Reprint 3337

"CHRIST BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL"

Golden Text: "Without faith it is impossible to please him." ***Hebrews 11 verse 6***

With this lesson we start a new quarter in studies of the earthly life of Christ. Since it falls on what is generally observed as Easter Sunday, those who have arranged the lessons suggest, without breaking the narrative of Christ's ministry, that this lesson be treated from the resurrection standpoint. The thought is a good one, especially for those whose eyes of understanding have been opened to some realization of the glorious things of the Millennial Kingdom, for which the whole creation is groaning and waiting. These and not others can properly get a connection between our Lord's miracles and the resurrection life of the Millennial age.

LIFE-RIGHTS FOR THE WORLD SECURED BY THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

From this standpoint we perceive that while our Lord Jesus came into the world to die on man's behalf, to redeem Adam and his race from the sentence of sin namely, death he did, additionally, two other important works. The redemptive work was the principal one,

without which there could be no future life of any kind. The laying down of life daily until the sacrifice was finished at Calvary may, therefore, be designated the principal or foundation work accomplished by our Lord. Without that nothing else could have been of any avail, but on that foundation the other two works could proceed. The Apostle declares that the Lord brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. This means that no clear and definite hope respecting eternal life had ever previously been given to any one even to the Jews. While other nations were without God, having no hope, the Jews did have a sufficiency of divine revelation to inspire a hope in the resurrection; though the philosophy of it how God could be just and yet release those whom he had justly sentenced to death they could not see, because it was not time, and therefore was not yet revealed.

Christ brought life to light by explaining to those who had ears to hear that he had come into the world to "give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10 verse 45). He explained further that the time would come when all in their graves should hear his voice in kingly authority and awaken from the sleep of death come forth from the prison house of the tomb. The people even then might have wondered what advantage there would be in such a release from the tomb if they would still be subject to the pains and aches and demon oppositions of the present time. Our Lord fortified the testimonies of the prophets respecting the Millennial age, which

they declared would be a period of universal blessing, with nothing to hurt or destroy in all the holy Kingdom. He showed how this could be by the various miracles which he performed; for he not only preached the Kingdom of God, taught his disciples to look forward to it and to pray for its coming and blessing and power, but in the various miracles which he performed he illustrated that its powers would prevail amongst men for their blessing.

He healed all manner of diseases and cast out demons, and thus gave evidence that in God's due time, as the great Physician, he will be armed with the abundant power which will completely restrain Satan and all the fallen angels from all work of evil in respect to the human family, and when he will lift up the poor, the lame, the deaf, the blind, the dumb, out of their present tribulation. And moreover, this temporary release which he brought to those who by faith accepted his favor, illustrated still higher blessings, labors and privileges the opening of the eyes of the understanding, the curing of the leprosy of sin, the returning of the withered powers, as well as the awakening of the dead that all might see and hear and know of the righteousness which God approves and of the life everlasting which will be its reward, and that all might be helped out of the present bondage to sin and imperfection, etc., into the full liberty of the sons of God. Thus, the Lord brought life everlasting life to the

view, to the knowledge, of those who hear his message of the Kingdom and the blessings to flow from it.

IMMORTALITY OR DIVINE NATURE ONLY FOR THE ELECT

He brought immortality to light also. In addition to everlasting life for the world, he opened a way by which a special class of footstep-followers might share with himself the glory, honor and immortality of the divine nature. The world in general was not expected to understand or appreciate this. On the contrary, the natural eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath in reservation for them who love him for the New Creatures for those who are begotten of the holy Spirit, and that make their calling and election sure to joint heirship with him in the Kingdom.

Our Lord's ministry and teachings can only be rightly appreciated when viewed from these three standpoints: (1). His own sacrifice as the redemption price for Adam and his race laying down his life day by day until he cried, "It is finished." (2). His general teachings which in due time will be applicable to the whole world respecting the outcome of the redemptive work, the reconciliation of the world to God, the complete forgiveness of the world's sins, the great trial or judgment or opportunity then to come to the world through the Kingdom which the Redeemer, as the

Mediator between God and man, will establish for the deliverance of mankind from the adverse conditions within and without, and for the assistance of all who desire to return to harmony with the Creator. (3). The call to special discipleship, to walking in the narrow way, to be baptized with the baptism of death that he was baptized with and thus by divine grace through this arrangement to be fitted and prepared for a share in the heavenly Kingdom to sit with Christ in his throne, and participate in the dispensing of all the wonderful blessings of the Millennium to all the families of the earth.

It is with this thought that we follow the lesson before us. Jesus and his disciples, after the feeding of the five thousand and the stormy night upon the sea of Galilee, spent some time in Capernaum. There the Lord gave the sermon which illustrated that his hearers should think less about the loaves and fishes which he had given them and should appreciate more the higher things. They should recognize him as the Bread of Life that came down from heaven; they should feed upon his words and thus gain life everlasting. The time had not yet come, however, for the general dispensing of this life everlasting that work belongs to the Millennial age. He therefore was seeking specially for such as were particularly hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Of this class were the apostles, whom he was now training for the future work which he would

accomplish through them after the new dispensation, to begin at Pentecost.

GOD'S FAVORS FOR HIS CONSECRATED PEOPLE

With his disciples our Lord traveled north-westward to the borders of the country called Tyre and Sidon, so named because of the prominent cities by these names which were there situated. He did not announce himself publicly to the people there, but his presence soon became known, showing that the fame of his miracles and teachings had spread throughout the whole of Palestine. A Canaanitish woman living as a Greek was amongst the first to hear of his presence and coming before him she cried or wailed for assistance for her daughter. Our Lord on this occasion acted very differently from his custom, and doubtless for the purpose of imparting a lesson. Although usually so prompt to hear and to sympathize and to heal, on this occasion he paid no attention to the woman, according to Matthew's account, who tells us that the disciples came to the Lord and urged him to send her away either grant her request and send her away or refuse her request and authorize her expulsion.

The poor woman's importunities were not for herself but for her daughter, who was possessed of a demon, an unclean spirit; and so far, as we have any knowledge, most of these fallen spirits, demons, are

unclean, depraved, and their influence upon those possessed by them is an unclean, injurious one. Sometimes they do indeed simulate purity, and on numerous occasions we have heard of their attempts to personate holy ones even the Lord; nevertheless, the whole tendency of these evil spirits seems to be toward impurity of thought and conduct on the part of those possessed and through them upon others.

Finally, in answer to the woman's cries and to the expostulations of the disciples, our Lord did speak, but very differently from his usual message. He merely intimated to the woman that his miracles and services were not intended for the world in general but for God's covenanted people, the Jews. He followed the Jewish custom of the time, of speaking of the Gentiles as dogs, yet he modified the matter, for instead of using the word which would signify the detestable brutes which infest the Orient and are the scavengers of the streets, he used another word signifying the little or pet dogs of the family. The woman, strong in her faith in the Lord's power, was equal to turning the unfavorable answer to her own benefit, and to urge that as the little pet dogs got some of the surplus from the table of the children, so she as an outsider might be granted some of the Lord's favors without in any degree working disadvantage to the Jews, to whom our Lord's ministry was specially sent and given.

WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE HIM

Footnote for the November 12th Manna, John 20 verse 27

This shows the earnestness and faith of the woman. Such an exhibit would surely be pleasing to the Lord. Indeed, we can see in our own experiences as Christians that many of the Lord's dealings with us are along the lines of developing and testing of our faith. He is good and gracious of heart; however, we may have misunderstood him in the past, and however his character and plan may have been maligned and misrepresented by the Adversary. It is impossible for us to come near to the Lord except as we shall exercise faith and trust in him, in his goodness, in his power, in his wisdom, in his love. All things are possible, only believe is the lesson which the spiritual Israelite of today needs continually to learn, as the apostles of old prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." Along this line it was well that we should pray, and that we should seek continually to accept the lessons of life from this standpoint as lessons or instructions in faith. We are not in this ignoring the necessity of obedience to the divine Word but are holding that wherever faith exists the works will correspond to it and be proportionately large or small. Hence the stronger our faith, the more our works are sure to be under the divine arrangement. Our Golden Text well says that without faith it is impossible to be pleasing to the Lord.

Faith is a matter of cultivation, of development. The same apostles who cried out in terror when the storm was upon the Sea of Galilee gradually grew stronger in faith until, as the records show, they could and did trust the Lord in his absence and where they could not trace him. Similarly, it should be a part of our daily lesson to cultivate trust in the Lord, and to think of the experiences in the past in our lives and all of these lessons in his Word, that thus our faith in him may become rooted and grounded.

FAITH REWARDED AFTER BEING TESTED

The Lord said unto her, "O, woman, great is thy faith." (Matthew). Her faith was strong in its love for her daughter, in its perseverance and persistency, in its humility, recognizing matters just as the Lord recognized them, and not according to the general sentiments of the Greeks and Gentiles that the Jews were merely pretentious and not more in divine favor than other peoples. It was strong in overcoming great obstacles, even our Lord's apparent repulsion. We would not consider this heathen woman's conduct to be in every sense of the word a pattern for the Lord's consecrated and enlightened people. The strength of faith is the only one that we should copy. As for us who have become the Lord's people, and are no longer strangers, foreigners, dogs, but children adopted into the Father's family and recognized by the Lord as "brethren," it would be no longer appropriate that we

should cry or entreat or beseech in any wise for things which the Lord is not pleased to give us.

Footnote for the November 13th Manna, Matthew 6 verse 8

The Master himself represented the difference between the things which the Gentiles might do and the things which we as his disciples might do, saying that our petitions and seeking should not merely be for the bread that perishes, for after such things do the Gentiles seek merely the earthly things and with importunity; but seek ye first, chiefly, the Kingdom of God and the righteousness which is appropriate thereto, and all these things of an earthly kind will be added unto you in such measure as will be for your best interests. Our petitions, our requests, our cries to the Lord, therefore, should be for the holiness of heart, for the filling of his Spirit, for the spiritual food, refreshment, strength; and as for the natural things, he knows the way we take and what would be to our best interests as New Creatures. We are to leave this to him: he would not be pleased to see us importuning him for things which he did not give us, for to do so would not be an exemplification of faith in him, but the reverse an exemplification of doubt, a manifestation of fear, that he was forgetting or neglecting his promise to give us the things needful.

Our Lord informed the woman that the faith manifested in her saying was sufficient, that her request was

granted, that the demon was gone from her daughter. The woman's faith was further manifested by her immediate withdrawal. She took the Lord's word implicitly; if he were what he claimed and had the power that she believed, he would not lie to her. Many of the Lord's people today seem to lack faith along these lines to have less than this poor heathen woman. Many of them hear the Lord's word assuring them that those who come to him have their sins forgiven, yet Little Faith bids them doubt and keep on bemoaning their sins and requesting forgiveness, which the Lord has assured them would be accomplished from the time of their acceptance of it. They fail to exercise the faith, and they fail proportionately of the blessing and peace and joy.

So far as the record goes our Lord did nothing in that quarter except for this poor woman, and the spiritual lessons connected with it were evidently less for her than for the disciples, for we have no record that he taught her or taught anyone of that vicinity. Departing thence, our Lord took an easterly course along the northern borders of Palestine, and crossing the river Jordan began to come southward toward the Sea of Galilee. Matthew says that he made a stop in the mountain, and that a great multitude brought their sick to him; the lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others they led to Jesus' feet and he healed them, and the multitude wondered and glorified the God of Israel.

Our lesson gives one instance from this multitude of healings. A man who was both deaf and dumb was brought to Jesus, and his treatment was peculiar; the Lord took him apart privately, perhaps to impress upon him the lesson. The man could not hear, and hence the Lord imparted the lesson through signs, touching his tongue and touching his ears, and then with a sigh he glanced heavenward, as indicating that the sympathy of heaven was moved for the man's assistance, and immediately the blessing came and he was healed. This may have been the first miracle in that region, and possibly the multitude coming, as Matthew records, were attracted by it. Our Lord's injunction that it should be kept quiet seems to have been understood, not as a command, but rather as a suggestion that he was not seeking publicity. Nevertheless, when the faith was manifested and the poor afflicted ones were before him the Lord never refused to give the blessing. Thus, we are taught that when the due time shall come for the blessing of all the families of the earth, the Lord will not withhold a blessing from any; all who desire to be blessed may then have his favor.

BLESSED ARE OUR EYES AND EARS OF UNDERSTANDING

As New Creatures who have already in a figurative sense risen with Christ to walk in newness of life, to walk in his footsteps, we have our eyes opened and our ears unstopped and our tongues loosed, so that

we may not only see and enjoy the grace of God ourselves, but we may speak of his goodness and love to others. In many respects those to whom the Lord grants the special knowledge of the Truth in this present time have a suggestion that it is not for everybody, that we are to be discriminating in our endeavors to dispense the Truth, and that some of these great blessings of the Lord which are to us like pearls are not meant for all; that we should not cast our pearls before swine, or before those who manifest no disposition to know of or receive the Lord's favors. But with us, as with the healed one in this lesson, the message is too good to keep; we love to tell the story, it did so much for us; we desire that all who are blind and deaf may come to the great Physician and be healed; we desire that all who are stammering in their endeavors to tell the good tidings may have their lips touched by the Master and henceforth speak plainly the glorious things of the Gospel of Christ. And as the Master would not reprove this one in the lesson, neither does he reprove us if in our zeal we go sometimes to the extreme of trying to tell the good tidings to those who have no ear to hear, or endeavor to make disciples of those who are swinish and not at all inclined to spiritual things, or of following the Lamb whithersoever he goes.

The heart of this lesson is that we who are risen with Christ in the spirit of our minds should walk in newness of life while still in this mortal body and still amongst

men; that we should look forward to the glorious change of the First Resurrection, when we shall be actually in the Lord's likeness and see him as he is, sharing his glory and participating with him in dispensing all these blessings of life and healing to whosoever will accept these favors in the glorious Kingdom time which we rejoice to know is near at hand.