

TRIALS, EXTREMES AND DEVICES
STUDY IV
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(This item is the Fourth Study in a series. Study I was #155; Study II was #165; and Study III was #280. The purpose of these Studies is to touch upon important principles as there seems to be necessity for being more diligent in “keeping ourselves in the love of God.”)

When our Pastor died we were left with a priceless heritage. We had all his writings in our possession—the “meat in due season” provided by our present Lord. This “meat” includes so many things, among them being (1) The Doctrines of the Divine Plan giving us a harmonious Bible. (2) Exhortations for character development. (3) Understandable instructions as to what the Lord’s service is that we may engage in that service intelligently and zealously. (4) Explanations of prophecy so we may know the time and season in which we are living. (5) The Pastor’s reasoning on current and unfulfilled prophecy. In our present study, we are concerned with the last named provision, number 5.

As we say, we have a priceless heritage. The question is what are we doing with this heritage? Are we making proper use of it? Is it possible that we may be misusing some of it in a way the Pastor never intended? Our questions refer particularly to the use we are making of the fifth provision listed in the paragraph above. Our Pastor wrote much on current and unfulfilled prophecy and we are deeply interested in everything he had to say. We instinctively feel that he is our superior in every way, and we could not possibly compete with him in understanding of prophecy, or in expressing in words that which would be appropriate.

We know how careful the Pastor was in his reasoning on prophecy; and while he attempted to handle the Scriptures as much as he felt God was pleased with our desire to understand, yet he avoided being dogmatic on many points of prophecy that he attempted to understand and help us to understand.

Some of our brethren in Christ are quite talented and have keen minds and it is only natural that they would be specially interested in prophecy, and make use of much that our Pastor has written in the way of reasoning and even opinion. And it is possible for such brethren to assist the Lord’s people in grasping what the Pastor taught, and this is good if it does not go beyond this. But we have noted, over the years, a tendency for certain brethren to use our Pastor’s writings in a way that the Pastor himself never intended—or so it seems to us.

We have several files of typewritten material from the Pastor's pen from brethren who feel this material is important for the Lord's people to consider in their study of prophecy, current and unfulfilled. The quotes from the Pastor are good in most cases. But we have noted something that seems to us is detrimental and harmful to the Lord's people, and that is in making hobbies of what the Pastor has written (or supposed to have written). In the presentation of these quotes, pressure is used, and one is made to feel that if you do not agree PERFECTLY with a certain viewpoint (a pro or a con from the Pastor's writings) then you are not faithful to the Truth. This does not seem right to us, as it has the effect of creating "sides" and the brethren become polarized and there is a strain that can be felt. A constant drumming on certain viewpoints on prophetic subjects can be tiring; and we feel the Pastor never intended us to use his reasoning in this manner.

We are all aware of what the Pastor has written, but the Pastor himself said that sometimes the brethren state his writings stronger than he himself did. We note the following on Reprint page 5367, par. 9: "Possibly some who have read the Dawns have presented our conclusions more strongly than we; but if so that is their own responsibility." Then in the article entitled "LET YOUR MODERATION BE KNOWN" on Reprint page 5249, par. 8 we read: "We urge the Watch Tower readers to exercise moderation in respect to their faith and conduct in all matters—including their chronological forecasts of the future." We think it is possible to get too animated over current prophecy and future prophecy, and in so doing it shows in our conduct and is upsetting to the brethren. On Reprint page 5555, col. 2, par. 4 we read: "He will not begin his great work of establishing the kingdom until the church shall be with him. We may not understand all this implies." This last sentence should calm us down—"We may not understand all this implies." On Reprint page 4530, last par. we read: "While our faith and hopes would be equally clear and logical whether this age ends in October, 1914 or a century later." The Lord is going to work out his own plan in his own way and in his own time, and we can have full confidence that this is so, and we do not need to get overly concerned. We have plenty to keep us occupied in the way of understanding what is clear and we can serve the Lord and serve one another, and there is no necessity for anyone to bear down hard on a prophetic viewpoint—at least this is the way it appears to us. Our notebook is full of quotes from the Pastor's pen, urging us to moderation, and we desire to follow the Pastor's advice as perfectly as we know how. In this way we believe we can be a blessing to the Lord's people.

We hesitate to mention some of the subjects that seem difficult for some of us to consider without becoming unduly animated. However, it may be profitable if these subjects are mentioned. One subject is concerning the vitalizing the Image of the Beast. Another one has to do with the Smiting of Jordan. A third one is whether there are any spirit-begotten in the Nominal System. The 1,000-year reign of Christ is being discussed at great length today. The Smiting of the Image in 1914 to 1918—Yes? or No? How Psalm 149:5 to 9 is to be understood. Are the experiences of John the Baptist and the final experiences of

Elijah to be regarded as typical of some crucial experiences that we, as the feet-members will have to endure? (On this point we have reasoning that has been in our possession for several decades past.) More recently we have “heard” that some are interested in the “Third Temple” and are making it a specialty. No matter how interesting these subjects may be, is it necessary or profitable to make hobbies of them? We are supposed to be united to one another by the Harvest Truth because we are IN CHRIST, and not because of some special line of prophetic thought.

So we ask our first question again—what are we doing with the precious heritage that was left in our charge since the Pastor died, especially the fifth provision? We realize we are raising a question that may touch a very sensitive spot in the minds of some brethren; but we are trying to be moderate in our treatment of the question, and we hope all will see that we are sincere and honest, and will not take anything personally. And if there is a principle involved, then consider the principle and ignore the writer. We are sending this study out as a token of our love for the Lord, for the Truth and for the brethren.

Sincerely in Christ,
Theodore A. Smith