

Hidden Manna, a White Stone, and Garments of Glory

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”
—Revelation 2:17

have their fulfillment “beyond the veil,” there are

IN OUR OPENING SCRIPTURE,

the glorified Lord, speaking through John, uses symbolic language to describe two things he will be pleased to “give” to “him that overcometh”—those faithful to their consecration vows during this Gospel Age. He will give them “to eat of the hidden manna,” and also “a white stone” with “a new name written” on it. Although these promises to the faithful overcomers will

also lessons contained in their meaning which we can draw from at the present time. Let us, then, consider some of the present and future lessons we see in these and other scriptural symbols and pictures which may benefit us as prospective members of the body of Christ.

OUR PRESENT “MANNA”

The first part of our text speaks of eating “hidden manna.” At the present time we may think of this as partaking of that spiritual nourishment which enables us as New Creatures to develop to maturity and gain a share in the first resurrection. “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” (Ps. 34:8) If we have responded to God’s High Calling through full consecration of ourselves to do his will, we will begin to “taste” that “the LORD is good” in our experiences. Hence, this becomes our first taste of the “hidden manna.”

Jesus thanked the Father that he had “hid” the Gospel message and its truths “from the wise, . . . and hast revealed them unto babes.” (Matt. 11:25) As “babes” in Christ, the consecrated followers of Jesus’ first taste of the “hidden manna” can be described as Peter states—“the sincere milk of the word,” that they “may grow thereby.” (I Pet. 2:2) Paul states that the food of the consecrated should progress from “milk” to “strong meat.” (Heb. 5:13,14) At first glance it might appear that “milk” refers to our knowledge of basic, foundation truths, and that “strong meat” denotes the understanding of more difficult portions of God’s Word. Although this may be true in a certain sense, “strong meat” also, and

perhaps most importantly, refers to the application of the truths we have learned to our daily life and conduct.

In the verses just cited, Paul notes that “strong meat” belongs to those “who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” (vs. 14, *New American Standard Bible*) If an understanding of the truths contained in God’s Word results in our application of its principles for the discerning of “good and evil” in our lives, then it is “strong meat” to us, and not just “milk.” Applying these principles signifies character development. Indeed, the development of a Christlike character will be the ultimate test of our devotion to God and worthiness to eat of the “hidden manna” beyond the veil.

Jesus identified himself as the “bread of life,” saying, “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” He also stated that “if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.” (John 6:48,51) We live through him in two senses. First, by accepting, in faith, the merit of his sacrifice and making a full consecration to do God’s will, we are justified in his sight and reckoned “alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Rom. 6:11

Living through Christ also means that we daily partake of the “bread,” or spiritual nourishment, which he brought to us through his teachings and example of conduct. We “eat of the flesh of the son of man” by appropriating his spirit and disposition. (John 6:53) Thus feeding upon him in our heart and mind we grow stronger in faith, and in all of the fruits and graces of the Spirit. We are to gather

and eat this symbolic “manna” daily, realizing that it will be our portion until we reach the heavenly Canaan.

A WHITE STONE—MARK OF IDENTIFICATION

In our theme scripture, after speaking of the “hidden manna,” the risen Lord, through John, speaks of a “white stone” to be given the overcomers of the Gospel Age. This stone will have a “new name written” on it which no man knows, except “he that receiveth it.” In olden times, when a king would send an ambassador on a special mission, he would often take a stone and divide it into two parts. One part was given to the ambassador, and the other part was kept by the king. If, during his journey and mission, the ambassador needed aid, he could send his half of the stone to the king. This insured that the needed help would be sent. Thus, this divided stone became a mark of identification to both parties.

The white stone of our scripture signifies a special token of the Master’s love, and the new name written in it suggests the Bridegroom’s name. It also indicates our intimate acquaintance with the Lord, and is a mark of identification known to him and ourselves. These things call to mind the “exceeding great and precious promises” of being “joint-heirs with Christ.” (II Pet. 1:4; Rom. 8:17) Only those who are “more than conquerors” will receive the fulfillment of these promises and the “white stone” pledged in our text.—Rom. 8:37

Each one striving to be “overcomers” and “more than conquerors” has the special favor of God and his Son, the Bridegroom. Of this intimate

relationship, no one in the world is particularly aware. The close association and friendship between the Lord and his consecrated footstep followers is indicated by a special identifying mark, or seal, upon each one, which serves as a constant reminder of their individual relationship with God and his dear Son.

Paul identifies this seal as the “holy Spirit of promise,” telling us that it is “the earnest [Greek: pledge] of our inheritance.” (Eph. 1:13,14) If faithful unto death, the sealing work will be complete, and we will receive our resurrection bodies. The seal, or pledge, of our inheritance will then be a reality, and the white stone given us will be in its final, glorious form, fashioned by God himself. Then we shall have complete knowledge of the name by which we shall be called by the Heavenly Father and his Son.

GOLDEN POT OF MANNA

In the Tabernacle arrangement of natural Israel, the “ark of the covenant,” found in the Most Holy compartment, contained three items. One of these was a “golden pot” of “manna.” (Exod. 16:32-35; Heb. 9:4) To the Israelites, this was to serve as a reminder that God had miraculously provided them food for forty years, as they wandered in the wilderness. This food provided all the nourishment and sustenance needed to maintain physical health.

We find two important lessons contained in the picture of the golden pot of manna. First, it represents the prospect of immortality—the divine nature—to those who are faithful to their “covenant . . . by sacrifice.” (Ps. 50:5) Christ Jesus our

Lord possesses immortality, having been given this reward by God when he raised him from the dead. Christ's faithfulness was so complete and all-encompassing that Paul states he began the process of "building," symbolically speaking, a new tabernacle. "Christ being . . . an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building [creation]; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption."—Heb. 9:11,12

Those who become Christ's joint-heirs—faithful members of his anointed "body"—will also receive immortality, pictured in the non-corrupting golden bowl of manna found in the ark of the Tabernacle. Paul describes the consecrated believer's hope of immortality with these words: "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. . . . Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—I Cor. 15:54,57

The second lesson of the golden pot of manna is for the Lord's people at the present time. Just as it symbolized to natural Israel a reminder of God's daily provisions of temporal food throughout the forty years of their wilderness experience, it reminds us of our daily supply of the spiritual "bread of life" given to us through the Word of God, especially the example of his dear Son, Christ Jesus. As previously noted, we are to eat of this "living bread" daily, as we walk through the present wilderness of sin that

surrounds us. Only this “incorruptible” supply of manna can truly satisfy our spiritual hunger.

GARMENTS TO BE WORN

In harmony with the lessons of our theme scripture pertaining to the reward of “overcomers” of the present age, is the typical picture of the garments of glory and beauty worn by Aaron, Israel’s high priest. These garments foreshadow the glorious character “worn” by the world’s future High Priest, Christ Jesus. The development of a Christlike character of love, and activity in furthering the interest of God’s coming kingdom, are prerequisites to becoming members of that glorious antitypical priesthood, which will bless all mankind. To become part of this priestly class, we must heed these words from Paul: “Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”—Heb. 3:1

In the inauguration of the typical priesthood, Aaron, from the tribe of Levi, was chosen by God to be Israel’s high priest. All future members of Israel’s priesthood were to come from the line of Aaron. In the antitype, the selection of the “Melchisedec” or “royal priesthood” began with the anointing of Jesus at the time of his baptism—he being chosen by God to be the world’s High Priest in the kingdom. When Jesus proved his faithfulness, even unto death, he “entered . . . within the veil,” and God made him “an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 6:19,20) Since that time, other prospective members of the “royal priesthood” have been chosen and developed by God for the great work of the next age. The faithful of this class

will also enter “into that within the veil,” where their “forerunner” has entered, to become part of the great Melchisedec High Priest class.

Romans 8:29 speaks of this group whom God has called to be members of his Son’s priesthood. “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” To be “conformed to the image” of Christ means we must be conformed to his character. This is the key requirement of those striving to be of the “royal priesthood.” The Apostle Peter urges us to add to our character the graces of the Spirit, promising “if ye do these things, . . . an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:5-11

On Israel’s Day of Atonement described in Leviticus 16, Aaron, the high priest, wore “holy linen . . . garments.” (vs. 4) They were worn while he was engaged in the sacrificial work associated with making atonement for himself, his household, and the congregation of Israel. After these offerings were completed, Aaron changed back into his garments of glory and beauty. (vss. 23,24) This illustrates the fact that Jesus, during his First Advent, and his footstep followers, during the present Gospel Age, are called to sacrifice. During this period, they wear sacrificial attire, not expecting any special honor or glory. However, when the age of sacrifice is over, and the Christ, head and body, have been all been raised to the divine nature, the glory and beauty of this great High Priest’s vesture will be made manifest to all.

In Exodus 28, we find a description of the “holy garments for Aaron . . . for glory and for beauty” which were to be made. (vs. 2) “These are the garments; . . . a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, . . . that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office.” (vs. 4) When Aaron was instated to the office of high priest during the consecration ceremony, he was first clothed with these garments. —Exod. 29:1-35; Lev. 8

LESSON OF COLORS

Before considering the pictures shown by Aaron’s garments of glory and beauty, we will first take into account, in a general way, the various colors which will be brought to bear, and their suggested symbolic meaning. (Exod. 28:4,5) In the Scriptures, we learn that certain colors illustrate conditions associated with God and the “royal priesthood” which is being developed under his supervision. White, for example, is a fitting representation of purity and righteousness. (Rev. 19:8) The antitypical Melchisedec priesthood in the kingdom will be entirely pure and righteous, both in its purpose as well as in all its dealings with mankind. This great High Priest—the Christ, head and body—will rule justly, with love and understanding.

The color blue is shown in the Bible to be an appropriate symbol of faithfulness. (Num. 15:38-40) The members of the antitypical High Priest will have been fully proven faithful before their induction to this office. They will continue to be faithful in their priestly capacity, fully loyal to God

and his kingdom arrangements. Purple is the traditional color of royalty. As typical Melchisedec was both a priest and king, the greater High Priest will also have kingly authority over mankind. (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:1-3) The Christ will use this authority in the work of destroying all evil, and of helping the willing and obedient of mankind to walk up the “highway . . . of holiness.”—Isa. 35:8

Scarlet, or red, is indicative of the merit, or value, of the ransom provided by Jesus, as pictured in his shed blood. It also appropriately shows the sacrificial course of the entire “royal priesthood”—head and body members—as they are prepared to be sympathetic kings and priests in the Messianic kingdom. Gold pictures things divine. This priesthood will have the divine nature, and thus be endowed with all the necessary abilities and power to carry out the responsibilities of their office.

MEANING OF THE GARMENTS

Each article of Aaron’s glorious apparel, detailed in Exodus 28 and 29, and in Leviticus 8, showed in a typical way the qualities and powers of the Christ—head and body—as viewed by God as he looked toward the future when his righteous kingdom would be set up under the leadership of the “royal priesthood.” First, the white linen coat, with its beautiful embroidery, shows a fully developed character of righteousness, adorned with works of grace and kindness. The linen girdle, which was bound around the embroidered coat, foreshadowed that the future High Priest will be the servant of righteousness.

The mitre, worn on Aaron's forehead, was also made of white linen, to which a gold plate or "crown" was fastened by a strip of blue lace. This illustrates that the crown of rulership will rightfully belong to Christ and his body members, because of their faithfulness and righteous character. (II Tim. 4:8) The gold plate had inscribed on it the words, "Holiness to the Lord." This beautifully shows that the antitypical High Priest is wholly devoted to the service of God. Just as the mitre was worn on Aaron's forehead so that all could see and recognize him as God's representative in all of Israel's religious affairs, so also the world of mankind will recognize their High Priest as God's choice to reign over them "in righteousness."—Isa. 32:1

The robe of the ephod, which was blue, represents the faithfulness of the High Priest. Its fringe of golden bells and pomegranates seems to tell us that the faithfulness of Christ has borne precious fruit—the redemption of mankind. This will be proclaimed to all during the kingdom, as shown by the sound of the golden bells drawing attention to the fruit.

The ephod, which was worn over the linen coat and robe of the ephod, was made of cloth of purple, blue, scarlet, white and gold threads. This could well represent the two great covenants in God's plan, whose fulfillment rests upon the shoulders of the antitypical High Priest. The front part of the ephod would seem to denote the Abrahamic Covenant, which promised a seed that would bless all the families of the earth. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) Under this covenant, in particular its Sarah feature, is also shown the selection and development by God

of the “seed” class. (Gal. 4:22-26) In Galatians 3:16, we are told that Abraham’s seed is Christ, and Paul, in verse 29, adds that those who belong to Christ during this present Gospel Age are also “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Continuing the picture, the back part of the ephod would appropriately picture the New Covenant. This is the covenant under which the willing and obedient of mankind will be restored to perfection during Christ’s kingdom and gain eternal life upon the earth. The purpose of this covenant is described in the Scriptures by God, saying, “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”—Heb. 8:8,10; Jer. 31:33

The success of both of these covenants is dependent on the faithfulness of the High Priest. If he fails to implement their terms and conditions, they will be unsuccessful and, as shown in the typical picture, fall as a garment to the ground. By God’s grace, however, these covenants are united and firmly held together by his divine power, shown by the gold clasps which held the front and back parts of the ephod together at the shoulder. The ephod was also bound to Aaron by the “curious girdle,” a cord made out of the same material as the ephod, showing that the antitypical High Priest’s work is to serve the interests of fulfilling each of these covenants.

Placed on the front part of the ephod was the “breastplate of judgment.” It was made of the same materials and colors as the ephod. It was doubled, with the back part fastened to the front of the ephod. It was folded in half at the bottom, and the

two upper ends of the front part were suspended by gold chains from the golden clasps on the shoulders of the high priest. The fact that this breastplate when doubled, or folded in half, was one span long and one span wide symbolized that to keep the law of God required a perfect man's ability.

The back half of the breastplate may signify the letter of the law, and the front half the spirit of the law. Israel was unable to obey the requirements of the Mosaic Law, either in letter or in spirit. The obligation of the Christian in this Gospel Age, however, must be to keep the spirit of God's law, which Jesus summed up as the law of love. (Matt. 22:37-40) At the same time, he has the robe of Christ's righteousness imputed to him to cover his unwilling failures in the performance of his intentions. Paul refers to this, saying, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."—Rom. 8:4

In the front of the breastplate, set in gold, were twelve jewels, in which were engraved the names of the tribes of Israel. This fittingly signifies the twelve tribes of spiritual Israel, Jesus' faithful footstep followers. (Rev. 7:4) Jewels are scarce and precious. Thus, the Lord's people of this Gospel Age, pictured by the twelve jewels in the breastplate, are few in number but precious in his sight. Of these we read, "They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."—Mal. 3:17

AN UNBLEMISHED PRIESTHOOD

In Leviticus 21:21, we read, "No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come

nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh." In applying the meaning of this text to those of the present age striving to be of the "royal priesthood," the blemishes spoken of do not represent the unavoidable stains caused by inherited weakness of the flesh. The robe of Christ's righteousness covers all such Adamic imperfections. The blemishes referred to in this verse picture defective heart qualities which must be overcome in order for one to be considered worthy as a member of the priestly class.

Verses 18-20 of this account list the blemishes which disqualified one from participating in priestly functions. No one who was blind could take on the duties of a priest. To become part of the antitypical priesthood, one must be begotten of the Holy Spirit in order to understand and "see" spiritual things. (I Cor. 2:14) One who loses his spiritual eyesight through yielding to the spirit of the adversary, or by allowing himself to become overcharged with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches, risks the loss of membership in the body of Christ.—Matt 13:22

The lame were excluded from the priesthood. Lameness, in a spiritual sense, might well represent indecision and wavering in the narrow way, which would compromise our loyalty to God and his service. A good lesson along this line is recorded in I Kings 18:21: "Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt [hesitate or waver] ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him." Only a definite, determined, and well thought out stand on all

things pertaining to our service of the Truth is acceptable in God's sight.

Another blemish mentioned was that of having a flat nose. This would imply a lack of the ability to smell properly. This might illustrate a failure to appreciate the love and self-sacrificing spirit of the brethren. Let us note how Paul appreciated the spirit of sacrifice in his brethren: "I am full, having received . . . the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God."—Phil. 4:18

Being "brokenfooted, or brokenhanded," is next mentioned as a blemish. This may signify spending all the energies of our walk, or our works, on one aspect of service or development, to the neglect of other important areas of labor. These blemishes might also symbolize the condition of one who is unable to do good or walk uprightly without mixing in a harmful remark or act. Such a condition, if not remedied, will debar one from being a priest.

The blemish of being "crook-backed" (*American Standard Version*) might well represent stubbornness, or refer to one who is often petty in his dealings with others, showing a spirit of selfishness. This blemish, in both the natural and spiritual sense, gives one the appearance of being a small, immature person. A priest must also not have a blemish in his eye. This could illustrate how one might lose his "eye of faith," and believe he can see all things by sight. In this regard, we should especially take caution when giving interpretations of prophecies and scriptures yet to be fulfilled.

Scurvy, another blemish, was a disease that resulted in itching skin. It may illustrate a condition

of discontent and fault-finding. It may also represent a lack of loving zeal to spread the “balm of Gilead”—the Gospel message—to others. Paul wrote: “Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” (I Cor. 4:15) Paul here was saying that while there were many who could assist the brethren in their walk after they had been Spirit-begotten, he had the overflowing zeal needed in order to bring many to Christ and thus start them on the Christian way.

With God’s help and guidance, let us be transformed into the likeness of Christ in love and unselfish devotion to him. By so doing, we will be found worthy to be counted as members of the great antitypical High Priest, and will receive a “new name written” in a “white stone.” “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”—Rev. 3:21 ■