

Gold Tried in the Fire

*“I counsel thee to
buy of me gold
tried in the fire,
that thou mayest
be rich.”*

—**Revelation 3:18** **THROUGHOUT THE PRESENT** Gospel Age our Heavenly Father has extended an invitation to a special class of Christians who would share in blessing the sin-sick and dying human family under the future administration of Christ’s glorious kingdom. In this lesson’s scripture, our Lord speaks of this distinct class of his faithful followers in a very special way, even as ‘gold tried in the fire.’

Through the writings of the revelator, our Lord makes clear the fact that after these faithful followers of our Lord Jesus have been called from the world, they must also be cleansed, purified, and conformed to his own image. To assist them in this endeavor, he will provide them with some very important spiritual gifts they will need to be faithful. He promises that they will be given “white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”—Rev. 3:18

HIGHLY VALUED

Gold is the most valuable of all metals and is usually found in small quantities, thus making it very rare. It is the first metal that is mentioned in the Bible, and is associated with the name Pison, one of the four divisions of the river which went out from the garden of Eden. The river symbolizes the human family, out of which a special class would be selected. From the scriptural record, we read, "A river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone."—Gen. 2:10-12

Gold is highly valued not only for its rarity, but also because it has long lasting durability and beauty. It was recognized as a measure of wealth and prominence in ancient times, even before Abraham's name had been changed. "Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold." (Gen. 13:2) Throughout the ages it has been highly sought after. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit." (Prov. 18:11) The Scriptures foretell a time when this hoarded wealth will become useless, and the present world and its evil institutions will fall away. James wrote, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days."—James 5:1-3

Because of its color and luster, and resistance to oxidation and tarnishing, gold is especially useful for making jewelry and ornamentation of many kinds. “Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.” (Song of Sol. 1:10) Another property of gold is that it is more stable and unchanging than other metals, and this has made it useful as a standard medium of exchange and commerce among nations and people.

THE DIVINE NATURE

Because of its scarcity and great value, gold is used in the Scriptures to illustrate the spiritual inheritance of the bride of Christ on the highest of all planes of life—the divine nature. Our featured scripture is taken from the Lord’s message to the last of the seven churches of Revelation. The inspiring promise was, “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) The faithful bride class, also known as the New Creation will share the divine nature as members of ‘the Christ’ and is shown seated on the messianic throne in the future heavenly kingdom. Jesus promised, “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.”—Luke 22:29

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

In the Hebrew Old Testament types and shadows, Rebekah symbolizes the Lord’s bride. To illustrate this, she was given gifts of gold that pictured the wonderful promises of the Heavenly Father who was seeking a bride for his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus. She willingly left her father’s

house to set out on an arduous journey that marked her commitment to meet her future husband, Isaac, who in turn represented our Lord Jesus. "It came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands [Rebekah's] of ten shekels weight of gold."—Gen. 24:22

In the Book of Psalms, there is an illustration of the future marriage ceremony where the bride of Christ is dressed in gold. Gold serves to enhance her spiritual reward to the divine plane of life. Concerning this most wonderful inheritance, the psalmist wrote, "Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." (Ps. 45:9) The queen stood distinct from her companions, the other honorable women, because of her loyalty to the Lord who she was about to marry, and because her character had been endowed with the principles of truth and righteousness. From the scriptural record, we read, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."—vss. 6,7

The reference to Ophir identifies a place renowned as a source of much gold of the very highest quality. Thus, "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee."—vss. 13,14

THE HEAVENLY CITY

When speaking of the future bride of Christ, our Lord Jesus proclaimed, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." (Matt. 5:14) In his last message to the faithful members of the Christ we are given a glimpse of the heavenly city. The revelator recorded, "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21:2) In symbolic language, Jesus described the adorned Christ in glory. "He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."—vss. 10,11

Even as gold was associated with the heavenly bride of Christ, so also was the heavenly city seen as a divine institution. "The building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." (vs. 18) Each one of the city's twelve foundations were garnished with beautiful stones (vs. 19,20), and the twelve gates with twelve pearls. "The twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." (vs. 21) Thus does the city of God represent the glorified Christ that has been in preparation to share in the rule over the nations. The heavenly city will be the center of blessing for all the families of the earth under the administration of Christ's glorious future kingdom.

GOSPEL AGE CALLING

We are now living during the closing years of this present Gospel Age, and the appointed time of our Lord's promised return. It was to be a special time of trial and testing for those who responded to the heavenly calling in Christ Jesus. From the prophetic words of Malachi, we read, "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness."—Mal. 3:2,3

We see that the world's old social order which has been established on selfishness and pride is passing away in preparation for Christ's future kingdom. "These be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." (Luke 21:22) As evidence for this upheaval among the nations, Luke recorded Jesus' words, "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."—vss. 25-27

All around us today we see the prophesied 'distress of nations, with perplexity,' and with no apparent solution or way of escape. Selfishness, hatred, pride, and the spirit of aggression have led to the creation of cruel and powerful tyrannies. Sin, corruption,

and injustice have surely brought their awful consequences. Man now has the weapons to even destroy himself. However, we are assured by the wonderful promises of God that the human family will not be permitted to do so. The Scriptures teach that human selfishness would ultimately lead to self destruction if not restrained by divine power and intervention. Jesus spoke of this awful time and the great distress toward which the world is now moving. He said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for elect's sake those days shall be shortened."—Matt. 24:22

THE GROANING CREATION

The poor groaning human creation will be rescued from its own selfish and proud madness. All national and international problems will be solved under the administration of Christ's future kingdom. We are promised that all unrighteousness will then be removed from the earth, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."—Rev. 21:4,5

The closing years of this present Gospel Age is the culmination of two thousand years during which time the faithful followers of our Lord have accepted the invitation of the heavenly calling. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted

that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”—Rev. 19:7-9

A TEST OF FAITH

The ending of this age is a time of special testing for the Lord’s people, and the faith of each member of the Christ is being refined, purified, and proven. John recorded our Lord’s words, when he proclaimed, “The great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (chap. 6:17) We are now witnesses of the rapidly approaching collapse of all present social institutions in the earth.

Jesus said, “So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”—Luke 21:31-36

FAITH AND WORKS

It has always been true that those who have accepted the heavenly calling to joint heirship with Christ will be thoroughly tested. Each must stand

fast in the faith of God's Holy Word. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." (I Cor. 16:13) If the proper degree of faith is developed in us, it will surely manifest itself by bearing fruit. Those who may have only a measure of faith have not progressed in the Truth by making it a living faith. Thus does the Apostle James ask, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14) "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."—vss. 17,18

Our faith, and our whole being as individuals, is especially on trial now, and we are thus exhorted by our Lord, "Be thou faithful unto death." (Rev. 2:10) Faithfulness of each member of the Christ unto death means an inheritance with him in glory, and the wonderful promise to share with him in blessing all families of the earth. This is the grandest gift we could ever expect to receive and is worth striving to attain and to prepare ourselves for. Our Lord asks for our faithfulness. He desires to purge out of us everything in the nature of dross, including self-will and all the works of the flesh.

Although works are essential, works without faith will not enable us to stand fast in the Truth. "Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2: 20) He whose life is not in harmony with his faith dishonors that faith, and that kind of faith is dead. James then wrote, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when

he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”—vss. 21-26

If Abraham and other faith heroes had merely discussed their faith with one another they would never have been faith heroes, or have obtained a good report through faith. The Scriptures reveal that they walked in faith, and their works were in harmony with their faith. Thus was their faith made complete by their works. Our faith must also be alive, active, and working in us by love.

THE MARK OF LOVE

Development of the attribute of love must also be stressed, although it does not take the place of other important factors in the life of those who have accepted the Heavenly Calling. For example, love cannot take the place of doctrine, but it does guide us in the proper use of doctrine. Love cannot take the place of faith or activity in the Lord's name, but it is the only motive for faith and for service that is acceptable to God.

While we stand fast in one spirit, with one mind and cooperate with others of like precious faith, we are to love each other from the heart. We are to

encourage one another to love and to good works, and to avoid every word and every act that might incite to misunderstanding or strife. These traits are of the flesh and of the Devil. Faith and love must go hand in hand. If we stand fast in the faith and are made alive by love, we are kept by the power of God.

The love of many may wax cold, but our love toward others, as we stand fast in the faith, must remain fervent even though it may be spurned by others. If we are abused or reviled we must see that we revile not in return. When we are persecuted let us never join the ranks of the persecutors. We need a strong faith, and an increasing measure of the loving spirit of holiness. This should be our sincere desire and earnest prayer. God's precious Word is the firm foundation for our faith, and ours must be a faith which works by love.

ENDURING FAITH

We must bear up under the trials and stand fast while our beloved Lord continues to refine, purify, and cleanse us, that we may offer unto him our acceptable sacrifice. It will mean taking up our cross daily and following him. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:13,14) The beloved refiner is graciously working upon us, and we are to submit willingly to his refining. We all need refining and cleansing because of the dross that is inherent in our earthen, fleshly vessel in which our spiritual treasure resides, even as gold tried in the fire.

The psalmist has expressed, "Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."—Ps. 130:2-5

Throughout our pilgrim journey, we could not possibly have any standing before our Heavenly Father without the covering robe of Christ's righteousness. "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."—Isa. 61:10

In his letter to the brethren at Rome, the Apostle Paul wrote, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." (Rom. 2:7) To the church at Galatia, he said, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Gal. 6:9) Our Lord will never leave us nor forsake us, and he lovingly desires that we be conformed to his likeness and that we reflect his image. It is for us to bear up courageously under his refining and cleansing.

We must not become 'weary in well doing,' and we must remember that our test is not one simply of well doing, but 'patient continuance in well doing.' Then keeping on the "whole armour of God" that we may be able to stand in this "evil day."—Eph. 6:13

MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD

The Apostle Peter wrote, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” (I Pet. 4:12) The apostle also draws our attention to the elect class, symbolized by gold, that is being especially tried at the end of this present Gospel Age. Concerning the Christ, he further explained their special calling, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”—I Pet. 1:2

The apostle continues, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”—vss. 3-6

Peter speaks of the Christ as gold tried in the fire, “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”—vs. 7

We are to remember, “He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”—Job 23:10 ■