

OUR LORD'S TEACHINGS BY PARABLES



A DAWN PUBLICATION

Our Lord's Teachings by Parables

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CONTENTS

Without A Parable He Spake Not.....	1
Teaching by Parables Only.....	4
The House Built upon a Rock.....	7
New Cloth on Old Garments – New Wine in Old Bottles.....	10
Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.....	11
Parable of the Treasure Hid in the Field (1 of 3).....	14
“Treasure Hid in the Field” (2 of 3).....	15
“Treasure Hid In The Field” (3 of 3).....	16
The Parable of a Pearl of Great Value.....	18
The Parable of a Fish Net.....	19
Parable of One’s Body Members Cast Off.....	20
Parable of the Lost Sheep (According to Matthew).....	20
Parable of the Lost Sheep (According to Luke).....	22
Parable of the Lost Coin.....	24
Parable of the King Forgiving His Servant’s Debt.....	26
The Camel and the Needle’s Eye.....	28
Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard.....	31
Parable of the Obedient and the Disobedient Sons.....	34
Parable of the Wicked Vine-Dressers.....	35
Parable of the Wedding Feast and the Reluctant Guests.....	40
The Fig Tree Putting Forth Leaves.....	45
Parable of One Taken and the Other Left.....	47
The Faithful Servant Dispensing Food.....	48
The Parable of the Ten Virgins.....	49
Parable of The Servants And Talents.....	53
The Parable of the Talents.....	55
The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats.....	58

Parables from Luke’s Gospel

Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind.....	64
Parable of Casting out the Mote from a Brother’s Eye.....	65
Parable of Gathering Grapes of Brambles.....	65
Parable of the Two Debtors – One Owed Much, One Owed Little.....	66
Two Types of Sinners” (Luke 7:36-50).....	66

The Parable of the Good Samaritan.....	70
Parable of the Rich Farmer Building Larger Barns.....	72
Parable of the Returning Bridegroom and the Waiting Servants.....	73
Parable of the Leaven Put into the Bread Dough.....	77
Entering in at the Straight Gate and the Closing of the Door.....	78
A Guest at a Feast Choosing a Humble Seat.....	80
Parable of the Rich Man's Supper and the Reluctant Guests.....	82
Parable of the Prodigal Son.....	85
Parable of the Rich Man and His Wasteful Steward (Article 1 of 2).....	88
Parable of the Rich Man and His Wasteful Servant (Article 2 of 2).....	92
Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.....	94
Parable of the Unprofitable Servants.....	99
Parable of the Unjust Judge and the Importunate Widow.....	100
Parable of the Pharisee's and the Poor Man's Prayers.....	103
Parable of the Servants and the Pounds (Compare "Talents" Parable, Page 55)..	105

Parables from Mark's Gospel

Parable of Not Fasting While the Bridegroom Is Present.....	111
Parable of the Sower and the Seed.....	112
Parable on the Growing of Sown Seed.....	115
Parable of the Mustard Seed.....	116
Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Article 1 of 2).....	117
Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Article 2 of 2).....	119

Parables from John's Gospel

The Samaritan Woman and The Parable of the Water of Life.....	122
"I Am the Bread of Life" (John 6:25-69).....	128
The Great Shepherd and His Son, the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-16).....	135
Parable of the Shepherd, the Door, and the Flock (John 10:1-18).....	140
God's House of Many Mansions (Article 1 of 2).....	147
God's House of Many Mansions (Article 2 of 2).....	149
The Parable of the True Vine and Its Fruits.....	149

Without A Parable He Spake Not

“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”—John 6:63.

“Without a parable spake he not unto the people.” What the prophet had declared of him was true, “He shall open his mouth in parables and dark sayings.” It is important that we remember this. Many noble Christian people have inferred that our Lord’s words were all simple, and that they presented the truth in a manner easily understood by everybody. Nothing is further from the truth. If our Lord’s parables and dark sayings be taken as plain, literal statements of truth, they will lead to all kinds of errors and misapprehensions. Let us remember, therefore, the Apostle’s declaration, “Without a parable spake he not unto the people.”

There is absolutely nothing in the words of Jesus without a deep significance. How many have stumbled over the Lord’s parables by taking them to be literal statements of facts! How absurd the conclusions drawn from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, for instance. How absurd to conclude that simply because a man was rich, fared sumptuously every day, and was garbed in fine linen, that he must suffer through all eternity! How equally absurd to interpret the poor man Lazarus, who lay at the rich man’s gate, as representing, literally poor and diseased beggars! How unreasonable to think that only such as have had an experience of this kind, with dogs to lick their sores, and hungering for the crumbs that fall from the rich man’s table, would experience the joys of heaven, according to the divine program! How foolish to think of Abraham’s bosom, which could hold only two or three, as being the portion of blessing for only a handful of beggars!

Note afresh the parable of the wheat and the tares, the gathering of the former into the garner and the burning of the latter. Neither represents literal experiences. In the parable the wheat is not literal wheat; the tares are not literal tares. The wheat symbolizes the inheritors of the kingdom; the tares symbolize the offspring of error—children of the wicked one. The gathering into the barn of safety symbolizes the glorification of the church on the spirit plane, and precedes the shining forth of the sons of God in the glory of the , for the blessing of the groaning creation; as the Apostle declares, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.” The whole creation is waiting for the shining forth of the sons of God in the kingdom, and their shining forth in truth and righteousness will scatter all the darkness of sin and error and awaken and revivify the world of mankind.

Eventually all the willingly obedient may enjoy the blessings of eternal life. On the other hand, the description of the burning of the tares, instead of referring to a literal burning, has evidently a symbolic significance; it means the destruction of the tare class—not their destruction as individuals, but as “tares,” as imitations of the “wheat” class.

How glad we are to find the key to these symbolic statements—these parables! How glad we are that by the use of this key the parabolic figures become reasonable and beautiful! What

a silver lining there is to the dark cloud of trouble which is now looming up before the world! How glad God's people must be to learn that just beyond the clouds and shadows comes the glorious Millennial day!

The parable of "the sheep and goats," taken literally, has caused confusion to many. They think of the separation of the sheep and the goats as now in progress, failing to notice the Scriptural declaration that the parable shall find its application "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all his holy angels (messengers) with him. Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." We thus see that the application of the parable belongs to the Millennial age. All through that age the work of Christ and the church, his bride, seated with him upon his throne, will be a work of blessing to the world of mankind. The manner in which those blessings will be received, will demonstrate the sheep-like or goat-like character of every individual of the human family. The sheep-like will come to the right hand position of favor, the goat-like to the left hand position of disfavor. The conclusion of the thousand-year Judgment day will bring the expression of the Lord's favor towards the sheep-like, rewarding them with eternal life, and the expression of his disfavor towards the goat-like, destroying them in the "second death." This is symbolically represented by the statement, "Depart ye cursed into the lasting fire (a figure of destruction) prepared for Satan and his messengers (followers)." The reward of the righteous will thus be everlasting life. The "everlasting punishment" of the unrighteous will be everlasting death, for the "wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Romans 6:23.

"I Thank Thee, Father"

Evidently some wise and gracious purpose stands connected with the hiding or secreting at present of the divine purpose from mankind in general. While the Scriptures declare it is a mark of special favor to the Lord's people that they are made acquainted with the divine purposes, yet nowhere do they declare that all those from whom God's plans are secreted are doomed to eternal torture, or to everlasting destruction. Thus our Lord Jesus prayed: "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Had the hiding of the divine counsel from mankind signified eternal torture for those from whom it was hidden, there surely would have been no ground for thanking the heavenly Father for this act. We can thank him, however, that though many of the worldly wise are not privileged to know of his glorious plans, nevertheless those plans are sure. For the world to have known of the divine purposes in advance would doubtless have been injurious, because in their blindness they would have attempted to thwart these purposes and therefore would have gotten themselves into a worse condition of condemnation.

Words of Spirit and of Life

Our text shows that however dark and parabolic were our Lord's teachings, nevertheless, rightly understood, his message is one that is spiritually helpful and life-giving to those who can and do understand it. It is this quality of the Lord's message which makes the religion of the Bible different from that of all the heathen. It is a message of life as well as a message of holiness. It is a message of forgiveness as well as a message of condemnation. It is a message of love as well as a message of justice. His wonderful words of life—they are charming, beautiful, forceful!

We may read them over year after year and we see still more beauty in them, still deeper significance, and that in proportion to our own growth in grace, our growth in knowledge, and in the spirit of our Master.

R 4644 (1910)

Our Lord's Teaching by Parables

Teaching by Parables Only

“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, saying, “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.”—Matthew 13:34, 35; Psalms 78:2.

Bible students and Bible scholars have generally expressed surprise that the Great Teacher, in harmony with the above Scriptures, spoke always to the people in symbolic language, “dark sayings,” the meaning of which they rarely understood. Another Scripture informs us that the reason was that the true invitation was not intended for the ordinary multitudes, but merely for the consecrated.

To those who accepted the Lord as the Savior, and who took upon themselves the required vow of faithfulness in walking in his footsteps unto death, these were granted special enlightenment, as it is written, “To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, but to outsiders these things are spoken in parables, that they might not see and understand.”

The simple explanation of the matter is that an understanding of spiritual things would do harm rather than good to those not spiritually begotten—to those not fully consecrated to the divine will. However, with the views we once entertained, and which are voiced by all the creeds of the Dark Ages, none of the explanations would be tenable, because according to these creeds, only the elect are to be saved, all the non-elect are to be lost, and the elect would be the only ones permitted to understand the things pertaining to the heavenly calling.

The entire matter is clarified when we recognize the difference between the salvation of the world to the human nature during Messiah's reign of a thousand years, and the salvation provided for the elect, called during this age and specially instructed and guided with the view of their making their calling and election sure.

The Apostles—Jesus' Mouthpieces

It has been claimed that the doctrines of Christianity can be better gleaned from the writings of the Apostles than from the sayings of Jesus, as reported in the Gospels. There is considerable truth in this claim, and the reason is manifest; namely, Jesus' words were addressed mainly to the multitudes, and when he addressed the disciples he could not discuss even with them deep, spiritual truths, because they had not been begotten of the Holy Spirit, and therefore could not understand spiritual things. Jesus himself declared, “I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now.”

On one occasion our Lord's words were so deep, so highly figurative, that many of his followers left him, saying, "This is a hard (difficult) saying, who can understand it?"—John 6:60. The saying was, "Unless ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you." God's consecrated and spirit-enlightened people can understand that statement, but none others can even yet understand it. St. Paul explains the reason why, saying, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."—1 Corinthians 2:14.

"After Ye Were Illuminated"

St. Paul gives the key to the situation in one of his epistles, saying, "After that ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions."—Hebrews 10:32. The illumination received was the begetting of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, the Apostles at Pentecost received an illumination of the mind which enabled them to understand the things of God, yea, the deep things of God; for He hath given unto us His Spirit, "that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God."—1 Corinthians 2:12.

Jesus had this same thought in mind when he declared that there were certain things his disciples could not understand at that time, but would know afterwards, because he would send the Holy Spirit, which would bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever he had spoken; and would show them things to come.—John 14:26; 16:13. This was not only true with the Apostles, but has been true with respect to all the members of the body of Christ throughout this age. Each one presenting his body a living sacrifice has been accepted by the great Advocate, and presented as a part of his own offering; and then the offerer has been begotten of the Holy Spirit to be a new creature in Christ.

It is to these new creatures that the statement is made, "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." It is to these the Bible has promised, "He will show you things to come." It is these that are to be guided into all truth as it shall become due. It is for these that the Word of God is a storehouse, from which "things both new and old" are to be produced under the Spirit's guidance, as they become "meat in due season" to the "household of faith."

Babes in Christ and Men

Along the same line we note the fact that even the spirit-begotten new creatures must make progress in their appreciation of spiritual things. The Apostle urges such that "as newborn babes they should desire the sincere milk of the Word that they might grow thereby." Growth is necessary if they would attain joint-heirship in the kingdom; hence the Apostle again urges that each seek not to continue a babe, but to become a man, and to use the "strong meat" of divine truth. By becoming a man he is sanctified, developed as a new creature and filled with the Spirit, and "thoroughly furnished unto all good work," by knowledge of the Word of God.—2 Timothy 3:17.

It must have been a difficult matter for our Lord, in teaching, to follow the rule which he gave to his disciples, namely, to “be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.” Appreciating the divine plan fully, completely, he must frequently have had a yearning desire to tell his beloved followers more of the mysteries and deep things of the divine plan than they were able to appreciate.

“Spirit and Life” Words

In the text: “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life,” was another endeavor to impress his dear disciples with the thought that they should not take his words too literally, but should look for the deeper meaning. Furthermore, they were to remember that they could not expect to get that deep meaning until after the Master’s ascension; as he said, “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Holy Spirit will not come unto you; but if I go away I will send him unto you,” “for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”—John 16:7; 7:39.

Jesus was not glorified because his glorification would not take place until his resurrection and in a fuller sense until his ascension to the Most Holy on High, there to appear in the presence of God on our behalf—to make application of the merit of his sacrifice for those who have consecrated to walk in his steps.

It was, therefore, after they had been illuminated that the Apostle and others of the church understood the meaning of this text, that the words of Jesus were spiritual and could be understood only by those possessing the spiritual key, the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

The Master’s words were “words of life” in the sense that they conveyed the great message of the terms upon which we may have everlasting life and become his joint-heirs. Although the Apostles explain the philosophy of the divine plan in great detail, and mention more than did Jesus, yet in his sayings we find the very essence or kernel of the Gospel. Nowhere are the terms of discipleship more carefully laid down than in Jesus’ words, because the disciples could understand what would be the meaning of the figures of self-denial, cross-bearing, and walking in his steps, even if they could not understand the philosophy of justification, sanctification, election, and divine foreknowledge.

From Jesus’ words more clearly than from any other words we get the thought of the “water of life,” and how it is now in his followers a “spring” of truth, grace, and everlasting life. Nowhere else do we more clearly get the general statement that the Father hath life in himself, and hath granted unto the Son life in himself, and that he might share this life with his disciples—with whomsoever he would. Thus, as St. Paul says, the words of this salvation in which we rejoice began to be spoken by our Lord. It is he also that declared that he brought life and immortality to light, thus distinguishing between the general reward of everlasting life to be given to the world, and the special reward to be granted to the church.—Hebrews 2:3; 2 Timothy 1:10.

R 5087 (1912)

Parables from Matthew's Gospel

The House Built upon a Rock

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

—Matthew 7:24-29.

Jesus sought to impress upon his hearers that it was not sufficient for them to hear that a kingdom of God was coming, and that it would bring certain blessings to the world. It was not sufficient that they should know that a class was being called out of the world to be Messiah's joint-heirs in that kingdom. Action would be necessary on their part if they would attain to this high privilege which God had granted to them. “Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works,” wrote St. James. Not that we are to attain the kingdom by our works; for imperfect through the fall, we are unable to do perfect works, acceptable to God. It will be our faith in God and in the Lord Jesus that will bring us the victory, if we gain it; but the victory will be accounted only to those who shall, to the best of their ability, work out their salvation with fear and trembling. God will work in such, and through Christ bring them off conquerors, yea, more than conquerors.

Jesus gave an illustration, or parable, declaring that those who heard his message and rendered obedience thereto would be like a wise man, who built his house upon the rock, where the descending rains would not wash away the foundation from underneath, nor in any wise harm it. The storms of life are sure to come; and the great crisis of life, death, is sure to come. Amidst those trials there will be calmness, confidence, and security for such as have accepted the Lord's arrangement and have been walking to the best of their ability in the footsteps of Jesus. To them death will be merely a transition from the earthly state to the heavenly, by the power of the first resurrection—“changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” for “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”—1 Corinthians 15:50-52. Their faith and confidence, built upon God's promises, can never fail them. For such there is laid up a crown of life, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give them at that day.—2 Timothy 4:8.

On the other hand, Jesus intimates that many who heard his words and expressed great appreciation of them, would fail to take the proper steps to attain the glorious privileges which he presented. They would allow custom, habit, love of pleasure, love of ease, the spirit of the world, to hinder them, either from making the proper, full devotion of themselves to God, or from carrying out that purpose. Such indeed might to some extent encourage themselves with hopes of the kingdom which would never be realized, because they never took the proper steps. They did not build their faith upon the proper foundation. Perhaps some of them built upon the Law, and thought that they could commend themselves to God by their own

endeavors, without the imputation of the merit of Christ. Such would be greatly mistaken. His death is our redemption price, and his appearance in glory as our Advocate is to make good for our unintentional shortcomings.

With all such, the day of stress and trial will surely come; and their faith structure, being without a proper foundation, will give way. They will suffer the loss of all their hopes. This, however, does not signify, as many of us once supposed, that they will go to eternal torment. Evidently nearly all Christian people, misled by the creeds of the Dark Ages, read into the Word of God many things which it does not at all contain.

Compare St. Paul's Parable

The Apostle Paul used a similar illustration, saying, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid—Jesus Christ." "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon," for the day that cometh shall try every man's work of what sort it is. Those building with gold, silver, and precious stones of divine truth, developing their faith and character in harmony with the divine requirements and arrangements, will suffer no loss in the great trial day at the end of this age. However, others who build with the wood, hay, and stubble of human tradition and self-complacency, will find that their entire faith structure will be consumed; for the fire of that day shall try every man's work of what sort it is.—1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

Nevertheless, the Apostle tells us that even those who will suffer the loss of their faith structure, if they have built upon Christ, will themselves be saved, though as by fire. They will be what is sometimes termed a tribulation class, described in Revelation 7:14-17. "These are they that have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him in his temple day and night." On these God has various blessings to bestow. These will be in proportion to their obedience and loyalty and faith.

The class that the Apostle mentions as building with gold, silver, and precious stones, will be a little flock, a royal priesthood, who will sit in the throne, wearing the crowns, and be joint-heirs with Jesus in the kingdom. The class building upon the rock without proper materials, yet saved so as by fire, will be the great company class, the antitype of the Levites, who instead of being in the throne will, before the throne, serve those in the throne; instead of wearing crowns, they will be granted palm branches, indicating a victory of an inferior kind. The priestly class will be the antitypical temple of God; the Levite class, the great company, will serve God in and through that temple class.

Nor is this all the salvation which God has purposed. These two classes include merely the spirit-begotten ones of this Gospel age. The ancient worthies are to constitute another class of saved ones—saved to an earthly perfection, to be princes in all the earth, glorious representatives of the invisible, spiritual, heavenly kingdom class. Then finally will come the blessing of all the families of the earth who shall prove willing and obedient during the thousand years of the kingdom reign, and who will be gradually lifted up, up out of sin and

degradation, by resurrection power, back to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed through the precious blood of Jesus. On the other hand, all intelligent, willful opponents of God and righteousness, after a certain period of opportunity, will be destroyed in the second death—whether they belong to the class that is now on trial, a class of spirit-begotten ones, or to the class which will be on trial during the period of Messiah’s reign. “All the wicked will God destroy.”

The People Were Astonished

No wonder the people were astonished at such doctrines as Jesus gave forth, even though they but imperfectly understood these, for none could perfectly understand except through the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, which was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified—John 7:39. The teachings of Jesus had a positiveness quite different from the various speculations and wonderings of the Scribes. So it is always with the truth. Wherever there is confusion and mysticism, we may be sure there is error and ignorance. Hence the necessity that all who preach Christ should have the anointing, or ordination, to preach, which God alone gives through the begetting of the Holy Spirit.

Our Golden Text

“What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?”—Micah 6:8. At first one might be inclined to say, Why, that is different! There is nothing in this text of Scripture to say that in order to be an heir of the kingdom one must take up his cross, deny himself, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus, self-sacrificingly!

This is true; but we should notice that the one is a requirement and the other a privilege. God does not require sacrifice. What he requires is loyalty and obedience, but not sacrifice. Whatever is sacrificial is so much more than the divine law requires. Thus in the case of Jesus, the divine law could not require him to do more than to obey it—to love God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself. We ask, could not all this have been done by Jesus without the laying down of his life at all? Surely! Hence the Scriptures represent that when Jesus presented himself at Jordan, he consecrated all that he had to do the Father’s will, even unto death—not merely to keep the law. He delighted to do the Father’s will, even beyond what the Father demanded in the law.—Hebrews 10:5-7. So must it be with all who would be acceptable footstep followers of Jesus and attain with him glory, honor, and immortality on the heavenly plane.

The Prophet Micah addressed the Jews, and his message was from the standpoint of the law. He was encouraging the Jews to do their best to fulfill its requirements. Nevertheless, we know that no Jew ever fulfilled the law except Jesus, because all except him were fallen, imperfect. He alone was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.”

During the Millennial Kingdom of Messiah, this same law of God, given to the Jews through Moses, will be given to the whole world of mankind through Messiah. The requirements will be

to do justly, to love kindness, to walk humbly with God. The reason why Messiah's ministrations of this law will be a success, while Moses' ministrations of it was a failure, so far as bringing any to perfection was concerned, is that Messiah's Kingdom will be fully prepared and authorized to forgive sinners and to help them up out of their imperfection—back to the image and likeness of God as it was originally represented in Father Adam.

The privilege and right to thus forgive sins and to thus lift the sinner out of degradation belong to Messiah, by virtue of his sacrifice for sins which he finished at Calvary. The right of life which he there laid down without forfeiting, he will be prepared to give to mankind during the Millennium; and only the willful rejecters will perish in the second death. R 5407 (1914)

New Cloth on Old Garments – New Wine in Old Bottles

“No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.”—Matthew 9:16, 17; Mark 2:21, 22.

Our Lord's work was not like that of John the Baptist—was not a work of reformation, seeking to patch up the Jewish system and arrangement. John had been commissioned to do that if he could, and had failed, and the work which Jesus was doing was a new work altogether; he was not attempting to patch and reform Judaism with his doctrines, but was making an entirely new institution, gathering out a church which would not be a Jewish church nor a Reformed Jewish church, but a wholly different institution, a Christian church. This was the reason he was not attempting to discuss with the Pharisees the proprieties and improprieties of their methods, and to straighten them out. He would let alone the old garment, already worn out and ready to be laid aside; he would provide as a new garment, not the impossible righteousness required by the law, but an imputed righteousness according to faith, based upon the merits of his own sacrifice for sins.

Had he attempted to combine Christianity with Judaism the result would have been disastrous to both, for they are opposites—the one demanding absoluteness of righteousness, which was impossible to sinners; the other demanding that the impossibility of personal righteousness should be acknowledged, and that faith should be the only condition of forgiveness and mercy.

The same lesson was illustrated by the custom of that time in the use of the skins of animals as instead of the barrels and bottles of today—indeed; such skins are used to the present time in various parts of the world, and called bottles. New wine put into such skins in fermenting would stretch them to almost bursting point, and such skins could never be used again for new wine, because the elasticity having gone out of them, the new wine in fermenting would surely burst them. The lesson which our Lord taught here is that Judaism having had its day, had accomplished its purpose; and that it was not the divine intention that it should be reformed, as his hearers expected. The system had become effete, and to have attempted to put into

Judaism the new doctrines, the new wine of the Gospel, would have meant that not only the Jewish nation would have been convulsed and wrecked by the spirit of the new teachings, but also that the doctrines themselves would have gone down with the wreck of the nation. Consequently it was the divine plan that a new Israel should be started, “a holy nation, a peculiar people,” and that it should be the receptacle of the new grace and truth then due.

Similarly now in the end of the Gospel age we perceive the impossibility of putting the new wine which the Master is now providing into the old wineskins of sectarianism, and all sectarians realize this too—they realize that to receive what is now being presented as present truth into their denominations would unquestionably mean the utter wreck of the denomination. God is therefore now, as in the end of the Jewish age, calling out of the whole system such as are Israelites indeed, that they may receive at His hands the wine (doctrine) of the new dispensation just at hand. As for the old institutions, they have served a purpose, partly good and partly bad. Their work, so far as the divine plan is concerned, is at an end. “The voice of the Bridegroom and of the bride shall no more be heard” in Babylon at all.— Revelation 18:23. Babylon will not permit them to be heard. The voice, the teaching of present truth, is consequently outside her walls; and whoever has an ear for the truth, whoever desires to be filled with present truth, must come outside of sectarianism before he can thus be filled and blessed and used as a vessel in bearing the blessing to others. —Revelation 18:4, 23.

R 2592 (1900)

Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

“Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” —Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.

This is another of the kingdom parables and one of the few which the Master particularly explained, and in harmony with which all the other parables are to be interpreted. Again it is the embryo kingdom that is pictured, and not the kingdom in glory; in other words, this parable also relates to this Gospel age, and the work of selecting the church. It therefore pictures the entire age from start to finish.

“The Field Is the World”

Our Lord’s personal ministry was to the Jews only, and likewise his disciples labored only with the Jews for the fixed period of time—until the end of “the seventy weeks” of the promise of divine favor to that nation. Those symbolic weeks ended three and a half years after Jesus’ crucifixion. Then the door was thrown open to the Gentiles also, Cornelius being the first convert.—Acts 10.

This parable also shows us the very commencement of the Lord’s call for his bride from amongst all nations and not from the Jews alone; although in the divine plan it was necessary that they should have the first opportunity. So St. Paul declares, saying to the Jews, “It was necessary that the Gospel should be preached first unto you, but seeing ye reject it...lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”—Acts 13:46. The entire world constituted the “field” for the sowing of “the good seed,” and the “good seed” is not any and every kind of message, but is strictly defined, “the Gospel of the Kingdom.”

Jesus and the apostles sowed this “good seed,” and all his true followers since have been authorized to continue the work in his name, and have more or less done so. However the adversary, Satan, as pointed out here in the parable, brought in false doctrines, false teachings, a different kind of seed from the kingdom “seed,” and sowed this everywhere over the wheat field. The result is that today the “tares” are so plentiful, and so conspicuous that they think they are the “wheat,” and the world in general so considers them.

The wheat class is considered “a peculiar people.” Their hopes and ambitions in life are toward bearing good fruit, and “showing forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness.” Of their good fruits the Apostle mentions meekness and humility, and these tend to bow their heads, while the “tares” stand proudly up, erect in the display of their “form of godliness,” which however lacks the power.—1 Peter 2:9; Titus 2:14.

“Let Both Grow Together”

The Lord knew all the time what Satan would do in the way of perverting the truth through false doctrines, which would tend to make void and belittle the Gospel of the kingdom and the children of the kingdom; but he allowed the matter to go on, fully assured that he would have in the end the crop which he desired, and very content to allow a great lesson to be taught by the presence of the “tares” and the ultimate treatment accorded the “wheat.”

The Lord could have hindered the adversary from bringing in the false doctrines in the early centuries, or he could have separated centuries ago between the wheat and tare classes, but this was not according to his intention, as the parable shows. He purposed to “let both grow together until the harvest.” So it has been true that Christians and imitation Christians have lived side by side in the same city, in the same house, and often-times in the same family—the one the result of the true Gospel message of the kingdom, leading to a full consecration and begetting of the Spirit and to the entrance upon a new life; the other with merely “a form of godliness,” intermixed with worldly wisdom, earthly ambition, and selfish desires.

However, the tares are not to grow on forever. Just as surely as there was a beginning of this age, there will be an ending. As surely as there was a sowing time for the good seed, there will be a reaping time, a harvest time. In the Common Version the words, “The harvest is the end of the world,” have been seriously misunderstood. It does not mean the end of time, nor the end of the earth—its destruction—nor the end of divine favor. It merely means the end of the present age—the close of the present dispensation. This age will close when it has accomplished its intended work—when the full number of God’s elect shall have been found faithful and ready for the “garner.”

“In the Time of the Harvest”

This expression signifies that the harvest of this age will not be an instantaneous work, but a gradual one, requiring time. There is good reason for believing that the harvest of this age is a period of forty years, as the harvest of the Jewish age was of that length. In this time of the harvest two things will be accomplished: (1) The tares will be gathered into bundles, ready for the burning—destruction. (2) The wheat, at the same time, will be gathered into the garner—the heavenly garner. This gathering into the heavenly garner is elsewhere represented as being the change from earthly to heavenly conditions which will be accomplished for the bride class in the end of the harvest, by the first resurrection. These will “all die like men.” At the appointed time their resurrection change will take place and be invisible to men—“sown in weakness, raised in power; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown an animal body, raised a spirit body.” “They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”—1 Corinthians 15:42-44; Revelation 20:6.

Burning of the Tares

“They shall gather out of his kingdom all things which offend, and them which do iniquity; ...there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Let us remember that these tares are not all the world of mankind, but merely the portion of them associated with the kingdom class—that portion which now verily believe that they are God’s people, as the Pharisees considered themselves in the harvest of the Jewish age. There will be two classes amongst these tares; one class, “doers of iniquity (inequity, unrighteousness);” the other class, those that have caused others to stumble. Doubtless this will include many teachers and preachers, and many doers of wonderful works.

We must not forget that we are considering a parable, and that the “tares” are symbolical, and likewise the “furnace” and the “fire.” The interpretation is that, in the end of this age, the harvest time, there will be a great “time of trouble” for all nations, society, governments, financial institutions, etc. The wheat class will be saved from that “time of trouble” by the resurrection change. However, the tares will not be saved from it; they will be cast into the trouble and have their portion with the hypocrites.

That trouble will not last forever. Many Scriptures seem to show that it will be terrific but of very short duration. It will be on the earth, and not in some far-off place. When the fire of that great day of anarchy and trouble shall cease to burn, there will be no more tares, there will be no more people having mere forms of godliness and pretensions for the kingdom, begotten of error. All humanity will be greatly humbled and, according to the Scriptures, ready and anxious for Messiah’s Kingdom, which will then be established. It will be “the desire of all nations.”—Haggai 2:7. Those formerly tares, as well as the remainder of the groaning creation, will welcome it and its blessings. In that kingdom the righteous, the garnered, glorified wheat class “shall shine forth as the sun” for the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Matthew 13:43; Galatians 3:29. R 5048 (1912)

Parable of the Treasure Hid in the Field

(1 of 3)

“Again the Kingdom of God is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.”—Matthew 13:44.

Man had sinned, had been sentenced to death, and had gone into death. There could be, therefore, no hope for man except as love and mercy might provide a substitute for father Adam. A substitute, as we have seen, must be of the same nature as Adam, human nature; the substitute must be equally free from sin, free from the curse, free from wrath; similarly holy, similarly harmless, similarly separate from sin and sinners, similarly approved of God, as was Adam before his transgression.

We have seen that our Lord Jesus was made flesh—(not sinful flesh) but holy, harmless, separate from sinners. We have seen that the man Christ Jesus was thus a perfect man, the counterpart of the first man, Adam, and thus we see that he was all ready to be our Redeemer, our ransom, to give his life and all human rights for the purchase, the redemption, of Adam and the race of Adam, which lost life and all human rights in him. We have seen that our Lord, “the man Christ Jesus,” did consecrate, did sacrifice, did give up on man’s behalf all that he had. This he clearly set forth in his teaching on this subject. He represented himself as the man who found a treasure hidden in a field, and who went and sold all that he had, and bought that field.—Matthew 13:44. The field represents the world of mankind, as well as the earth itself.—Ephesians 1:14. In this world of mankind our Lord saw a treasure—prophetically he saw the result of the redemptive work, the deliverance of many from the bondage of corruption into the full liberty of sons of God (the church in this age, and the worthy of the world in the age to

come). It was in view of this treasure that the field was bought. Speaking of the result of the ransom, and of the work of redemption, as it shall finally be accomplished by the close of the Millennial Age, the Prophet speaking of our Lord says, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”—Isaiah 53:11. Our Lord was fully satisfied to give his life, and all he then had, to purchase the world. E 440, 441

“Treasure Hid in the Field”

(2 of 3)

This is not one of the parables which Jesus expounded. His people, therefore, are left to exercise their judgment of its meaning, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the light shed upon it by other Scriptures. Indeed, there might be more than one application of it correct. For instance we might apply the parable to our Lord Jesus and say that he bought the whole world at the cost of all he had, and that he purchased the world because of the “treasure” which it contained. That treasure might consist of a variety of treasures of different values—for instance, the church, the bride class, the Lord’s special “treasure,” and such of the world as will ultimately receive and be blessed by the Messianic Kingdom.

Our preference of thought is that the Great Teacher referred not to himself at all, but to those whom he instructed. By virtue of his own covenant of sacrifice the kingdom was already promised to him, and he in turn, in the Father’s name, was inviting those who had the ears to hear, and hearts to appreciate, to become members of his bride class—members of his kingdom class.

He recommends that these should view the kingdom after the illustration of this parable. Suppose in their journeying they saw a field for sale at a certain price, and suppose, upon examination of it, they found it to contain a great treasure. The treasure might consist of very excellent soil, especially suited to their purpose, or it might consist of a valuable vein of precious metal, or it might consist of money buried long centuries ago and forgotten, and not belonging to the owner of the field more than to others who might find it. In such a case, the parable suggests, anyone of ordinary intelligence would be willing to invest everything that he possessed to acquire the title.

So the Master declared to those who heard him then, and to us who receive his words now, that he has information to give respecting a great treasure, a priceless treasure, which can be obtained, but only by the expenditure of great energy and the investment of everything of value. The great treasure is the share in the Messianic Kingdom—that by accepting the terms of discipleship we may become not only sons of God but, if children, then heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord to his heavenly inheritance. This inheritance was the same as was promised to the seed of Abraham and we acquired an interest or share in it, not by being the actual seed of Abraham and the actual heirs to the kingdom, but by becoming Messiah’s bride and joint-heir.

When we think how much time and energy are put forth, and how much money and influence are expended to obtain some little, petty earthly honor of worldly renown and glory, and when we reflect that these at most will last but a few years and be unsatisfactory at best, then we can appreciate the better the glory, honor, and immortality which God has in reservation for the “called and chosen and faithful,” the bride, the Lamb’s wife. R 5047 (1912)

“Treasure Hid In The Field”

(3 of 3)

“Sold All That He Had and Bought”

Two of our Lord’s parables are very assistful to a proper understanding of the difference between the Ransom-Price and the Sin-Offering. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls, who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”—Matthew 13:44-46. The kingdom of heaven, the Millennial Kingdom, its glory and honor and its privileges in connection with the world’s restitution, constitute the great prize peculiar to this Gospel age. This prize never before was possible of attainment, and opportunity to attain it will end with this age, when it will be established in power and great glory at the second coming of our Lord—at which time “we shall appear with him in glory.”—Colossians 3:4. This prize was first presented to our Lord Jesus, as we read, “Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”—Hebrews 12:2. This is the same prize or high calling which has since been set before us.

The two parables under consideration illustrate the process by which this kingdom is obtainable. Our Lord left the glory of the Father and humbled himself to become “the man Christ Jesus.” However, this humbling was no part of the ransom nor of the sin-offering. It was a preparatory work. A perfect man had sinned and had involved the entire race in his death condemnation, and only a perfect man could pay the price for one or any number or all of the sinners. When our Lord reached the age of thirty years, the age of manhood according to the Law, he was ready to be put on trial for his own life, that by loyalty under tests he might prove his worthiness of everlasting life on the human plane. Only such a tested, proven, perfect man could be the world’s ransom-price.

Our Lord’s keeping of the divine law was not the ransom-price of the sinners. It merely demonstrated that our Lord could be an acceptable ransom-price for all. The giving of his life at thirty years in consecration was finished at Calvary. By that consecration, by the things which he suffered, by the laying down of his life, he laid down the world’s ransom-price. It mattered not that the testing and his personal loyalty and his consecration of himself unto death were simultaneous. It was just as proper that it should be so as it was that he should have been tried and tested first and should subsequently have surrendered his life willingly as man’s ransom-price.

This feature of the work—the laying down of his life—is illustrated in the parables under consideration by the statement, “Sold all that he had.” As in the parable the selling of all that the merchant had did not purchase the field or the pearl, but merely secured the price which was sufficient afterward for its purchase. So our Lord’s surrender of his life and all of its rights and interests sacrificially in the world’s behalf did not purchase the world—did not pay the price—but merely secured the ransom-price for the sins of the world, to be applied afterwards as he may please.

As in the parable the price was afterward used in the purchase of the treasure, so in the reality our Lord’s payment of the price of justice corresponds to the buying of the treasure, the buying of the pearl. In other words, the ransom-price of the world was secured by our Lord by the sacrifice of his human life, but the use of that price for the purchase of the treasure was a later and a totally different transaction. It was after our Lord had risen from the dead and sojourned with his apostles forty days and had ascended up on high that he “bought us with his own precious blood.” “He appeared in the presence of God for us” and there applied on our behalf the merit or ransom-price which previously cost him his life. —Hebrews 9:24.

Those whose eyes of understanding are open to a discernment of “the mystery of God” will readily see the further application of the parable to us, the Lord’s followers and members. By the grace of God our Lord paid the price and bought us. He did not buy the world, but the church. He “loved us and bought us with his own precious blood.” “Ye were redeemed (bought) not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ.”—1 Peter 1:18, 19. However, this application of the ransom-price to us is provisional, conditional. To be of the class included in this purchase requires that we shall not only flee from sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto justification, but that additionally we must have our Lord’s character-likeness and must, like him, sell all that we have, that we might share with him in his great work and thus pass his merit on for the purchase of the world—for the cancellation of the sins of the whole world, at the close of this age.

Whoever has not the Spirit of Christ in this sacrificing is none of his. Whoever, after consecrating his life, draws back does so unto perdition, destruction.—Hebrews 10:39. Whoever seeks to preserve his life—the restitution life imputed to him through the merit of Christ—will lose his eternal life.—Mark 8:35. (This principle is applicable to the church only, during this age. The rule will be the reverse for the world during the Millennium. Whereas we receive of Christ restitution rights to sacrifice them as his members and to gain the new nature with him, the world will get restitution rights to keep them everlastingly and never to sacrifice them.)

In the transaction, be it noted, the merit, the value, all proceeded from the one man—the man Christ Jesus. No more was needed. No more was demanded by Justice for the sins of the whole world. So to speak, our Lord Jesus loaned to the “elect” the merit of his righteousness, imputing it to us by faith as a wedding garment. Thereby he qualifies us as his members and in his name to share in his sacrificial work in order that we may be permitted to share with him in his Millennial Kingdom glory and its great uplifting work for the world of mankind.

It is the merit of Jesus which now temporarily is loaned in justification by faith to the church and which must be sacrificed again by us as his “members”—that is to constitute eventually the ransom-price of the whole world of mankind, who are to be blessed during the Millennium.

The condition upon which we may share the Millennial Kingdom with our Lord is that we shall walk in his steps; that we shall suffer with him; that we shall drink of his cup; be partakers of the blood of the New Covenant, which, at the end of this age, will be sealed for Israel and the world. Thus we shall be sharers in the sufferings of Christ, by immersion into his death, in order that, in due time, we may share also in “his resurrection.”

Who cannot see the force of these parables? Who cannot note that our dear Redeemer counted well the cost, then laid down his life—sold all that he had? Who does not remember that he calls upon us to sit down and count the cost of being his disciples? The field will be bought. The precious pearl will be secured by our Lord, in harmony with the Father’s arrangement. More than this, the faithful elect church will secure a share therein as members of his glorified body. How important, then, that we count the cost in advance and that we count not our lives dear unto us, that we may win the prize, the pearl, the treasure!

R 4535 (1909)

The Parable of a Pearl of Great Value

“Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”—Matthew 13:45, 46.

In the days of our Savior, pearls were represented amongst the most precious and most desirable of jewels, and the larger and more nearly perfect the pearl the greater its value. The Great Teacher used this familiar matter as the basis for a lesson on the value of the kingdom. The merchant of the parable found a pearl so superior in every respect to all other pearls that he considered it cheap to give everything that he possessed to become the owner of that pearl.

This, said the Master, illustrates the value of the kingdom, with its glory, honor, and immortality, which I am inviting an elect, saintly little flock to share with me. Those who prize it properly will show their appreciation by the amount they will be willing and glad to pay for it. Whether a man be wealthy or poor, learned or ignorant, influential or otherwise, the cost of this kingdom pearl of great value will be—his all. It cannot be had for less.

The wealthiest or most talented person in the world could not obtain a share in that kingdom if he kept back one single atom of his possessions; the price of the kingdom is self-sacrifice, even unto death, and nothing less will secure it. Nor would any sacrifice that we could make secure a share in this kingdom for us, except as our sacrifice would first be made acceptable in God’s sight through the precious merit of our Redeemer’s sacrifice, which he finished at Calvary.

R 5048 (1912)

The Parable of a Fish Net

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”—Matthew 13:47-50.

We are not to think of the kingdom as like a net, but to understand that the embryo kingdom resembles a fishing experience with a net, in which were gathered all kinds of fish, which were brought to shore and sorted. This is a parable of the embryo kingdom because it relates to a work done in this age, in connection with the finding of the “little flock” who will constitute the kingdom in glory. The Lord during this age has not been fishing for all kinds of fish; he has not been seeking for all kinds of people. He has been calling, drawing especially, and dealing with only the elect, only the saintly.

Incidentally, however, a variety of other kinds of fish have gotten into the Gospel net, some from worldly ambitions, some because religious systems are a good matrimonial field, others because of social privileges and standing, others because they desire to breathe a moral atmosphere, others because they would use religion as a cloak for business enterprises, etc. The suitable fish that the Lord is seeking, which alone will constitute the kingdom class, are those who hear his message with joy and count the cost and appreciate the situation and desire to be “bond servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.” They are willing to suffer with him now that they may be glorified together with him in his kingdom.

The parable tells us that “when the net was full it was drawn ashore” and the fish sorted. This evidently signifies that there will come a time in the end of this age when the Lord will have gathered a sufficient number of saintly ones to serve his purpose—to complete the number foreordained by the Father to be members of the elect church in glory. Then the fishing will cease. Who can say that the opportunity for entering the “net” as one of the true “fish” of the kind the Lord is seeking may not be almost at an end? Who can say that the Gospel net, with its full assortment of churchianity of every style, will not soon be drawn ashore that the suitable, the elect, may be gathered into the kingdom?

The unsuitable “fish” of this parable correspond with the “tares” of the parable (of the wheat and tares) already considered. The “furnace of fire” will be the same “time of trouble” which will come upon the whole world of mankind very shortly. The unsuitable fish in the net are church members—the nonprofessing world is not represented in the parable at all.

Jesus asked his disciples if they understood the parable. They answered yes, and he told them to consider his parables as a householder would consider his reserve of food supplies, from which from time to time truths “both new and old” would be brought.

Our text emphasizes this study. (“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Matthew 6:33). If the kingdom is the pearl, and the treasure, which the Master indicated—if we believe his testimony, then by all means let us show our faith, not merely by professions, but in every act and word. Let us seek the kingdom as the pre-eminent matter of our lives, in comparison with which all other things are inferior, and as St. Paul declared, “Not worthy to be compared.” If seeking the kingdom seems to hinder some of our earthly prospects, so much the better. The Master said it must cost us our all. Our earthly considerations we have left in his hands. Let him apportion our earthly blessings according to his wisdom of what will be most helpful to us in making our “calling and election sure” to a place in the kingdom. R 5048 (1912)

Parable of One’s Body Members Cast Off

“Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.”—Matthew 18:7-9.

Here (in the above quotation) the Master brought in a saying that has perplexed many. Those who fail to remember that Jesus spake to the people in parables, and never without a parable, will be liable to stumble over these words of his. His teaching is this: If you have anything in your make-up dear to you as a right hand or a foot or an eye, that is likely to cause you to stumble and fail to enter the kingdom, you would better cut off that tendency, no matter what it costs, no matter how precious, no matter how great a hold it may have upon the very tendrils of your life. Would it not be better to enter into life than to go into Gehenna fire, that is, destruction, the second death? Surely this is true. Having put our hands to the plow, having even become followers of Jesus, we must either go on and be accepted as conquerors, or must perish.

There will, of course, be none in the kingdom with but one eye, but the illustration is the same. If it should cost us the cutting off of some of our members, it would surely pay us to gain the eternal life in glory, even thus maimed, rather than to take the consequences of the second death, utter extinction. The lesson is that having begun as followers of Christ, and entered upon the contract and received a part of the reward, the Holy Spirit, the divine favor, we cannot back out of the contract; we must go on to everlasting life or to everlasting death.

R 5130:6 (1912)

Parable of the Lost Sheep (According to Matthew)

“For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and

goeth and seeketh that which is gone astray? If so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.”
—Matthew 18:11-13.

There are various diversions between this account of a hundred sheep and the other account of Luke 15:3-7. The one was apparently made to the Scribes and Pharisees (Luke’s); the other narrative on the contrary was made to the disciples (Chapter 18:1). We have elsewhere discussed the parable addressed to the Pharisees, showing that the hundred sheep properly represented the entire family of God, and that the one sheep that went astray represented properly enough humanity, which fell from divine likeness and favor through Adam’s disobedience.

The parable shows the Lord’s love and mercy in pursuing after the lost sheep, humanity, and intimates its recovery in the end—not that all will be universally and everlastingly saved, but that all will be brought to conditions of salvation, to a clear knowledge of the truth and to a full opportunity for accepting the same, so that the rejection will be a just cause for their sharing the second death.

This statement respecting the hundred sheep is applied in a totally different manner, as the context shows. Here it refers to all of the Lord’s “little ones,” all who become his followers, his sheep. Should one of them be stumbled, should one of them stray, the Lord in his providence will not abandon him, but will purify him if possibly he may be recovered. All who are in harmony with the Lord should have this same thought and interest in one another that they would be willing to spend and be spent in the recovery of a brother from the snare of the adversary. Verse 14 sets the matter forth very clearly, saying, “Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” Hence, as the Apostle explains, he that recovereth a sinner from the error of his ways, saves a soul from death and hides a multitude of sins.—James 5:20. This is not referring to the souls of the world in general, which are still under the sentence of death, but it is referring to the souls of believers, who through faith have been justified and consecrated to the Lord. If they shall fall way, shall stumble by any means, all the faithful are to be energetic in their endeavors to recover such, to bring them back into full accord with the Lord.

Its assurance further is that it is not the will of the Father that they should perish, and hence we may rely upon it that any and every reasonable and proper thing in their interests will be done rather than that they should be abandoned. This same spirit at work in the household of faith amongst the “little ones” would lead them, not to strive as to which of them would be greatest, but rather lead them to mutual helpfulness, that each and all might gain the prize of the high calling. It is in accordance with this thought that the Lord does not wish these to perish that he provides that those of his consecrated ones who do not follow voluntarily in the work of sacrifice shall not be abandoned, but shall be put through trying experiences, as represented in the “great company,” who will wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. It would, of course, have been better had they been so loving and loyal and zealous as to joyfully sacrifice earthly interests to gain the heavenly, but even though they do

not thus do all in their power to fulfill their covenant the Lord is merciful toward them and unwilling that any should perish. He will see to it that they are brought through such experiences as will eventually test and prove them, and if they are faithful under the test, bring them off conquerors. R 3798 (1906)

Parable of the Lost Sheep
(According to Luke)

“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”—Luke 15:1-7.

Bible students should always seek to view the jewels of the Lord’s Word in the settings in which they have been placed. To neglect this is to lose a portion of the lesson intended. The Scribes and Pharisees held themselves aloof from the common people—the Scribes, because the masses were illiterate; and the Pharisees, under the claim that the people were sinners, cut off from relationship to God, and therefore not proper to be recognized by the holy of humanity, which they claimed to be.

Jesus, however, received the common people, even the Publicans, acknowledged sinners. His superior knowledge did not make him haughty, and his superior righteousness did not make him proud and unsympathetic. He has set his followers an example that they should walk in his steps. The more closely they follow him, the more pleasing they will be to the Father, and the more ready for a share in the kingdom for which we pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

Our lesson tells us how the Pharisees and the Scribes murmured against Jesus, charging against him as a sin that he received sinners and ate with them. Whatever did not harmonize with their standards they could only contest. Their difficulty in part was that they had too high an opinion of themselves. Their spirit in this matter was an evil one, begotten of the adversary. Hence Jesus sometimes spoke of them as being children of the devil, because his works they did, and his spirit they had. However, even this does not signify that the Pharisees were beyond hope of salvation. Did not Jesus address St. Peter on one occasion, saying, “Get thee behind me, Satan (adversary)?” He was an adversary, had the adverse spirit at the time; but, corrected in harmony with the Lord’s spirit, everything was changed.

So it is with us. “His servants ye are to whom ye render service.” “By their fruits shall ye know them,” said the Master. Applying his words to many who profess to be his disciples, we

are bound to suppose that either intentionally or ignorantly they are in opposition to the Master's Spirit and teachings—adversaries of his teachings.

Jesus, knowing the thoughts of the Pharisees, and perhaps noting their gestures and looks or hearing their words, answered them in a parable, saying, "What man of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it?" And finding it, he lays it upon his shoulder rejoicing, and tells the fact to his neighbors exultantly. This course of the shepherd, Jesus declared, illustrates the attitude of God and all the holy angels associated with him. They have a special feeling of interest in those who have strayed, and especially rejoice in the recovery of such. There is more rejoicing over the repentant sinner than over ninety and nine just persons needing no repentance.

Oh, how encouraging it is to us to know that this is the sentiment of heaven, and that the fall of man and our imperfections do not stand as a perpetual bar to recognition by the Lord, if we return to him! He is merciful, and will abundantly pardon, and will remove our sins from us as far as the East is from the West. This interest is in the repentant one or in the one who has not sinned beyond repentance. Any sheep, having been found by the Shepherd and then preferring the adversary, would no longer be interested to be the heavenly ones.

Many apply this parable inconsistently. They seem to think of the whole world of mankind as representing the flock of a hundred sheep, and the one straying as representing the sinners of earth, comparatively few. Surely this cannot be the true interpretation! Rather, as the Prophet has declared, "All we like sheep have gone astray."—Isaiah 53:6. "There is none righteous, no not one."—Romans 3:10.

Let us rather interpret the parable on a broader scale, in comportment with the facts and the Scriptures. Let us understand the one stray sheep to represent Adam and his family; and the ninety and nine just persons needing no repentance as representing the holy angels. To this view every feature of the parable inclines. The Good Shepherd left the heavenly flock and came to earth to find, to redeem, to recover, mankind, the lost sheep; and there is more rejoicing in heaven over human recoveries from sin and alienation from God than over the holy ones themselves, than over each other, who have never been alienated, never needed redemption.

The lesson to the Pharisees is plain. They had a different spirit from that of the holy ones. Theirs was an earthly view, a selfish one, a proud and haughty one, out of accord with the divine spirit, and not pleasing to God. Jesus would have all of his disciples copy God. "Be ye like unto your Father which is in heaven." "He is kind to the unthankful." "His mercy endureth forever"—to a full completeness.

His mercy sent His Son, the Under Shepherd, to be our Redeemer, and to help us back into His favor. His mercy will pursue the lost sheep until every member of Adam's race shall have been brought to a knowledge of the truth and to a full opportunity of returning to the fold of

God. To this end the Messianic Kingdom is to be established. To this end also is the present call for the church, to be a royal priesthood, that under the guidance of the great Deliverer, they may be colaborers with him in carrying the message of God's grace to all the members of Adam's family.

Oh, how different this view of our loving Creator from the one which was handed down to us from the Dark Ages! How different from the one which represented the Almighty as angry in a vicious sense!—as having prepared in advance a place for the eternal torture of the human family, except a few who would have the hearing ears and happen to hear the message in the present life. On the contrary, we find that God's loving provision is only beginning to be manifested, in his favor toward Christ and the church; and that ultimately the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth, until every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, to the glory of God.

In proportion as we become Godlike we have an interest in sinners—especially in those who through heredity or evil environment are more deeply steeped in sin, ignorance, and superstition. Having God's spirit, we are glad to do anything in our power to reach these sinners. Nevertheless, we are not to be wise above what is written. We are not to expect to find all the sheep. Rather, we are to prepare as many as the Lord our God shall call and draw to be associated with the great Chief Shepherd in the work which he shortly will institute, the work of seeking the lost sheep and finding it and restoring it—all the willing and obedient.

“The Son of man came to seek and to save (recover) that which was lost.” The race was lost, not merely a few, the church; and their recovery is to include all that was lost. This does not signify universalism, but will be accomplished in bringing every member of Adam's race to a full knowledge of God and to full opportunity of recovery from sin and death.—1 Timothy 2:3, 4
R 5426 (1914)

Parable of the Lost Coin

“Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”—Luke 15:8-10.

Jesus gave another parable of similar import, to illustrate the same great truth from another angle. It was the custom among Jewish women to wear on the forehead a fringe of coin bangles. These might be of gold or silver, and sometimes represented her dowry. The loss of one of these coins would represent more than its intrinsic value; for its absence marred the beauty of the bangles. The search for the coin would mean that, instead of its being abandoned as not worthy of consideration, it would be hunted for diligently until found. The female neighbors would learn of the loss, and also learn if it were found, and would rejoice with

her greatly. This is another illustration of joy in the presence of the angels of God over one repentant sinner.

The Value of a Man

Jesus said, “Are ye not of much more value than many sparrows?” In the present lesson he intimates that a man is of much more value than many coins and of much more value than many sheep. We all agree that it would be difficult to estimate too highly, too fully, the value of human life, especially if it were our own life or the life of someone dear to us. However, to what extent do we manifest this in our daily lives?

...Each Christian should ask himself, How much of God’s Spirit have I? How much of my time am I giving to helping my fellow-men out of their difficulties and trials back to God? How much am I sacrificing of my time and strength in going after the lost sheep? Harken to the Apostle, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked.” “He that doeth righteousness is righteous”—and not merely he that professes to be a follower of Jesus.

Nevertheless, we are not to forget that God is the one chiefly interested in this great work, and that he has sent forth His Son for its accomplishment. We are not to forget that not only we have an interest, but that divine interest and love are greater than ours, and that divine wisdom is superior; and our course should be to give strict heed to “him that speaketh from heaven,” to follow his course, his example.

This may mean that we shall to some extent be misunderstood by others. There are many theories for saving the world by social uplift, political uplift, moral uplift, vice-fighting, etc. Undoubtedly, the principle remains always true that there are but two great captains in the warfare between sin and righteousness, namely, Christ and Satan. It remains true also that whoever is fighting for the one is fighting against the other. It is for us to make sure, first of all, that we are on the Lord’s side, on the side of righteousness, truth, purity, and goodness. There is still a further step—to make sure that we are fighting as our Captain would wish us to fight; that we are laboring as he would wish us to labor; that we are spending ourselves as he would wish us to be spent.

“This is the will of God (concerning you), even your sanctification.” Thus our personal salvation comes first, in God’s order. Reconciled to God ourselves and consecrated to His service, we inquire, What is the next step? The answer comes, “Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.” At first we might be disposed to demur, to say, Lord, should we not rather go after the straying, after the lost sheep? The answer is given by the Lord, through the Apostle, that we are to “do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially unto the household of faith.”—Galatians 6:10. If, therefore, the household of faith demands all of our time when we have the opportunity, we may be doing nothing for the lost sheep, but only helping to perfect those whom the Lord has already found.

The circumstances of the Lord's providence alone can direct our course. When we see his purpose, his object, in this arrangement, all is clear. He is taking out of the world a peculiar people, to be joint-heirs with His Son in the kingdom; and they all need education along spiritual lines for their own development, and to fit and prepare them to be the royal priesthood—to be priests unto God—who by and by are to judge, to chasten, to uplift, to bless, all the world, in proportion as they shall prove willing and obedient. R 5427 (1914)

Parable of the King Forgiving His Servant's Debt

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven.

“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

“But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave ye all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.”—Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 17:3, 4.

St. Peter put a hypothetical question of how many times a brother might trespass and ask forgiveness and yet be forgiven—would seven times be the limit? The Master practically declared that there could be no limit that any brother confessing his fault and asking forgiveness must be forgiven, if it should recur four hundred and ninety times. There is no other position left; forgiveness is obligatory when asked for. We must not be too much afraid of the consequences of following the Master's direction; we must put the responsibility of the matter with him, assured that his wisdom has not misdirected us.

Then our Lord gave a parable, to illustrate this matter, in respect to the kingdom of heaven class—the church in the present embryotic condition. A certain king had a reckoning with his servants and squared up all accounts. Amongst the others, one owed him ten thousand talents.

His master commanded him to be sold and his wife, and all that he had, until the payment should be made. The servant fell down at his master's feet and besought him to have compassion on him and he would pay the debt. The master had compassion on him and discontinued prosecution on account of the debt.

"Owed Him a Hundred Pence"

The servant thus released went out and began to look up some of those who were indebted to him, and found a fellow-servant who owed him a hundred pence, a very insignificant sum in comparison with the one which he had owed the master. He took his fellow-servant by the throat, saying, "Pay me the hundred pence thou owest." His fellow-servant fell at his feet and besought mercy, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." However he would not delay and cast him into prison till the debt should be paid. The matter finally reached the ears of the master, who called him and said, "Thou wicked servant! I released thee from the penalty of thy debt because thou didst entreat me! Thou shouldst also have had mercy upon thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity upon thee." And he was angry, and delivered him to punishment till he should pay all that was due.

An Important Lesson Here

What is the lesson? It is that we should have compassion upon one another, even as we desire that God for Christ's sake should have compassion upon us. The lesson is well expressed in our text. ("Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."—Ephesians 4:32). We should be kind to one another, tender-hearted—even as God also in Christ forgave, and continues to forgive our trespasses day by day. The trespasses of others against us are trifling indeed in comparison to our obligations to the Lord. We should therefore be very willing to forgive all who ask us—"until seventy times seven." In thus exercising mercy we will be copying the divine character. The influence upon our hearts and lives will be ennobling. Our Lord Jesus is the express image of the Father's person, and we in copying the qualities of generosity and love become more Christ-like, and therefore more God-like.

So Also Did God Do unto You

Our Lord Jesus explains that his parable teaches the principle along which the heavenly Father deals with the members of the body of Christ, which is the church. If they are harsh and unsympathetic, if they hold their brethren to a strict account along lines of justice, then the heavenly Father will so deal with them, and will hold them to account for all their shortcomings. It would seem that if God's people would realize the force of this lesson, the practice of forgiving the brethren of their trespasses and shortcomings would very generously and very generally be brought into play, for who of us could afford to have the Heavenly Father exact of us a full penalty for every imperfection, and refuse to remit any of the same?

We show our appreciation of God's mercy toward us by schooling ourselves in His character and becoming more and more merciful and generous toward all the household of faith. If merciful toward the brethren, naturally we would be generous also toward all. In other words, as we remember and appreciate our own weaknesses and blemishes, it will make us sympathetic with the brethren and with all mankind. Mercy, generosity, sympathy, God delights in. Such as cultivate these graces of the Spirit will be pleasing in the Lord's sight, and they will thereby be fitted and prepared to have a share with Jesus in his throne of glory; for that great Messianic Kingdom will be established for the very purpose of showing mercy unto thousands of mankind, who will return to divine favor and blessing, under clearer knowledge and with the assistance that will then be afforded.

Adam's Sin Is Not Meant

We are not to understand this parable to refer to divine forgiveness of original sin. The sin of Adam is not forgiven simply because we cry for mercy. Adam and the entire race might have called for mercy, and would have received none, except in the divine way—through Jesus—through faith in his blood. Nor could this forgiveness be granted until Jesus had finished his sacrifice and ascended up on high, and there appeared in the presence of God on behalf of those coming to the Father through his merit.

The parable refers entirely to subsequent sins—sins referred to in our Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." This is shown also by the fact that the parable speaks of these as servants, whereas the world, as sinners, are not God's servants, but aliens, strangers, foreigners. The only ones whom God will recognize as servants are such as have come back into relationship with him through Jesus—through faith and consecration. It is these who are servants of God and who are required to have mercy upon their fellow-servants—upon their brethren.

Each and every one of the new creatures, sons of God, accepted through the merit of Jesus, is held responsible for his own weaknesses; but divine power has provided for the cancellation of these freely for Christ's sake, upon their acknowledgement and request for forgiveness. The forgiving of these trespasses of God's children is made dependent upon their having a spirit of forgiveness toward the brethren, for "if ye do not from the heart forgive one another's trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you." "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure" of benevolence ye mete out to others, the same shall be meted out to you. How wonderful are the divine arrangements! How blessed, how profitable to us, how helpful to us in our preparation for the kingdom! R 5134 (1912)

The Camel and the Needle's Eye

"And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt

not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honor thy father and thy mother: and Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

“The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”
—Matthew 19:16-26.

On his journey our Lord was accosted by one who said, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” He had the right idea, namely, that eternal life is the grand need, the grand hope of all hopes before the human family. We are glad of the question, for it brought forth the inspired answer, in which everybody is interested. What is the value of the present life, except as it leads us up the passageway to eternal life? How utterly lost we should feel if assured that at death we would be blotted out forever! How little in this life would be worth consideration—how little it could do toward filling the longing of our hearts, which yearn for eternal life!

Our Lord parried the question, in order to draw out the young man and make him commit himself, “Why do you call me good?” Why do you acknowledge me as a good teacher? I am either the Messiah, as I claim, or else an imposter and far from good. Do you accept my Messiahship? If you do not, how can you call me good or acknowledge that anything could be good that does not proceed from God, the Fountain of all goodness? Answering your question, if you would enter into eternal life, keep the commandments. The young man replied, Which? The Master answered, “Thou shalt do no murder, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor bear false witness, but honor thy father and thy mother and love thy neighbor as thyself.” The young man replied, “All these things have I observed from my youth. What lack I yet?”

He was a model young man and Jesus loved him. Evidently he was keeping the Jewish law to the extent of his knowledge and ability. He thought that he was loving his neighbor as himself, but this was a mistake which Jesus disclosed to him by the following suggestion: “If thou wouldst be perfect, go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven” instead of on earth; sacrifice also your earthly reputation and become my follower.

Ah, how the Lord knew to put his finger on the sore spot! The young man had come to him very boastful, very sure that if anyone in the world was seeking to be in harmony with the divine arrangement he was that one. He came for the Master’s approval, that he might hear him say, “You are the one exception to the rule.” The Lord did not say, “If you love your

neighbor as you love yourself you will at least put forth an effort to make that neighbor as comfortable as you desire to be comfortable.” He was content to be very rich, while some of his neighbors whom he thought he loved as he loved himself were very poor—abjectly, sorrowfully so. When Jesus discovered to him the difficulty of his situation, he grasped it at once. He saw himself as never before. It became a new test with him. Thus it is with all. A previous lesson showed us the kingdom as a great prize, a pearl of great value, a treasure, which to possess, will cost all that we have; and this lesson points out the same fact.

Let us not make the mistake made by some, and suppose that the young man, who lived so honorable a life and failed to gain heaven, would be thrust down into eternal torment because he did not sacrifice his all to become the Lord’s disciple. His loss of the kingdom was a sufficient penalty without suffering eternal torment in the future. Such members of the human family, under the blessed conditions of the Millennial Kingdom, will doubtless make very rapid progress and will obtain eternal life on the plane of human perfection, though not worthy of the kingdom honors which belong only to the elect. The elect are those only who are gladly sacrificing their lives and their all to gain the great prize.

Passing through the Needle’s Eye

Our Lord commented upon the matter to his disciples and added that the rich must have great difficulty in connection with their endeavor to enter into the kingdom. He said sympathetically, rather than in a denouncing manner, “It is easier for a camel to go through the needle’s eye than for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God.” This astonished the disciples very greatly, for they knew that the majority of the religionists of their day belonged to the wealthy class, the Scribes and the Pharisees. They replied, “Who then, can get into the kingdom, if these cannot?” Our Lord’s reply was, “With men this is impossible, but not with God.” Men would be inclined to say that God would find no one for the kingdom at all if he rejected the rich.

In a word, no rich man can get into the kingdom. He must give up everything to the Lord or else be barred from a place in the kingdom. The terms of acceptance are the same to the rich as to the poor. He that would have the “pearl of great price” must sell all that he has in order that he may obtain it. The rich must give up all to the Lord, and then as stewards of their riches will be held responsible for their stewardship.

The following little poem describes the needle’s eye, or small gate beside the larger gate, through which the camels might pass into the walled city after sundown and without any of their burden. So the rich by unloading and becoming poor may get into the kingdom:

Through the Needle's Eye

Tall was my camel and laden high,
And small the gate as a needle's eye.
The city within was very fair,
And I and my camel would enter there.

"You must lower your load," the porter cried,
"You must throw away that bundle of pride."
This I did, but the load was great,
Far too wide for the narrow gate.

"Now," said the porter, "to make it less,
Discard that hamper of selfishness."
I obeyed, though with much ado,
Yet still nor camel nor I got through.

"Ah," said the porter, "your load must hold
Some little package of trust-in-gold."
The merest handful was all I had,
Yet, "Throw it away," the porter bade.

Then lo, a marvel! The camel tall
Shrank to the size of the portal small,
And all my riches, a vast estate,
Easily passed through the narrow gate!

R 4658 (1910)

Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and he said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you, And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard;

"So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

“And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for one penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?”

“So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.”—Matthew 20:1-16.

This parable is difficult of interpretation so as to make all of its facts find fulfillment. The Great Teacher gave it as a parable of the kingdom; hence we know that it applies to the experiences of the church during this Gospel age. If we were to apply the different intervals mentioned to different epochs in this age, we would have difficulty; for the apostles and others, called early in this age, did not live and labor throughout the entire period. Again, in so applying it we would face the proposition that only those at the beginning of the age had definite promise as respects a reward—that all others got merely the assurance that they would receive what would be right.

Another difficulty which we would encounter in interpreting the parable is how to apply the murmuring of those who were first called and last rewarded. Other Scriptures show us that the apostles and others first called in the Gospel age will experience their resurrection change before those who will be living at the second coming of Christ. St. Paul declares that the dead in Christ shall rise first, and that then those of us who are alive shall be changed. Furthermore, it would be unthinkable that the apostles and others of the early church would murmur at the reward to be given them.

All of these difficulties must be borne in mind when we attempt to find a solution of this parable that would fit the experiences of the church as a whole during the Gospel age.

If we attempt to apply the parable to the individual experiences of God’s people, we have trouble also. Applying it thus, we might say that those who begin a Christian life early, and are found faithful in the Lord’s service at the evening-time of life, would be the ones first called and promised a reward. Others coming in later, and serving the Lord’s cause with only a portion of their time, strength, and talent would correspond to those who heard the later call—some even at the eleventh hour. If we interpret the parable as meaning that all these will get a similar reward regardless of the time spent in the Master’s service, we would still have difficulty with the fact that those called earliest murmured, complained, and were dissatisfied.

On the contrary, we are surely convinced that any who would murmur against the Lord’s will and his just and loving arrangements for his people, will never obtain the kingdom reward beyond the veil. We may feel assured that any who receive the Master’s “Well done” and the resurrection change will be far from murmuring. They will rejoice and be glad, and feel more than rewarded for every little service and sacrifice. How then can we apply this parable

consistently, in harmony with the teachings of other Scriptures respecting the reward of the kingdom class? We can think of only one way, and that is to apply the parable entirely to present-life experiences of the kingdom class, especially of those who will be living at the close of this Gospel Age.

Partly Applicable to the Jews

For sixteen hundred years and more the Jews waited for the first coming of Messiah and the blessed opportunities which then would come. When Jesus began his ministry, he preached, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and gave the Jews the privilege of entering into it. That privilege was a "penny," or a reward for their faithful endeavors to keep the law all their lives. However, when the offer of the kingdom was promulgated, some publicans and sinners were attracted—some who had previously neglected God's service and labors in the vineyard. These new laborers were received by the Lord Jesus and given an opportunity to become his disciples.

The privilege of discipleship was the penny or reward. The Scribes and the Pharisees, who had been faithful to the Lord God all their lives, considered that they should have had some preeminence or preference over the publicans and sinners; and they murmured at any arrangement as unfair which would not give them the first opportunities of the kingdom. If publicans and sinners were to obtain the blessed privilege of discipleship with Messiah, then surely, they thought, some still higher favor should come to them. They murmured that Jesus received publicans and sinners and ate with them.

One of the Master's parables was intended as a special reproof to the Pharisees along this line. The prodigal son represented a class of Jews not living up to their privileges, while the elder brother represented those who had continuously sought to be earnestly and actively engaged in the Father's business. When some of this prodigal class received the message of God's love from the lips of Jesus and his disciples, and returned to the Father's house, and were treated graciously and given the same privilege of sonship as those who had not gone astray but who had labored faithfully, the elder-brother class was offended. They murmured and refused to participate in the feast. Thus there were some who were first in opportunity, but who were last so far as the blessing was concerned, and others who were last and least found opportunity for receiving the divine blessing sooner and more effectively.

Applicable Also to Christians

The general lesson of the parable would seem to be that we should appreciate the fact that whatever God has to offer is a gift. We should enter His service with loving loyalty to principle, to righteousness. If we have served many years, that privilege of service should be esteemed; and our interest in the Lord's cause should make us happy. From such a standpoint of appreciation of the privilege of service, we should be glad to see the Lord's work carried on, glad to see others enter the service, and glad to see them get the same reward that we hope for ourselves. Only those who have such a broad spirit, such an appreciation of the privileges of the vineyard, such a sympathy for "as many as the Lord our God shall call"—only these will be

fit for the kingdom proper and in readiness to receive the special privileges of knowledge and opportunity when the kingdom is ready to be announced.

As the typical kingdom was offered to the Jews in Jesus' day, and as those who were newest in divine service received the same opportunities for a share in the kingdom with those who had been long engaged, so apparently it is to be in the end, or harvest time, of this Gospel age. Those who have all their lives been seeking to be faithful to the Lord and to serve his cause should remember that they have had that much more privilege and blessing. If some shall enter the divine service later, they should be rejoiced with as fellow-servants.

Indeed, all who are servants, according to the Word of the Lord, should be praying the Master to send other laborers into the vineyard, instead of feeling jealous of any others who might come. As greater knowledge of present truth is now coming as a reward to all who labor in the vineyard of the Lord, let us not be surprised if this shall be equally distributed to those who have come in recently and to those who have been a long time in the Master's service.

Let us rather rejoice in the Lord's ways. Let not our hearts be angry because of his graciousness to those who have come into the service even during the eleventh hour. Are they not brethren? Under the terms of the Golden Rule should we not wish them to have the same blessings that we enjoy? Any aloofness on the part of those who have been longer in the Lord's service—any feeling on the part of such that they must have more manifestation of the Lord's favor now—is evidently wrong. The Lord would have us more like unto himself. This is the suggestion of those who have selected the Golden Text for this lesson. Be ye like unto your Father; for He is kind to the unthankful. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."—Matthew 5:45. R 5473 (1914)

Parable of the Obedient and the Disobedient Sons

"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons: and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in the vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go Sir: and went not.

"Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The First. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you. That the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when you had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."—Matthew 21:28-32.

The Great Teacher in two parables portrays the mistake made by the religionists of his day. The understanding of these parables gives a clearer insight into the cause which led to the rejection of Israel for a time from divine favor. Incidentally, too, we are to remember that nominal fleshly Israel was a prototype of nominal Christendom. Hence we may look for somewhat similar conditions and dealings now in the "harvest time" of this Christian age.

To get the force of the Lord's teachings here and everywhere it is necessary to remember that the Jewish people had been promised the Kingdom of God, of which David's kingdom was a type on a small scale. For centuries they had been expecting a great King, Messiah, whose coming would exalt them and bring them into prominence as God's kingdom. John the Baptist, when he came to introduce Messiah, told the Jews that unless they would repent and come back, to the extent of their ability, into harmony with God and the Law they need not expect to share in the Messianic kingdom. Jesus told the people that unless their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no wise enter into or become members of the long-awaited-for kingdom.—Matthew 5:20. The two parables of this study illustrate what stood in the way of the majority.

Work Today in My Vineyard

The Jewish people professed to be God's people, willing to do him service. They were treated, not as mere slaves, but rather like sons. All were told to go and work in God's vineyard; but they divided into two classes, represented by the two sons, in our first parable. One of these sons represented the outwardly religious, pious, who said, Yes, we will serve God. However, they did not really seek the divine service, but rather the service of their sects and parties and their own personal aims, honor, influence, and preferment. The other class of Israelites, represented by the other son of the parable, made no pretense of serving God, and were branded as publicans, sinners, harlots. Nevertheless, when Jesus appeared, when John's message went forth, and afterwards the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles, these same publicans, sinners, harlots, were the ones ready to receive him, while the religious, finding that his message was in conflict with their teachings, repudiated him. Thus one of the charges against Jesus was, "He receiveth publicans and sinners and eateth with them." R 4678:2 (1910)

Parable of the Wicked Vine-Dressers

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

"And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

"When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.”—Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19.

Not only did the Redeemer teach chiefly by parables, but additionally nearly all of those parables related directly or indirectly to the kingdom. The reason for this is plain. The divine plan calls for the setting up of the kingdom of righteousness by divine power for the overcoming of the prince of darkness and his reign, which for six-thousand years has been a reign of sin and death. While not directly telling of the kingdom, the lesson of today points to it indirectly.

While the whole world was lying in darkness and sin and under divine sentence of unworthiness of life, God planted in the world a root of promise, a hope. This promise, made to Abraham, foretold that his seed, or posterity, would eventually become very great and powerful, and would cause the blessing of God to fill the earth, instead of the curse, which it would roll away. In due time this promise came to the nation of Israel, as the natural posterity of Abraham and the heirs of the promise. Thus God planted a vineyard in the world, the Jewish nation, a special and peculiar people bound to Him, and He to them, by the Law Covenant negotiated through Moses. God set a hedge about this nation and gave them special provisions of divine favor “every way.”—Romans 3:1, 2. The divine hedge was the divine promise that as long as the Israelites would be faithful and loyal to God, they would be thoroughly protected against their enemies.

The vineyard had a watch tower, as was common in those days, that from this tower watchmen might guard against robbers. So the Lord declared himself to be Israel’s high tower. He placed watchmen, even the prophets, who cried aloud and warned the people from time to time in respect to any and every breaking down of the wall, or partition; for this protection could be broken down only by disloyalty, carelessness, sin, on the part of Israel. The statement that the Lord, after having made this arrangement with Abraham’s seed, went into a far country implies that the arrangement was intended to stand for a long time.

The Original Vine-Dressers

While in this parable the entire nation of Israel is represented by the vineyard, the husbandmen, or caretakers of the vineyard, were the religious leaders, of whom Jesus said, “The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.”—Matthew 23:2, 3. These vine-dressers became conceited, got to feel a proprietary right in the vineyard, acted as though they were the real owners, and not merely the Owner’s servants. Even in their speech they became accustomed to refer to the

masses of Israel as the laity and to themselves as the clergy. They referred to the people as “our people,” “my people,” etc. In other words, they failed to glorify God properly, and therefore in thus taking honor to themselves felt themselves more than the servants of God, honored in being permitted to be vine-dressers in his vineyard.

As centuries rolled on, it was only proper to expect that the operation of the Law Covenant would produce good fruitage amongst the people—that through their inability to keep the Law they would become stronger in character; that these united experiences would make them more reverential, more loyal to God, more earnestly desirous that the typical kingdom should give place to the antitypical one, when the Owner would be present, either directly or through some especially appointed representative. In due course of time the Owner, Jehovah, sent His servants, the prophets, to Israel, sometimes with one message, sometimes with another. These servants and their messages became tests as respect the love, devotion, and loyalty of the vine-dressers, and tests also relative to the character-development of the people of Israel.

Alas! The very ones who should have been glad to welcome the Owner’s representatives, and glad to have manifested to them the fruits of holiness amongst the people, showed their own disloyalty by mistreating the servants. They reasoned that to acknowledge those servants and the reproofs which they gave would mean an acknowledgment that they themselves were merely vine-dressers, and not in any sense of the word owners of the vineyard or an especially preferred class not held responsible under the general law governing all. Therein their pride and their desire to show off before the people prompted the mistreatment of the Owner’s special representatives, the prophets. As the parable shows, some of these were beaten, others killed, others stoned.

“It Brought Forth Wild Grapes”

Finally the Owner of the vineyard sent His Son, saying, Surely they should reverence My Son. As a matter of fact the Bible informs us that God knew that the rulers of Israel would not reverence His Son, but would crucify him; and that He sent His Son with this foreknowledge of their intention.

The parable is stating the matter from a different standpoint—as though the Owner had said, as he might well have said, “They will reverence My Son.” Surely the rulers of the Jews should have revered the perfect one—“holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.” Surely they should have recognized this One, of whom the people declared, “Never man spake like this man.” Surely they should have hearkened to his message, should have repented of their sins, should have come back through him into harmony with the Father, and thus have obtained forgiveness and a blessing. Whatever reasons there might have seemed to be for their thinking that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Malachi, and others of the Prophets were deceivers, none of those arguments would hold against the Owner’s Son, whose credentials were manifest in his holiness, in his miracles and mighty works, and in his mightier words of life.

However, the spirit of selfishness and self-conceit is powerful, and often leads those who possess it to monstrous acts which afterward appall even themselves. The Jewish Doctors, the clergy of that time, perceived that Jesus, the Son of God, the representative of the Owner of the vineyard, by his words and deeds was exerting a mighty influence over the people. His claim to be the Owner's Son was backed by numerous signs which the people were disposed to recognize. We read that he departed into a mountain alone, when the people would take him by force to make him a king. The clerical class reasoned that to whatever extent his cause should prevail, their power over the people, their influence, their titles, their honors of men, would diminish in importance.

"Behold Oppression—Behold a Cry"

The rulers of the vineyard, shown by Jesus' description to be the Pharisees and Sadducees, had become very unbelieving as respects the declaration of the prophets that the King would eventually send Messiah with great blessings and power for the glorification of that vineyard and the widening of its influence in the whole world. The Sadducees, including many of the Scribes, as a class were agnostics—disbelievers in the inspiration of the promises and the prophecies. The same spirit affected the Pharisees to a considerable extent. All were self-seeking. Jesus styled them "money-lovers," and declared that they sought chiefly the honor of men rather than that honor which cometh alone from God.

In their exasperation against Jesus, in their realization that his victory meant their defeat and the defeat of all the institutions which represented their wisdom and teachings, they determined that it was necessary for him to die. By this they meant that his death was necessary for the success of their theories and plans, because his theories, his teachings, were so different from theirs. They could not endure the thought that the great institutions which they had so laboriously constructed out of human traditions which made void the Word of God should all fade away. To them it seemed that to surrender their plans to Jesus and for him to carry out the plans which he preached would mean the ruin of the vineyard, the nation. They did not realize that the course which they were taking was the very one which would lead to the destruction of that typical Kingdom of God, that typical vineyard.

Jesus carried the parable up to his own time and foretold his own violent death at the hands of those wicked vine-dressers who treated the Lord's heritage as though it were their own. Then, in conclusion, Jesus asked his hearers what they would expect the Owner of that vineyard to do with those wicked husbandmen when he should come to take possession and to redress the wrongs. The answer was that he would miserably destroy those wicked vine-dressers, and would let out his vineyard to other husbandmen who would render him the proper fruits at the proper time.

Jesus did not himself give the answer, but his silence was confirmatory of the answer of the people. So the parable was fulfilled. God's judgment came upon the Jewish nation, with the result that it was entirely overthrown in the year 70 A. D. Speaking of this, St. Paul says, "Wrath is come upon this people to the uttermost."—1 Thessalonians 2:16, that all things written in the

Law and the Prophets concerning them should be fulfilled. Their nationality was utterly overthrown and has never since been restored—nor will it be until the time foretold by the prophets, when Messiah in glory shall establish his reign of righteousness and when under his kingdom those faithful servants, the prophets, who were slain, stoned to death, etc., will be made associates and given authority and power as Messiah’s representatives in the earth.—Psalms 45:16.

The New Vine-Dressers

The Lord said that those originally appointed were wicked vine-dressers. He appointed new ones; namely, the twelve apostles, St. Paul taking the place of Judas. Moreover, he started a new vineyard, putting into it only the true vine, inspired with faith and loyalty toward God. Those faithful servants, although they long ago fell asleep, continue through their words, their teachings, to influence, to guard, to keep, the true vine of the Lord—the church, the body of Christ. Of this vineyard our Lord declares, “I am the true vine; ye are the branches.” Century after century these true branches of the true vine have been planted by baptism into death with their Master and have been bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Ere long, we believe, this fruitage will all be gathered and, by the resurrection “change,” be transplanted to the heavenly condition.

Meantime, however, the same spirit which was manifested by the vine-dressers of the Jewish age has manifested itself again. Other vineyards have been started. In numbers, wealth, and influence these quite outrank and outshine the Lord’s vineyard, which alone bears the precious fruit which he desires. The two vines are spoken of in the Bible. The one is said to be “the vine of my Father’s right-hand planting.” The other is styled “the vine of the earth.” The fruitage of the one is manifested in the character-likeness of Christ, faithfulness unto death. The fruitage of the other is manifested in boastfulness, pride, show—a form of godliness without the power thereof.

There is to be a gathering of the fruitage of the vine of the earth at the second coming of the Master. We read that it is to be dealt with in the winepress of the wrath of God in the great time of trouble with which this age will pass away, giving place to the thousand years of Messiah’s kingdom for the world’s uplift.

The Chief Corner-Stone

The Scriptures give us the thought that the church of Christ is represented by a pyramid, which has five corner-stones, the chief one being the top-stone—a perfect pyramid in itself, the lines of which control the entire structure. Jesus, rejected by the Jews, crucified, is the chief corner-stone of this great temple of God which is the church. Already he is glorified. During this age his footstep followers, shaped in harmony with his character-likeness, and are being prepared to be united with him in heavenly glory.

Thus, as our Lord declared, the Kingdom of God was taken from Israel—the natural seed of Abraham—to be given to spiritual Israel. God is thus developing or creating the new nation, a holy nation, a peculiar people, separate and distinct from all others, gathered out from Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, from every nation and denomination.

Christ Jesus, the top-stone, is indeed “a stone of stumbling” to many. By stumbling over him they injure themselves; but if he should fall on them, in the sense of condemning them, it would signify their utter destruction; their cutting off in the second death.

The chief priests and the Pharisees heard the Master’s parables and perceived that he spoke of them as the wicked vine-dressers. They sought to lay hold of him and destroy him forthwith; but they feared the multitudes, who, although they did not recognize him as the Son of God, did esteem him the great Prophet or Teacher. R 5504 (1914)

Parable of the Wedding Feast and the Reluctant Guests

“And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden. Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

“Then said he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.”—Matthew 22:1-14.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!”—Luke 13:34.

Here we have another parable of the kingdom. Today’s lesson shows that the promises of God and his providences toward Israel under the Law Covenant were all designed to fit and

prepare the Israelites to be God's holy nation, and especially to provide at the coming of Christ a sufficient number to constitute the elect church, Messiah's joint-heirs in the kingdom—his bride. The parable shows that only a few were "Israelites indeed," in whom was no guile—not enough to constitute the kingdom class; hence the call of this Gospel age, selecting from the Gentiles a sufficient number of saintly characters to be joint-heirs with the Jewish remnant in the Messianic kingdom.

The kingdom of heaven, otherwise styled the Kingdom of God, is not to be an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly one, whose ruler, the glorified Christ, will not be an earthly king, but a heavenly being of the highest rank—of the divine nature. This kingdom, representing God and the heavenly rule, or dominion, is to be established amongst men for the eradication of sin. Its first work will be the binding of Satan, the "Prince of this world." Afterward all the works of darkness will be overthrown. The overthrow will at first cause a great time of trouble, following which, as the reign of righteousness progresses, the curse in its every form will give way before the blessings of Messiah's kingdom—until there shall be no more curse, no more sighing, no more crying, no more dying.

However, before this heavenly kingdom can be established, it is a part of the divine decree and arrangement that there shall be a bride class selected from amongst men. These are begotten of the Holy Spirit and are God's workmanship, in whom he works by the exceeding great and precious promises of the Scriptures and by the providences of life. Thus they are being transformed in mind and made ready for the glorious birth-resurrection by which they will be "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," from earthly nature to heavenly nature. Thus they will enter into the joys of their Lord by becoming his bride class, his joint-heirs in his kingdom.

Application of the Parable

For the development of this kingdom class the world has now been waiting since the days of Jesus, when by his death he opened up a new way of life and became the Advocate before the Father for all those desirous of being his disciples, his joint-heirs, his bride.

Today's lesson takes up the kingdom project at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power (liberty or privilege) to become sons of God."—John 1:12.

Jehovah himself is the King who made a marriage for His son—arranging before the foundation of the world that there should be certain joint-heirs with Christ in his kingdom. This marriage, of course, could not take place until the King's Son had come into the world and had made the way for his followers and for the kingdom of which he is to be king.

At the appropriate time God sent his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; but they would not come. John the Baptist and his disciples did this work of calling to the attention of the Jewish people the fact that the King's Son was in their midst. He said, "There

standeth one among you whom ye know not.”—John 1:26. Again he said, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”—John 3:29. John rejoiced to hear the voice of the Bridegroom. Prophetically he foretold that the calling of the bride class had come, although he himself could not be a member of it.

Made Light of the Message

Again other servants were sent forth. Jesus sent his disciples to the Jews, saying, O. “Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage” feast.

The message of Jesus and his disciples was not received. The people, under the guidance of the Scribes and the Pharisees, the theologians of that time, made light of the message and went their way—one to his farm, another to his merchandise, saying, We do not believe this message respecting the kingdom. Some did even worse than this. They entreated these servants shamefully, spitefully, and slew them. Not only was Jesus slain by the unbelieving ones who had been invited to the feast, but his faithful disciples also were evilly treated and slain.

Then, as seen in another parable, Jehovah was wroth with the people of Israel, and sent forth His armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. The fact that it was the Roman army under Titus which destroyed Jerusalem in A. D. 70 did not make it any less the army of Jehovah, for He is able to make the wrath of man praise Him and able to use whom He may please as His messengers, or servants.

Gentiles Called to the Wedding

Meantime God said to His servants, the apostles, and to others through them, The wedding is provided, but the Jewish nation, which was especially invited, have not been found worthy of the honor. Go ye therefore unto the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast. So those servants went into the highways and gathered together as many as they found, and brought them in. Thus the wedding was provided with guests.

Highways represent public concourse, the world over. The Lord’s ambassadors were no longer to restrict themselves to Jews, but were to make known to every people, kindred and tongue, the fact that God is now calling out of the world a little company, lovers of righteousness, to be followers of the Lamb and eventually to become joint-heirs with the Redeemer in his kingdom. Be it noted that these ambassadors were not to intercept all the people in the highway, but merely to urge upon all those whom they met in the way, the great privilege of the open door to the wedding feast.

These were not all saintly, good; some of them, on the contrary, were bad. The apostles explain this, saying that not many great, not many rich, not many noble, but chiefly the poor, the mean things of this world, hath God chosen. The apostles speak, along the lines of our

lesson, of the class that God is selecting from the world. No matter how mean, no matter how degraded, no matter how ignoble by nature—all who are willing to receive the grace of God may be made suitable for the wedding by the covering of the wedding garment, the righteousness of Christ.

Indeed, however noble or worthy many are naturally, they are still not fit for the presence of the King. All who attend this wedding must have on the wedding garment—must be covered with the merit of Christ’s righteousness. The wedding is thus furnished with guests—all that the king had intended—every place filled. Thus and otherwise does the Lord indicate that the number of the elect is a definitely fixed one; and that as soon as the special number has been found, the call will cease.

Inspecting the Guests

The custom of the Jews, arranged by divine providence doubtless, was that at every wedding feast each guest was to put on a white wedding garment, covering his own garments. Thus all at the wedding were on an equal footing as respects dignity, because they were the guests of the host. So all who come to God’s great feast provided by Christ must come, not through any worthiness of their own in the flesh, but acknowledging that they have an insufficiency of merit to be acceptable to God, and must accept the merit of Christ as making them worthy of the honor to which they aspire in responding to this invitation.

Each guest entering the house was supplied with the robe, and was expected to put it on immediately. For anyone to appear without that wedding garment would be a mark of disrespect to the host who had provided it. Indeed, for anyone to appear at the wedding without the robe would imply that he had taken it off; for no one was admitted without the robe. This is the picture given us in the parable. A guest was found there who had not on the wedding garment—one, therefore, who in disregard of his host had removed his wedding garment, the wearing of which was the condition of his admission.

The words, “When the king came in,” signify an inspection just prior to the feast. Since the King of the parable is Jehovah himself, this would seem to mean that God takes note through the exhibition of divine justice in some manner of anyone professing loyalty, yet disregarding the merit of Christ’s death. Or, Christ might properly be understood to be referred to as the King in this instance; for at his coming he is to be invested with kingly authority and power by the heavenly Father, as our Lord himself indicates in the parables of the Pounds and the Talents. At his second advent, therefore, he tells us, he will himself inspect all those who pose as being his faithful servants—all those who are desirous of enjoying the wedding festival.

The man found without a wedding garment in the presence of the King we should understand to represent a class, and not merely one individual. So we might find just such a class today, professing to be followers of Christ, professing to be waiting for the marriage of the Lamb, professing to hope to enter into the joys of their Lord, yet telling us that they are no longer trusting in the merit of Christ’s sacrifice for their standing with the Father. These have

rejected Jesus as their Savior, their Redeemer, the Atoner for their sins. They merely retain him as their Teacher, and then, apparently, accept only a part of his teachings.

These are manifestly unfit to be members of the bride of Christ. Only the loyal, only the faithful, are to be of that class. The parable shows that all those who reject the merit of Christ's sacrifice will be rejected from the kingdom class. They are unable to say how they came in without a "wedding garment;" for they did not come in without it. No one was ever admitted into the fellowship of the spirit in the church which is the bride of Christ without first having on the wedding garment of Christ's merit, covering his imperfection. Those admitting thus that they have taken off the wedding garment are cast out summarily. The king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The Outer Darkness

When our minds were filled with hallucinations of the Dark Ages, we read into this and into other Scriptures what they do not contain. We assumed that the class represented by the man without the wedding garment would be cast into eternal torment, and there suffer to all eternity. However, now examining the Scriptures more carefully, we have perceived that as all of these guests at the wedding came into the light of the wedding chamber from the darkness of the outside world, so the casting of one of them out of the light into the outer darkness would merely mean the taking from such a one the knowledge and the joys represented by the wedding-chamber light.

As for the outside world, we know that the Apostle John declares that the whole world lieth in darkness, "in the wicked one." We know also that as soon as the bride class shall have been completed, a great time of trouble will prepare the world for the blessings of Messiah's kingdom later on. During that trouble all those who are in the darkness will have weeping and gnashing of teeth—discontent, anguish, disappointment, etc., connected with the overthrow of many of their wrongly based human hopes and expectations.

Our Lord concluded the parable with the statement, "For many are called, but few are chosen." This does not mean, as we once supposed, that only an elect few will get any favor from God in the future, and that all the remainder of mankind will be eternally tortured. We must read it in harmony with the context. The Jewish nation was called, or invited, to the wedding—and failed, except the few "Israelites indeed." For eighteen hundred years the message has gone out into the highways, to one nation after another of the Gentiles, until many have more or less heard the call of the Gospel age. Yet only a few have accepted and have therefore come into the elect condition. Of those who come into this elect condition there will still be a class not properly appreciative which will be cast away, or rejected.

Again the Master drew attention to the matter, saying, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The little flock, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, will through their faithfulness become God's chosen people, his elect church, the

bride of Christ. Then, later on, they with their Lord will be the Heavenly Father's agency for blessing all the non-elect with the glorious opportunities of restitution to all the earthly blessings and good things lost through Father Adam's disobedience and fall. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs." R 5510 (1914)

The Fig Tree Putting Forth Leaves

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."—Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21:29-33.

"And Peter, calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away."—Mark 11:21.

Our thought is that this particular incident in our Lord's earthly ministry may be very significant. We see that nearly all his acts were good, not only for the time being, but, as it were, pictures of larger things to come after. In the casting out of devils, etc., he was showing forth the glory of his coming kingdom. When his kingdom shall come, all the sick will be healed, all the blind will have their eyes opened, all the lame will walk; there will be literal healing and blessing of the world. All devils will be cast out.

The Lord did not attempt to heal all the sick he saw when on earth. We recall the case where the impotent man was lying on the porch at the pool of Bethesda. Jesus went to that one man and said, "How is it that you are here?" He said, "When the time comes for the moving of the waters, others step down before me." Then Jesus merely said to him, "Arise, take up thy bed." He said nothing to the others. He did not pretend to heal all the sick. He was merely demonstrating his mighty power, which will be fully expanded when the glorious kingdom is established.

Therefore, we think we are taking the proper view of matters when we suppose that even the little things, every little act of the Lord Jesus, was in some degree prophetic, significant of the great things to come. Take, for instance, his coming into the boat at night. There was a great storm; but as soon as Jesus came into the boat, they were at the shore where they were going.

Now in the instance under consideration, we read that Jesus came unto a certain place and there was a fig tree and he declared something about gathering of figs; "for the time of figs was not yet," our common version reads; more properly it would read, "for the time of figs was not over," was not past. It would be strange for Jesus to come before the proper time to look for figs.

So he cursed the fig tree, and said, "Let no more figs grow on thee to the age." Then later St. Peter called attention to the fact that the fig tree was beginning to wither, and Jesus said, "Have faith in God." What is the reason?

When Ye See the Fig Tree Putteth Forth Leaves Ye Know That Summer Is Nigh

It is our understanding that the fig tree was a type or picture of the Jewish nation, to whom Jesus came when it was proper to expect fruitage. However coming to the Jews, he did not find the nation bearing fruit. The great ones of the nation were cast off; and only the publicans and sinners were ready to accept his message.

It is remembered that the nation had a blight upon it. At the end of his ministry, Jesus coming to the brow of the hill overlooking Jerusalem, said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."—Luke 13:34, 35. A very short time afterwards it began to lose its power; and the Jewish nation lost its identity completely as a nation in the year 70 A. D.—37 years later.

While the Jewish nation has thus been in hades, in the tomb so to speak, it is as a nation that they are referred to thus. They go into the tomb as individuals, as everyone else; but as a nation also they have gone into the tomb. We see according to the Scriptures there will be a resurrection of the Jewish nation, and a picture of that raising up is given where it says, "the bones came together, bone to his bone," etc.—Ezekiel 37:7. Those bones represent the whole house of Israel, which is referred to as saying, "Our hope is dead"—verse 11; our ambitions are all gone or are asleep!

So God is telling them that all the kingdom hopes of that nation are to be revived. As Jesus said to his disciples in one of his discourses—When ye see the fig tree beginning to put forth its tender leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. We see the fig tree putting forth its leaves today—Matthew 24:32; Mark 13:28; we see the Jews looking back to Jerusalem, and we thus see the fig tree putting forth its leaves, or giving signs of life, looking forward to the re-establishment of the Jewish nation. God says there will be a Jewish nation again. R 4788 (1911)

"For various reasons many Bible students understand that our Lord referred to the Jewish nation under the symbolism of a fig tree. He had been telling his disciples what he expected in the end of this age, when he would come again to receive his faithful to himself and give them a place as his bride upon his throne and to establish his kingdom under the whole heavens for the blessing of Israel and all the world through Israel. In this study he tells us that amongst the prominent signs of the closing of this age and the opening of the new will be the budding of the fig tree—the springing forth of new life and new hope in the Jewish nation. And is not this condition of things manifesting itself today? Behold the Jew awakening and listening to the voice of Moses and the Prophets calling them to Palestine and to fresh hope in God and in the

glorious promises to which they still are heirs as the natural seed of Abraham! ‘For the gifts and calling of God are things he does not repent of.’—Romans 11:11-39; R4705 (page bottom)

Parable of One Taken and the Other Left

“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”—Matthew 24:40-42.

“I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”—Luke 17:34-37.

The Lord, through the Prophet, informs us that though the Millennial morning draws near, a night also approaches.—Isaiah 21:12. It will be a night of trouble in the forefront of which the saints will be gathered out of Babylon. The “bed” here, in harmony with Isaiah’s use of that word—Isaiah 28:20, may be interpreted to symbolize human creeds which are long enough for “babes” in Christ, but too short for a developed “man” to stretch himself in it. This is true of the various “doctrines of men,” substituted for but very different from the doctrines of God’s Word whose lengths and breadths surpass human knowledge. For instance, the doctrine of Election, as taught by our Calvinist friends is a quite sufficient “bed” to rest many who are only “babes” in Christ, whose senses have never been much exercised; but as in the light of present day knowledge the babes get awake and grow in grace and knowledge, they will all surely find the creed-bed too short for comfort, and as each attempts to wrap himself in the promises of God narrowed by an erroneous theology, he cannot satisfactorily cover himself: doubts creep in to chill him with fear that after all he is not certain that he and all his friends are of the “elect,” and by and by such developed Christians find it a relief to get out of such a predicament; and to such God generally sends the light of present truth to guide them to a “large place” of true rest supplied with abundant coverings for all who seek to know and to do the Father’s will. Others, however, the vast majority, remain quite satisfied and comfortable in their various little cribs, because they are “babes” and not “men” in Christian knowledge and experience. “One shall be taken and the other left.”

“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left.”

“The field is the world,” our Lord explained; and in this discourse it represents a condition outside the nominal “house,”—outside Babylon. Thus we are taught that not all “come-outers” will be “gathered,” but that the “jewels” will be sought wherever they may be—“the Lord knoweth them that are his,” and in this harvest gathering he is making up his jewels, — gathering his “elect,” to be joint-heirs in his Kingdom.

“Two shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left.”

A mill is a place where food is prepared: the ministers and theological schools do the grinding of the spiritual food for “Babylon,” and turn out very poor grist—not “clean provender.” The complaint is a growing one that the food supplied is largely husks and chaff, which will not sustain spiritual life and strength: and each grinder is obliged to prepare what is given him by his own denomination, and he cannot hold his position and yet provide the “meat in due season,” “clean provender,” for the household of faith. Hence “present truth” gathers some of the grinders and leaves others—one is taken and another left. Those who are loyal to God and to his flock will be taken; all others will be left. While the world and the nominal church declare this to be a time of union and “confederacy,” God declares it to be a time of separating.—Isaiah 8:12.

“And they (the disciples) answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? (Where will these be taken?) And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body (the carcass, the food) is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”—Luke 17:37; Matthew 24:28.

The lesson is that *in that day*, when the Lord is gathering his “elect” from the four winds of heaven—from every quarter of the Church—he will attract them as eagles are attracted, by food, for which they have a keenness of vision and appetite; that in due time the Lord would provide the proper food, and his true people would recognize it and be gathered to it;—the ready and worthy taken and the others left.

The food of “present truth” now provided by our Lord, and the gathering of his saints by and to it, fits the description of this prophecy exactly. The present call is not out of one “mill” into another “mill,” nor out of one “bed” into another of about the same size. It is not the gathering by one man or many men, to him or to them, into a new denomination; but a gathering together unto Christ himself, the true and only Master and Teacher. Where and when before was there ever such a public recognition of all who trust in the precious blood of Christ and who are consecrated to him, as the one household of faith—all brethren—and the one and only Lawgiver Christ, regardless of human creeds and dogmas upon other subjects? Never and nowhere since the days of the apostles, so far as we may judge.

Moreover, it is worthy of note that great human ability, oratory, etc., have been notably connected with other movements, but not with this present gathering to the Lord. Here the *truth*, the spiritual food which the Lord is supplying, is the whole attraction: human flourish and oratory find little room for exercise here; they are lacking but are not missed. The gathered and gathering ones come together because they “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” They are finding the satisfying portion which the Lord himself has provided; and each for himself is eating thereof.

D 608-611 (1897)

The Faithful Servant Dispensing Food

“Who then is the faithful and prudent servant, whom his Master has placed over his household to give them food in due season. Happy that servant whom his Master, on coming,

shall find thus employed! Indeed I say to you that he will appoint him over all his stores of provisions.”—Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-46.

The intimation here seems to be, that at the particular time indicated by the prophecy—namely, during the Lord’s *presence*, and at the time of the gathering of the elect—our Lord, the great Servant of his people, will make choice of *one channel* for dispensing the meat in due season, though other channels or “fellow servants” will be used in bringing the food to the “household.” However, the servant is merely a steward, and liable to be removed at any moment, should he fail to fully and duly acknowledge in every particular, the Master—the great Servant of God, and his people—“the Messenger of the Covenant,”—Christ.

Faithfulness on the part of said steward (both to the “Master” and to “his fellow-servants” and “the household”) will be rewarded by his continuance as steward—so long as he serves faithfully, he may continue, and may serve the household of faith with things new and old, meat in due season—to the end; bringing forth all the precious things of divine provision. However, if unfaithful he will be deposed entirely and put into outer darkness, while presumably another would take his place, subject to the same conditions.

To our understanding this would not imply that “that servant” or steward, used as a channel for the circulation of the “meat in due season,” would be the *originator* of that meat, nor *inspired*, nor *infallible*. Quite to the contrary, we may be sure that whoever the Lord will so use, as a truth-distributing agent, will be very humble and unassuming, as well as very zealous for the Master’s glory; so that he would not think of claiming authorship or ownership of the truth, but would merely dispense it zealously, as his Master’s gift, to his Master’s “servants” and “household.”

Any other spirit and course would surely work a change of steward. This is detailed by our Lord as follows:—

“But if that servant shall [become] wicked, and [losing faith] say in his heart, My Master delays his coming; and shall smite his fellow-servants, and eat and drink with the intemperate [of their false doctrines], the Master of that servant will be present in a day that he looketh not for, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him off [from being his servant]) and will appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”—Matthew 24:48-51. D 613 (1897)

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

“While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise. Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”—Matthew 25:1-13.

“The parable of today’s study is supposed to have been uttered by our Lord about three days before his crucifixion, as part of his response to the question, “What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?” In the preceding chapter the Master traces various experiences of his people down to the time of his second coming—the time of the consummation of this Gospel age and of the inauguration of the Messianic age, the age immediately ahead of us.

In considering this parable, it is proper to notice, first of all, that it has not been applicable at all times and under all conditions. This is shown by the first word, “Then”—at that time—“the kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins.” Furthermore, it should be noted that the parable does not describe the world in general, but merely the “virgin” class—the church—the pure ones who have left the world, who have come to God through Christ, who have been justified by faith in his blood, and who have thus been made prospective members of the kingdom class, the bride class. This parable shows, then, that in the end of this age a separation or division, will take place in the true church of Christ, regardless of what may be the attitude of the world or of the nominal church.

With the Jews, betrothal took place between the bride and the bridegroom usually a year before they came together at the marriage feast. During that year the obligations of marriage applied, and any unfaithfulness to the bridegroom vitiated or annulled the contract, which was usually made, not by the bridegroom himself with the bride, but through others, intermediaries. So, during this Gospel age, a church is being betrothed to Christ, and covenant obligations are being entered into in behalf of the Bridegroom, Christ, who is “afar off” and who is now entering into a covenant with those who would be members of his bride class. These covenants and agreements are made through the brethren, ministers, servants, of the Lord and of the church.

The Scriptures represent that during the long period between the time when our Lord went away and the time of his return there has been a serious unfaithfulness on the part of many professing to be of the church of Christ. In the Revelation these are charged with harlotry. We are assured that they will not be recognized, but will be fully repudiated, rejected, at his second advent. Although the mass of those professing to have entered into a covenant with the Lord

were foreseen to be unfaithful, nevertheless the Lord just as distinctly declares that at his second presence there will be a faithful “virgin” class—pure ones, separate from the world, uncontaminated. It is this class which the parable describes. It shows incidentally that not even all the virgins will be accepted as members of the bride; but that, in addition to purity, a certain watchfulness and zeal will be considered essential.

Parousia and Epiphania

Many Bible students hold that this parable began to have its fulfillment in the Millerite movement which, in 1844 culminated in a disappointment. For some fourteen years prior to that time a cry had gone forth throughout the church that the time of the second presence of Christ was at hand. History tells us that many noble characters of all denominations believed the message and, in the strength of their faith, went forth to meet the Bridegroom. However they were disappointed, in that the Bridegroom tarried.

Then all of the “virgins,” both wise and foolish, slumbered and slept. A general stupor, uncertainty and drowsiness came over all. Some of them dreamed of strange knockings during that time. Later at midnight, the Bridegroom came apparently, and announcements were made to that effect—“Behold the Bridegroom! Go ye out to meet him!”

An increasing number of Bible students believe that this latter cry sounded forth just thirty years after the disappointment of the followers of William Miller; namely, in 1874. They do not claim that Jesus came in the flesh then; but, on the contrary, they hold that he is never to come in the flesh—that he is flesh no longer, that he has “ascended up where he was before”—to the spirit plane, far above angels.

These Bible students call our attention to the fact that the Bible distinctly differentiates between the parousia of Christ and his epiphania, at his second coming. The word parousia signifies presence, without in any sense of the word indicating that the presence is visible. The word epiphania signifies the revealing of one who is already present. These Bible students claim that in the end of this Gospel age Christ will be present invisible to men, doing a work especially in his church—rewarding the faithful, as shown in the parable of the Pounds and the Talents, and receiving the “wise virgins,” as in the parable of our lesson.

With the conclusion of this work of separating the wise virgins, and after they shall have entered into the joys of their Lord by the glorious change of the first resurrection, then will come Immanuel’s Epiphania, revealing, showing forth. “When he shall appear, ye also shall appear with him in glory.” Christ will take his body members to himself before the last of the great time of trouble.

The Lamps and the Oil

The views of these Bible students are interesting to us. Whether all of their conclusions may be accepted or not, they are at least worthy of consideration, inasmuch as they furnish a new

interpretation of some Scriptures not previously understood. Whether they have the times and seasons properly divided are another matter, upon which each individual Christian should use his own judgment. Let us follow the parable from this standpoint; for we know of no other to which the terms and conditions of the parable could be applied.

Let us note that all the “virgins” are to hear this message, “Behold the Bridegroom!”—the expected one has come. It does not follow that they will all hear at once—rather the contrary. During the period of the “cry,” whether it is forty years or more or less, as long as the cry goes forth there will be opportunity to hear it. All the virgin class must hear it.

The “oil” of the parable evidently represents the Holy Spirit, while the “lamps” represent the Bible. All of these virgins had the Bible and some light therefrom; but only those possessing the Spirit of the truth in their hearts in good supply would be able to hold out. To the others the lamp would cease to burn. They would cease to be able to appreciate and apply the Scriptural prophecies relative to Christ’s second coming.

Only One Way to Get the Holy Spirit

The “wise virgins” trimmed their lamps in response to the message—they examined the Scriptures. Like the Bereans of old, they “searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things be so.” Thus they had light in their lamps, as well as “oil,” the Holy Spirit, in their hearts. Then it was that the “foolish virgins” said, “Give us your oil. We wish that we could be as earnest at Bible study as you are, but these things are no longer interesting to us. Do give us some of your oil (spirit)!”

However, there is but the one way to get the Holy Spirit, and that is from the Lord himself and upon his own terms. In order to receive a fresh supply of oil we need to look well to our covenant with the Lord and to our zeal for him and the truth, to our loyalty to the principles of righteousness. This costs something of time and study. It costs something, perhaps of neglect of the things of this life. It means to forego strife for wealth and fame. It means to live close to God.

This is the cost of the precious oil which is to give light to those who will have it. Hence the wise virgins declared, in no ungenerous spirit, that they had none too much of the oil of the Holy Spirit for themselves. Then they advised their brethren who were deficient to go to God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and to seek the oil by obedience to His Word, by the searching of the Scriptures and by close following of the Master’s leading in the narrow way.

The Shutting of the Door

Meantime, the “wise virgins” were going in, one after another—passing beyond the veil—until finally the last of the foreordained number had gone in and no more could enter, “Then the door was shut.”

Once in our misunderstanding we thought that this shutting of the “door” after the wise virgin class had gone in represented that all the foolish virgins and all the remainder of mankind were shut out of God’s favor. Now, however, we notice that the “door” merely shuts in the kingdom class, the little flock, to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom. While others will never be able to enter into that kingdom, God has other blessings for them; all of which will come through the kingdom class—Christ and his bride.

The parable shows that later on the foolish virgin class gets the oil, the Holy Spirit, in proper measure and is able to get light from their lamps; that they recognize that the end of the age has come, and earnestly desire, and in prayer “knock,” that the door of the kingdom may be opened to them. However the Lord’s answer to them is, “I cannot recognize you. There is only one bride class, and they have already come in to me.”

In view of this, all of the Lord’s consecrated people should be earnestly on the watch, filled with the Spirit and having their lamps “trimmed and burning.” None might know the day and the hour when the Bridegroom would come, in the sense of his parousia; nevertheless, all of the virgins were to be aware of his presence after he had come. Anyone who did not know of it would, to that extent, lack the evidence that he belonged to the bride class; even the foolish virgins knew of the Bridegroom’s presence.

In the parable the Lord does not tell what may happen to the foolish virgins; but other Scriptures show that they pass through a portion, at least, of the great time of trouble coming upon the world; and that when finally they are received of the Lord, it will not be as his joint heirs in the throne, but as honored servants of the bride. They are elsewhere spoken of as “the virgins, the bride’s companions, who follow her” and who will ultimately be brought into the presence of the King and have an inferior share in the work of the kingdom.—Psalms 45:15, 16. Next in order will come the blessing of natural Israel and of all the families of the earth for a thousand years, for their uplifting from sin and death to righteousness and life eternal—or failing in this, the destruction of the incorrigible in the second death, from which there will be no recovery. R 5522 (1914)

Parable of The Servants And Talents

“The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

“Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.

“After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou

deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

“He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

“Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”—Matthew 25:14-30.

Every great business enterprise employs various classes of workers. This does not imply that the firm approves of all the moral qualities of their employees. They may employ some laboring men who are of good moral character and some who are of poor character; for they do not hold the working men responsible in that sense. However, the most responsible positions are given to those of recognized good character.

So God makes use of different agencies to do His service. These are sometimes animate, sometimes inanimate—Isaiah 45:1-4; Jeremiah 10:13. Those whom he recognizes as specially his servants are the church of this Gospel age—a special class of servants on special terms and agreements. These special servants are also called sons, that is to say they are adopted, and promised that they will be fully inducted into the divine family if they are faithful in God’s service in the present time.

These servants represent a stewardship—a term common in olden times. The servant did with his master’s goods as though they were his own. At the same time, while given this privilege, he was required to give an account to his employer. The master did not give him these goods and say, Use them as you like, and I will call for them when I want them. On the contrary his stewardship was to be a faithful one, and would be examined later with this end in view—to see if he had been faithful. A faithful steward would be on the lookout for everything that represented the master’s interests—would be as careful of these as he would be of his own. He would use his every power for increasing the talent—represented by the money in his care.

The Parable of the Talents

In the parable of the talents the Lord represented a man as going into a far country and leaving the talents in the care of his stewards. They were entrusted with these goods in a very special way. Thus it is with us. Each of us is entrusted with certain talents. At the time of consecration we gave our all to God. Having given all that we have and are to the Lord, he accepts our offering and appoints us his stewards over these goods—these things that we had. This would include our all—time, influence, various talents for business, music, or what not. All these are the Master's after we have made consecration. We belong to Christ. He is the head, he is Lord. But he commits to us as his faithful servants all these talents, to use for him. He says, "Occupy till I come."

This parable applies to all the church all the way down this age. Each servant is to be diligent in occupying the position of steward until he is released from it. The steward who would use his position merely to glorify himself would not be a faithful steward. The faithful steward would be the one who would desire to use the talents so as to increase the Master's wealth, the Master's glory.

The Lord gave an illustration of the faithful and unfaithful stewards at his second presence, before he will deal at all with the subjects of the kingdom—mankind in general. He showed how he will call these servants to whom he has given the talents; for he has promised them that he will make them rulers with him in his kingdom, if they are faithful in the use of their talents. In the parable, the one who received five talents doubled them, and made them ten. The one who had received two talents made them four. The one who had received one talent gave the excuse that he had buried it in the earth, because afraid. He was declared to be an unfaithful steward.

This servant was not sent to eternal torment, but the talent was taken from him. It was of his own volition that he became a steward. Seeing that he had become a steward, he deserved to be punished because he did not use that which his lord had entrusted to him. That talent belonged to his lord.

An unfaithful steward will be punished for his unfaithfulness. Better that we should not enter into the Lord's service at all than that we should enter and then hold back, neglect our opportunities. If the one who had the five talents had held back, his simply doing nothing would have made him responsible. In showing how he dealt with the one who had the one talent, and Lord is emphasizing the matter the more. These talents represent our opportunities for service according to our several abilities. The one who had less ability was given less opportunity than the one who had more ability.

So with us. Some may have handicaps of various kinds. Some have more talents, or abilities, some have less. We cannot use talents we do not possess. It is required of a man that he be found faithful with what he has. This matter of using all the talents calls up the thought of full, complete loyalty of heart devotion. We should not say I am doing better than somebody else,

as the man with five talents might have thought had he used but three or four of them. The one who is using his talents to the full capacity is specially pleasing to the Lord. Those who have two talents and use them faithfully receive the same commendation as the one who has five talents and uses the five.

Two Parables Compared

The parables of the talents and of the pounds are much alike, both representing a great householder, or lord, dealing with his servants. In the parable of the pounds, a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. This parable is based upon the fact that when an under-king, like King Herod, would hear that a new Emperor had come to the throne of Rome, he would be anxious for a re-appointment to his own kingdom. Knowing that the Emperor had power to reinstate him, he would be desirous to know whether he would receive his kingdom again, or whether someone else would receive the place. So when such under-kings went to Rome, it was with the view of returning with his kingdom, or a commission from the new Emperor.

Our Lord in this picture represents himself as a Nobleman who had been called to a throne, and who was going to a far country, to heaven itself, to receive the investiture of his kingdom. In due time he was to be the great Messiah; and he must first be invested with the authority, and then return and establish his kingdom.

In the parable of the talents, the lord, before leaving, called in his servants and committed unto them his goods, his property. He said, I will make these servants stewards. He gave one talent to one, two talents to another, and five to still another, according to their several ability. They were all remembered. When he returned he called his servants and reckoned with them. The one with two talents came and said, Lord, thou gavest me two talents. Here I make my report. I have gained two other talents. The one with the five talents said, Lord, thou gavest me five talents; lo, I have gained other five! I have doubled the amount and gotten ten! The lord said to each, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joys of thy Lord. Thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."

Then came the servant with only one talent. Although he returned it, he had failed to use it. He said, I have not lost a penny; here is thine own. His Lord said unto him, Thou art a slothful and wicked servant! The servant was punished because he was unfaithful.

Opportunity Measures Responsibility

The Lord gave this parable as an illustration of our experiences now. These talents consist of opportunities. We recently had the talent, or opportunity, of speaking the truth to 5,000 people. Therefore we had a responsibility. However, if we do not have such an opportunity, we do not have the responsibility of it. This is what the Lord meant, we understand. One may have more opportunities granted him than another. One person might be a good writer; another a good speaker; another a good exhorter; and another may be good at all three of

these things. The one good at all three would have thereby three times as much responsibility as the one with only one ability.

The talent in Bible times represented a certain amount of money. According to the most recent figures available (Am. Bib. Society, 1895), the talent mentioned in the Scriptures was either gold or silver. The value in United States money of the gold talent is \$32,689.00, while the silver talent was but \$1,563.37. Our Lord, however, used the talent, not to represent gold or silver, but as well representing the opportunities his people have to do God's will and to serve the brethren, for he says that whoever does good to one of the least of His will receive a blessing.

The lesson taught in the parable of the pounds seems somewhat different. In this the lord gave each of his servants one pound to do what he could with what was given him. One gained five pounds, and one gained ten. The third gained nothing. The pound (mina or maneh) is equivalent, if gold, to \$6,637.80; if silver, \$312.67.

Significance of One Pound to Each

In this application of the parable, to our understanding, the pound represents the blessing of justification given to each of God's children. When did he give us the pound? When he accepted us as his servants. When did he accept us as servants? We were not servants when we first turned from sin. To turn from sin is not to become a servant. The first step toward God is to turn away from sin toward righteousness, and to attempt to draw nigh unto God; for God says, "Draw nigh unto me and I will draw nigh unto you."

This one is walking in the way to justification, but has not gotten it. He is getting nearer and nearer to the right place in his ideas, etc. Finally he comes to the place where he says, Lord, if thou wilt accept me, I will give thee all I have. He offers himself to be God's servant.

One is not yet a servant of the Lord when he turns from sin. We never had a right to do wrong; and in getting away from sin and wrong, we were not serving God. God has no servants in this age except those begotten of the Holy Spirit. Others may in some sense be used as servants; for God can use even the wrath of man to serve him. In a certain sense the devil may be his servant; for sometimes he does what the Lord wishes to be done. We think the devil was serving God when he got the Jews stirred up to crucify Jesus. Demons often serve the Lord in bringing tribulation upon his people, for these tribulations are like the turning of the grindstone that polishes the jewel. God wishes to use some means at the present time to polish his jewel class.

However, the servants referred to in the parables are the Lord's consecrated people; for it is only those who have reached the point of full consecration to God that he calls his servants. Those who gave up the service of sin and unrighteousness became their own servants, the servants of self, until they gave up their lives to the Lord. They then said, I have no will but

thine. I will serve thee faithfully, even unto death. As the Lord accepts these as his servants, he gives each one a pound.

What is this pound? It is justification to life—a valuable thing. Now, being justified by faith, and being thus accepted as a servant of God, and begotten of the Holy Spirit, each one has the opportunity to do what he is able as a servant of the Lord. He uses whatever talents the Lord gives him. He must do his best with all that is entrusted to his care, as a faithful servant of the King of kings, and Lord of lords. R 5385 (1914)

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats

“When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

“Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me, And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”—Matthew 25:31-46.

While the Scriptures do not teach the blasphemous doctrine of everlasting *torment*, they do most emphatically teach the everlasting *punishment* of the wicked, the class represented in the parable as “goats.” Let us examine the parable, and then the sentence pronounced at its close.

It has been truly said that “Order is Heaven’s first law;” yet few, we think, have realized how emphatically this is true. In glancing back over the plan of the ages, there is nothing which gives such conclusive evidence of a Divine Director as the order observed in all its parts.

God has had definite and stated times and seasons for every part of his work; and in the end of each of these seasons there has been a finishing up of its work and a clearing off of the rubbish, preparatory to the beginning of the new work of the dispensation to follow. Thus in the end of the Jewish age order is observed—a harvesting and complete separation of the “wheat” class from the “chaff,” and an entire rejection of the latter class from God’s favor. With the few judged worthy in the end of that age, a new age—the Gospel age—began. Now we find ourselves amid the closing scenes, the “harvest,” of this age: the “wheat” and the “tares” which have grown together during this age are being separated. With the former class, of which our Lord Jesus is the Head, a new age is about to be inaugurated, and these “wheat” are to reign as priests in that new dispensation, while the “tare” element is judged as utterly unworthy of that favor.

While observing this order with reference to the Jewish age and the one just closing, our Lord informs us through the parable under consideration that the same order will be observed with reference to the age to follow this Gospel age.

The harvest of the Jewish age was likened to the separation of wheat from chaff; the harvest of this age to the separation of wheat from tares; and the harvest of the Millennial age to the separation of sheep from goats.

That the parable of the sheep and the goats refers to the Millennial age is clearly indicated in verses 31 and 32: “*When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.*” As in the present age every act of those on trial (the church) goes to make a part of that character which, in due time, will determine the final decision of the Judge in our case, so will it be with the world (“the nations”) in the age to come. As in the present age the trial of the majority of the individual members of the church ends, and the decision of their case is reached, long before the end of the age—2 Timothy 4:7, 8—so under the Millennial reign the decision of some individual cases will be reached long before the end of the age—Isaiah 65:20—but in each case there is a “harvest” or general separating time in the end of the age.

In the dawn of the Millennial age, after the “time of trouble,” there will be a gathering of the living nations before Christ, and in their appointed time and order, the dead of all nations shall be called to appear before the judgment seat of Christ—not to receive an immediate sentence, but to receive a fair and impartial individual trial—Ezekiel 18:2-4, 9, 20, under the most favorable circumstances, the result of which trial will be a final sentence, as worthy or unworthy of everlasting life.

The scene of this parable, therefore, is laid after the time of trouble, when the nations shall have been subdued, Satan bound—Revelation 20:1, 2, and the authority of Christ’s kingdom established. Ere this, the bride of Christ (the overcoming church) will have been seated with him in his throne of spiritual power and will have taken part in executing the judgments of the great day of wrath. Then the Son of Man and his bride, the glorified church, will be revealed

and be seen by men, with the eyes of their understanding and shall “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”—Matthew 13:43.

Here is the New Jerusalem as John saw it—Revelation 21, “that holy city (symbol of government)...coming down from God out of heaven.” During the time of trouble it will be coming down, and before the end of it, it will have touched the earth. This is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands (but by the power of God), and it will then have become a great mountain (kingdom), filling the whole earth—Daniel 2:35, its coming having broken to pieces the evil kingdoms of the prince of darkness.—Daniel 2:34, 35.

Here is that glorious city (government), prepared as a bride adorned for her husband—Revelation 21:2, and early in the dawn of the Millennium the nations will begin to walk in the light of it—verse 24. These may bring their glory and honor into it, but “there shall in no wise enter into it (or become a part of it) anything that defileth,” etc.—verse 27. Here, from the midst of the throne, proceeds a pure river of water of life (truth unmixed with error), and the Spirit and the bride say, Come, and take it freely.—Revelation 22:17. Here begins the world’s probation, the world’s great judgment day—a thousand years.

However, even in this favored time of blessing and healing of the nations, when Satan is bound, evil restrained, mankind in process of release from the grasp of death, and when the knowledge of the Lord fills the earth, two classes will be developed, which our Lord here likens to sheep and goats. These, he tells us, he will separate. The sheep class—those who are meek, teachable, and willing to be led, shall, during the Millennial age, be gathered at the judge’s right hand—symbol of his approval and favor, but the goat class, self-willed and stubborn, always climbing on the rocks—seeking prominence and approval among men—and feeding on miserable refuse, while the sheep graze in the rich pastures of the truth furnished by the Good Shepherd—these are gathered to the Judge’s left hand, the opposite of the position of favor—as subjects of his disfavor and condemnation.

The work of separating sheep and goats will require all of the Millennial age for its accomplishment. During that age, each individual, as he comes gradually to a knowledge of God and His will, takes his place at the right hand of favor or the left hand of disfavor, according as he improves or misimproves the opportunities of that golden age. By the end of that age, all the world of mankind will have arranged themselves, as shown in the parable, into two classes.

The end of that age will be the end of the world’s trial or judgment, and then final disposition will be made of the two classes. The reward of this “sheep” class will be granted them because, during the age of trial and discipline, they cultivated and manifested the beautiful character of love, which Paul describes as the fulfilling of the law of God.—Romans 13:10. They will have manifested it to each other in their time of sorest need: and what they will have done for one another the Lord will count as done unto him, counting them all as his brethren—children of God, though they will be of the human nature, while he is of the divine.

The condemnation of the “goat” class is shown to be for the lack of this spirit of love. Under the same favorable circumstances as the “sheep,” they willfully resist the molding influence of the Lord’s discipline, and harden their hearts. The goodness of God does not lead them to true repentance but, like Pharaoh, they take advantage of his goodness and do evil. The “goats” who will not have developed the element of love, the law of God’s being and kingdom, will be counted unworthy of everlasting life, and will be destroyed; while the “sheep” who will have developed God-likeness (love), and will have exhibited it in their characters, are to be installed as the subordinate rulers of earth for future ages.

In the end of the Millennial age, in the final adjustment of human affairs, Christ thus addresses his sheep: “Come ye blessed,...inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

It is manifest the “sheep” here addressed, at the close of the Millennium, are not the sheep of the Gospel age, the Gospel church, but those “other sheep” to whom the Lord referred in John 10:16. And the kingdom prepared for them in the divine plan, from the foundation of the world, is not the kingdom prepared for the Gospel church. The church will receive her kingdom at the beginning of the Millennium; but this is the kingdom prepared for the “sheep” of the Millennial age. Their kingdom will be the dominion of earth which was originally given to Adam but which was lost through sin, and which is again to be restored when man is brought to perfection and so made fit to receive and enjoy it. That dominion will not be a dominion of some of the race over others, but a joint dominion, in which every man will be a king, and all will have equal rights and privileges in appropriating and enjoying every earthly good. It will be a sovereign people—a great and grand republic on a basis of perfect righteousness, wherein the rights of every man will be conserved; because the golden rule will be inscribed on every heart, and every man will love his neighbor as himself. The dominion of all will be over the whole earth, and all its rich and bountiful stores of blessing.—Genesis 1:28; Psalms 8:5-8. The kingdom of the world, to be given to the perfected and worthy ones of the redeemed race at the close of the Millennium, is clearly distinguished from all others by being called the kingdom prepared for them “from the foundation of the world,” the earth having been made to be the everlasting home and kingdom of perfect men. However, the kingdom bestowed upon Christ, of which the church, his bride, becomes joint-heir, is a spiritual kingdom, “far above angels, principalities and powers,” and it also shall “have no end”—Christ’s Millennial kingdom, which will end, being merely a beginning of Christ’s power and rule.—1 Corinthians 15:25-28. This endless heavenly, spiritual kingdom was prepared long before the earth was founded—its inception being recognized in Christ, “the beginning of the creation of God.” It was intended for Christ Jesus, the First Begotten; but even the church, his bride and joint-heir, was chosen or designed also, in him, before the foundation of the world.—Ephesians 1:4.

The kingdom or rule of earth is the kingdom that has been in preparation for mankind from the foundation of the world. It was expedient that mankind should suffer six thousand years under the dominion of evil, to learn its inevitable results of misery and death, in order by contrast to prove the justice, wisdom, and goodness of God’s law of love. Then it will require the seventh thousand years, under the reign of Christ, to restore him from ruin and death, to

the perfect condition, thereby fitting him to “inherit the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world.”

That kingdom, in which all will be kings, will be one grand, universal republic, whose stability and blessed influence will be assured by the perfection of its every citizen, a result now much desired but an impossibility because of sin. The kingdom of Christ during the Millennium will be, on the contrary, a theocracy, which will rule the world (during the period of its imperfection and restoration) without regard to its consent or approval.

The brethren of the Gospel church are not the only “brethren” of Christ. All who will at that time have been restored to perfection will be recognized as sons of God—sons in the same sense that Adam was a son of God—Luke 3:38, human sons. All of God’s sons, whether on the human, the angelic, or the divine plane are brethren. Our Lord’s love for these, his human brethren, is here expressed. As the world now has the opportunity to minister to those who are shortly to be the divine sons of God, and brethren of Christ, so they will have abundant opportunity during the age to come to minister to (each other) the human brethren.

The dead nations when again brought into existence will need food raiment, and shelter. However great may have been their possessions in this life, death will have brought all to a common level: the infant and the man of mature years, the millionaire and the pauper, the learned and the unlearned, the cultured and the ignorant and degraded: all will have an abundant opportunity for the exercise of benevolence, and thus they will be privileged to be co-workers with God. We are here reminded of the illustration given in the case of Lazarus: Jesus only awakened him from death, and then were the rejoicing friends permitted to loose him from his grave clothes and to clothe and feed him.

Further, these are said to be “sick and in prison” (more properly, under ward or watch). The grave is the great prison where the millions of humanity have been held in unconscious captivity. However, when released from the grave the restoration to perfection will not be an instantaneous work. Being not yet perfect, they may properly be termed sick, and under ward; not dead, neither are they yet perfected in life; and any condition between those two may be properly symbolized by sickness. However, they will continue to be under watch or ward until made well—physically, mentally, and morally perfect. During that time there will be abundant opportunity for mutual helpfulness, sympathy, instruction, and encouragement, and any failure to assist will mark a lack of the Lord’s spirit of love.

Since all mankind will not be raised at once, but gradually, during the thousand years, each new group will find an army of helpers in those who will have preceded it. The love and benevolence which men will then show to each other (the brethren of Christ) the King will count as shown to him. No great deeds are assigned as the grounds for the honors and favors conferred upon the righteous: they will have simply come into harmony with God’s law of love and proved it by their works. “Love is the fulfilling of the law”—Romans 13:10—and “God is love.” So when man is restored again to the image of God—man also will be a living expression of love.

“Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” does not signify a rule independent of the divine law and supremacy: for although God gave earth’s dominion to man at first, and designs restoring it to him when he has prepared him for the great trust, we are not to suppose that God intends man to rule it otherwise than as under, or in harmony with, his supreme law. “Thy will be done in earth as in heaven,” must forever be the principle of government. Man thenceforth will rule his dominion in harmony with the law of heaven—delighting continually to do his will in whose favor is life, and at whose “right hand (condition of favor) there are pleasures forevermore.”—Psalms 16:11. Oh! Who would not say, “Haste ye along, ages of glory!” and give glory and honor to him whose loving plans are blossoming into such fullness of blessing?

Let us now examine the message to those on the left: “Depart from me, ye cursed (condemned)”—condemned as unfit vessels for the glory and honor of life, who would not yield to the molding and shaping influences of divine love. When these, “brethren,” were hungry and thirsty or naked, sick, and in prison, ye ministered not to their necessities, thus continually proving yourselves out of harmony with the heavenly city (kingdom), for “there shall in no case enter into it anything that defileth.” The decision or sentence regarding this class is: “Depart from me into everlasting fire (symbol of destruction), prepared for the devil and his angels.” Elsewhere—Hebrews 2:14—we read without symbol that Christ “will destroy...him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

“And these (the “goats”) shall go away into everlasting (Greek, *aionios*—lasting) punishment, but the righteous into life eternal (Greek, *aionios*—lasting).” The punishment will be as lasting as the reward. Both will be everlasting.

R 2606 (1900)

Parables from Luke's Gospel

Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind

“He spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.”—Luke 6:39, 40; Matthew 15:14.

The Great Teacher in this lesson emphasizes the necessity of knowledge and of a faith built thereupon. The blind leading the blind represents the ignorant leading the ignorant into difficulties, into the ditch. In the mental blindness of the past, many Christians assumed that the Master here taught that the blind leaders and the blind followers of our day would all fall into the pit of eternal torment, but not so. The thought is that they will stumble and experience injury instead of reaching the desired destination.

The destination sought by the Jews was fellowship with and relationship with God—His highest favor mentioned to Abraham, saying, “In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” St. Paul says of that promise, “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh, but the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded.”—Romans 11:7. The entire Jewish race was blinded and turned aside and fell into the pit—into confusion, darkness, separation from God. This was the very matter against which Jesus warned them. They were following the lead of the Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, all of whom were blind leaders who misled their too trusting followers. The disciple or follower will not fare better than his master or leader or teacher; he cannot hope for better results than his leader.

How important, then, that God's people recognize the true Leader, Jesus, that they hear his voice, and heed not the voice of others. In the present, in the ending of this Gospel age, we have a condition of things very similar to that which obtained in the end of the Jewish age. We have many great, learned, and wise men in all the denominations of Christendom, as the Jews had in Jesus' day in all their different sects. It is equally important that we take heed that we do not follow blind leaders today—in fact, it is much more important. Why should we follow any of the creeds when we now have the word of God in such convenient form and when all are able to read it? Who cannot rejoice that recently the Pope issued instructions that the Roman Catholic bishops should encourage Catholics to study the Bible? How it would rejoice us to find the Protestant leaders similarly urging the Word of God upon their people!

Alas! on the contrary, we find that many of the great and wise of the principal pulpits of the world are undermining the faith of the people by telling them that the Bible is not divinely inspired, that Moses and the Prophets did not write the books ascribed to them, and hence indirectly saying that Jesus and the Apostles were deceived when they made quotations from the Old Testament and ascribed them to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses, Habakkuk, etc. These great men style themselves Higher Critics and endorse the theory of Evolution, that humanity is undergoing a process of evolution from monkey-likeness to God-likeness. They are thus indirectly telling their people that there was no fall from God's image and likeness, that there

was no sin committed, no sentence for sin, no Redeemer from sin and its sentence and that restitution is not to be hoped for nor to be desired.—Acts 3:19-21.

Surely the Great Teacher's advice not to follow blind leaders was never more needed than in our day. Blessed will they be who heed the warning, and by it will be guided back to a more thorough study of the words of the Great Teacher, his apostles, and the prophets. R5029 (1912)

Parable of Casting out the Mote from a Brother's Eye

“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceives not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.”—Luke 6:41, 42; Matthew 7:3-5.

The parable of a man with a beam in his own eye trying to pick a mote out of his brother's eye was a forceful method whereby the Master inculcated the necessity of humility on the part of those who would be taught of God. Humility is here as elsewhere put as a foundation virtue. The Latin word for humility is *humus*, ground. This implies that it is the soil out of which other virtues are produced. Those who think they know everything can learn nothing. As Chalmers has said, “The more a man does examine, the more does he discover the infirmities of his own character.” As Wheatley remarked, “Ten thousand of the greatest faults in our neighbors are of less consequence to us than one of the smallest in ourselves.” A knowledge of our sins and imperfections should make and keep all humanity humble; but how beautiful it is to realize that the perfect Jesus was humble and that all the holy angels are so! R5029 (1912)

Parable of Gathering Grapes of Brambles

“For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”—Luke 6:43-45; Matthew 7:16-20.

While the Scriptures forbid God's people to judge one another, they do commend to us another kind of judging. We are not to judge in the sense of condemning, sentencing, etc., those who claim to be honest, sincere, reverential, merely because they differ from what we would expect; God knows their hearts and to his own Master each servant must stand or fall eventually.

While not condemning the heart we are to judge of the outward conduct. The parable which our Lord in this lesson gives respecting the gathering of grapes from bramble bushes illustrates this point. God's people are likened to the grape-vine, which produces no thorns but luscious

clusters of fruit. Mankind in general are likened to bramble bushes, ready to scratch, tear, injure, on the slightest provocation, and are merely self-sustaining, not bringing forth fruitage that would be a blessing to others. We are to distinguish between such characters and God's people: "By their fruits shall ye know them."

It is said that at times a bramble bush will be entirely covered by a vine, so that the grapes would appear to be coming from the bush. We are not to be mistaken. A good tree cannot bring forth an evil fruitage, neither can an injurious tree bring forth a good fruitage. The lesson, applied to humanity, is that those who are really God's people cannot live injurious lives or fruitless lives; they must be fruit-bearing else they are none of his. Should we find some of the fruits of the spirit commingling with a thorniness of life, an evil, injurious disposition, we are to assume that in some sense of the word the fruitage is merely put on and does not belong to the bramble-bush character.

It is therefore useless for any man to tell us that he has given his heart to the Lord in fullness of consecration and that he has received the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit and yet find him rejoicing in sin, taking pleasure in iniquity, injustice, selfishness, and a course of life injurious to his neighbors. If his heart be changed the results will be manifest in his daily life because, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." R 5029 (1912)

Parable of the Two Debtors – One Owed Much, One Owed Little

"Two Types of Sinners"

(Luke 7:36-50)

Simon was a very common name amongst the Jews, and hence it is not so remarkable that there were two Simons at whose homes Jesus was entertained. It is a little peculiar, however, that there are so many features of similarity connected with the two entertainments—that at both of them our Lord's feet were anointed, etc. (Compare Matthew 26:6-13). It is supposed that about a year and a half elapsed between the two events, that recorded by Matthew being just prior to our Lord's death, "anointing for my burial."

In this lesson we see Simon, a Pharisee, evidently considerably impressed with our Lord's character and teachings, and more favorably inclined toward him than the majority. He thought it would be pleasant to invite Jesus to dinner, thus to honor him, and possibly to have a little notoriety himself in connection with the noted Nazarene.

When our Lord accepted the invitation and attended the dinner Simon treated him kindly and politely, but did not go to any extreme of politeness in his entertainment, perhaps thinking of him as not being used to special attentions, but rather as being a companion of fishermen and common people generally. Simon therefore did not salute him with a kiss on his arrival, as was usual with honored guests, for that would have seemed like bestowing too much honor upon an ordinary person whom he, as a Pharisee, was not yet prepared to fully endorse; nor did he send the servant to take off the Master's sandals and to wash his feet, according to the

custom of the best entertainers of that time. He may have said to himself, This man and his disciples are not used to being entertained in such style, and my servants would recognize themselves as being on a par at least with any of these men except the Teacher himself. Without, therefore, going to the extremes of polite entertaining, the Pharisee had nevertheless cordially welcomed the Lord to this table, feeling no doubt that in doing this he was honoring the Lord, and not sufficiently realizing that he was the one who was being honored, in the privilege of entertaining so noble a guest. How will Simon regard the matter when, in the resurrection time (during the Millennium) he ascertains that his guest was “the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?”

The Apostle urges upon us all, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels (God’s messengers) unawares.” The Lord wishes his people to be generous with such things as they have (but not to be vaingloriously extravagant), hence it is written again, “There is that scattereth and yet increaseth: and there is that withholdeth more than is meet (proper) and it tendeth to poverty.” It is a part of our present lesson to learn of our own mean selfishness, which all have inherited through the fall, and gradually, under the instruction of the Lord’s Word, to get the victory over this and become more generous—more like our Father in Heaven.

Let us be specially generous and hospitable toward the “brethren,” who really represent the Lord himself; not only as “ambassadors for God,” but also as “members of the body of Christ.”

The “woman of the city” mentioned, was evidently a common character, widely known to the people of the city, though she might not be known to Jesus and the disciples, who were not residents. Whatever the woman’s previous life may have been, she had experienced deep contrition of heart, and a desire to live a better life. She had heard about Jesus, the Great Teacher, and that unlike the Pharisees he did not disdain to speak with and to encourage fallen ones and to help them up again. She felt that she would like to go to the Lord in prayer for forgiveness, and would like to make a fresh start in life, to seek thereafter to live more consistently. She knew not how to approach the matter; she knew not what to say respecting herself; she would merely take a little offering in her hand and while he was reclining at dinner, after the custom of that time, and while his feet would be easily accessible to her, she would venture to anoint them with the fine ointment which she had brought with her. Saying not a word, her heart too full for utterance, she reached the Master’s feet, and there her tears trickled over them. By her tears he should know, more eloquently than she could voice her sentiments in words, what were the true longings of her heart for forgiveness and for reconciliation.

How merciful and considerate of our needs is the Lord’s provision that when we come penitently to his feet for forgiveness we are not required to approach him through another, nor to formulate our petition in some exact form of language—he can read our hearts and accepts our tears and even our humblest efforts to make amends and to serve the “members of his body.” Even though he may delay the message of forgiveness it is but to let the roots of penitence and faith sink deeper in our hearts.

Jesus for a time seemed to heed her not, and she may have questioned whether or not he was misunderstanding her motives and her prayer, but fullness of her heart found vent in still more tears, and tenderly she wiped his feet and anointed them with the ointment. The Pharisee, meantime, was saying within himself: Now it is most fortunate that I invited Jesus to dinner today, and it is fortunate that this woman came in; it affords a proof, a test, respecting the ability of Jesus to read the hearts of those about him. If he were a prophet, if he were specially empowered and enlightened of God, he would have known the character of this woman, but he evidently does not know her character, and therefore is permitting her to anoint his feet, and this seems to be a proof that he is not a prophet.

Jesus, fully conscious of all that was going on, and with a clear knowledge of the heart of a poor woman at his feet, and of the self-satisfied Pharisee who entertained him, was planning a way by which he might do good to both of them—a way by which he might set before all present a great truth. Therefore he put a parable to Simon, saying that a certain creditor had two debtors, the one owing a large amount, the other a small amount, and when they were totally unable to pay, he cheerfully and promptly forgave them both. Then our Lord pointed his lesson on this little parable, by inquiring which of the two forgiven ones would be most appreciative of the creditor's leniency? Simon, who had not as yet caught the import of the parable, promptly answered that the one who had the largest debt forgiven would undoubtedly be the one who would be the most appreciative, and our Lord approved this answer. Then directing attention to the woman, he reminded Simon that although he had been kind in inviting him to dinner, and although he appreciated his attentions, nevertheless the still greater attentions of the woman, and the still greater marks of respect which she had shown were evidences that while they both loved, the woman loved the more; and the intimation clearly is that the greater love was developed by a greater realization of sin and a greater desire to be relieved from it.

Of course, in one sense of the word, all are sinners, all have come short of the glory of God, and are hopeless without forgiveness, yet the Pharisee occupied a different position from the woman, because under the Jewish Law Covenant he was already occupying a standpoint of typical justification, and was seeking to maintain that standing by living a life of strict regard for the divine law. On the other hand, the woman, although under the same covenant, by living an abandoned life in open violation of the Law, had lost her interest in the national typical justification, and was therefore in a much larger sense of the word a sinner. Simon knew very well that while he was trying to keep the law he was not keeping it perfectly, but infringed it in various ways from time to time, and yet he was not willfully an infractor of the Law, as was the woman; hence in this sense of the word there was the wide difference between great sin and less sin; yet both needed the Savior, and if the Pharisee had realized the truth of the matter he needed the Savior just as much as did the woman, for the Law Covenant could not give him everlasting life—to attain that he must admit his sin and accept forgiveness and salvation from sin and its penalty, death, as a gift from the Savior who honored him by consenting to be his guest.

Then Jesus turned to the woman and said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven." What words those must have been to her! Her prayer was answered—a prayer, which had risen in her heart and which had expressed itself through tears and ointment, had been heard and she was forgiven and all the past treated as forever blotted out. How thankful she must have felt! Poor Simon, however, so far as we know, did not come to the point of saying Lord, I also am a sinner, and even though I have loved less than this woman, I also need to be forgiven, and I pray for the forgiveness of my sins, that I may be counted one of your followers. No, the very fact that he had a religious standing in the nominal church, and had made a profession of holiness, seems to have stood in his way, and to have hindered him from accepting the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins. So it is right along. How frequently do we see that people who have been living moral lives, evidently seeking to walk in paths of righteousness, are much less prepared to accept forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ than are some others who have been living more carelessly and who awaken to a realization of their undone condition, and go to the Lord more contritely and more earnestly, and exercise a greater faith, and feel for him consequently a greater love!

There is no intimation, however, that because of his failure to ask forgiveness and to become a follower of Jesus, Simon was condemned to "hell," etc.; quite to the contrary, he simply followed the course of his nation (blinded by prejudice and false traditions of men). Their rejection of Jesus lost to them the privileges of joint-heirship in Christ's kingdom, and led to their national rejection from God's favor until the opening of the Millennial age. Then, as the Apostle clearly shows, their blindness shall be removed and they shall be blest with a much clearer knowledge of the truth. Then the Lord will "pour upon them the spirit of prayer and supplication, and they shall look upon him whom they pierced, and shall mourn because of him." Then when they weep as did the woman with the ointment, God, through the glorified Christ, will have mercy on them and forgive their sins. Then their trial for everlasting life will begin.—See Romans 11:25-32; Zechariah 12:10.

The other guests at the table were particularly struck with our Lord's declaration that the woman's sins were forgiven her. Not recognizing the speaker to be the Messiah, the Son of God, they questioned the propriety of such words, but this was one reason why our Lord uttered the words; it was one of his methods of calling attention to the fact that he was the Messiah, and that as such, and in view of the work which he was yet to do all power to forgive sins was in his hands.

Then he said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." He wished her to know that it was not her tears that had brought her forgiveness; that it was not the value of the ointment that had moved him to forgive her, but that the thing that was pleasing in his sight, and on account of which her sins were forgiven, was her faith. She not only realized her own sinful condition but she had realized that this great Teacher had the power to forgive her and to restore her, and she had trusted, and acted upon this, and our Lord wished her to realize that the reward she had received was because of exercise of this faith. So we may realize in respect to all of the Lord's favors in the case of each one of his people. When we come unto the Lord, with tears of penitence, we are to know that they do not prevail; and if we present gifts we are

to know that they do not prevail, and that the tears and offerings could avail us nothing except as we present to the Lord our faith, accepting him as the one who has power to forgive sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Not only is this necessary at the beginning of the Christian way but similarly faith is necessary all the journey through. If we do not continue in faith we cannot progress. “According to thy faith be it unto thee,” would seem to be the Lord’s method of dealing with all who are his disciples, from first to last of their Christian walk and experience.

The center of the lesson then is abiding faith in the Lord: faith when he seems not to notice us; faith when things seem to be going prosperously with us in our spiritual affairs and in our temporal affairs, and faith equally strong when the current and forces seem all to be against us. The victory that overcometh the world is the faith that in all conditions is able to look up to the Lord with absolute confidence in his goodness and faithfulness, and to realize that according to his promise eventually all things will work together for good to us because we are his people.—
1 John 5:5; Romans 8:29. R2625 (1900)

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

“And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

“Which one of these three, thinkest thou, was a neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that had mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”—Luke 10:30-37.

At this point our study for today opens. A lawyer thought to entrap the master by asking the question: “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” In those days, when the only law of Israel was God’s Law, a lawyer was one well versed in the teachings of the books of Moses. Jesus therefore said to this theological doctor: “How do you understand the matter? You know what is written in the Law.” The lawyer replied: “We shall love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.” Jesus approved this, saying that it was true. “Do this—keep the Law—and you shall live. You will never die.”

The lawyer was caught before he knew it. He knew that the people of Israel had been dying for centuries, notwithstanding the Law; yet himself and others were outwardly claiming that

they were keeping the Law. Jesus showed him out of his own testimony that he was not keeping the Law, as he pretended to do and as the Pharisees in general pretended to do. The fact is that no imperfect, fallen human being can keep the perfect Law of God; for it is so comprehensive that only a perfect man could keep it thoroughly.

The lawyer sought to make the best of a bad argument and, instead of acknowledging his defeat, turned the question to Jesus again: “Who is my neighbor” whom I am to love as myself? This was one of the points which Jesus had particularly made against the Pharisees—that outwardly they were pious, religious, they prayed, fasted, etc., yet in their hearts they were unjust and would take unjust advantage of widows and orphans—not loving them as themselves. The lawyer sought to imply that God’s Law did not include everybody as his neighbor but only certain special ones.

Jesus, however, again said to him, I will give you a parable. A certain man went down to Jericho; and on that lonely mountain road he was beset by thieves, who stripped him, wounded him and left him half dead. There happened that way a priest, one of the highest representatives of the Law; and when he saw the man he passed by on the other side. Likewise there passed by a Levite, next in relationship to service to the Law, the service of God. He went a little nearer and looked at the poor man, but did nothing. Then came along a Samaritan, an outsider, not a Jew at all; and he was filled with compassion. He bound up the wounds, put the man on his beast, brought him to an inn and took care of him, sacrificing his own time and strength in the wounded man’s interest. He did more than this. He paid for the man’s keep until he should return from Jerusalem.

“Now,” said Jesus to the lawyer, “I put the question to you, Which of these men acted the part of the neighbor to this man who fell among the thieves? Which one of these treatments of the case would fulfill the requirements of the Law, according to your judgment?” The lawyer answered that the one who showed mercy on the man was the one who had surely done the neighborly act. Jesus replied that this should be an example to the lawyer, that he should do likewise—that he should be kind, thoughtful generous toward any human being who was in affliction, in need of help.

Love Fulfills the Law

We do well to remember God’s real object in giving laws, commandments, etc. He is not taking pleasure especially in the number of times that we bow the knee or bow the head, nor in the number of times that we attend divine worship, nor in anything that we can do along the lines of worship. The Lord especially delights to see us cultivate his own spirit of love and kindness and generosity. “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.”—1 John 4:16. As the Apostle says, “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he claim to love God whom he hath not seen?” How could he know that he would love God?—1 John 4:20. Well does the Apostle Paul tell us that love is the fulfilling of the law. —Romans 13:10.

We are not to understand the Apostle to mean that simply to have love would fulfill God's Law and give us everlasting life. No! It is only for those who have accepted Christ that love fulfills the Law. For all those who become disciples of Jesus, God has made a special arrangement, that the merit of Jesus' sacrifice shall cover their blemishes; so that if they cultivate and possess the heart quality of love (God-likeness) it will be acceptable—because Jesus' sacrifice makes good all deficiency. We are "accepted in the Beloved." "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who are walking, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

St. Paul remarks that love is the principal thing in our character in the divine estimation. He tells us that if we should give all our goods to feed the poor or even if we should give our bodies to be burned in some worthy cause, and yet not have love—not do these things from the spirit of prompting of love—it would all count for nothing in God's sight.—1 Corinthians 13. Evidently the great lesson for Christian people to learn is to put away all these—anger, malice, envy, hatred, strife, and to put on all these—meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love. St. Peter declares that if we do these things we shall never fall, but that an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be granted to us.—2 Peter 1:10, 11. R 5369 (1913)

Parable of the Rich Farmer Building Larger Barns

"Soul, Take Thine Ease"

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be; which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."—Luke 12:16-21.

Our Lord gave a parable illustrating the comparative foolishness of all earthly ambitions. This does not mean that earthly ambitions are the worst thing; but rather that they are poor in comparison to the one great possibility, the kingdom. It is a pearl of great value, to obtain which all other pearls—all other valuables, all other ambitions, and all other hopes—are to be set aside, and counted as dross.

The parable tells of a rich farmer who, instead of using his riches in doing good, was miserly, taking pleasure in accumulations. He built greater barns and storehouses, and consoled himself with the thought that he had plenty and more than enough, and could thenceforth take his ease. The parable points out that ere long he died. We query, What advantage did the man really have through his accumulation of great wealth, which he failed to use? He left it for

others to quarrel over, and possibly to be more or less injured by. He was a foolish rich man. Instead of leaving his wealth thus, he should have enjoyed himself in spending it wisely for the good of others and to the glory of God. Thus he would have been rich toward God. However, on the other hand, he was an illustration of those who are not rich toward God; for he laid up his treasure for self.

Many read into this parable things that it does not contain. They infer that the rich man went to eternal torment, but nothing in the Lord's words so intimate. The expression, "this night shall thy soul be required of thee," signifies this night you lose your life—you die in poverty. Earthly riches will be of no account to you in the future if you have not laid up spiritual riches in the heart, in the mind and in good works, which would make you rich in the future.

That rich man, instead of being benefitted by the riches which he accumulated, will in the future life be disadvantaged. He might have used his riches sacrificially, or he might have consecrated his entire life to God through Christ and then faithfully laid down time, talent, opportunities, wealth. Thus he would, in the same proportion, have been laying up treasures in heaven, so that in the resurrection he would have been received of the Lord as a faithful follower, to share his glory, honor, and immortality—to be a member of his kingdom class, whose commission it will be for a thousand years to scatter the divine blessings, secured by the death of Jesus, to all of Adam's race.

That rich man, having missed his opportunities, will nevertheless come forth during Christ's Millennial Kingdom; for we read that all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth. But instead of coming forth approved to a share in the first resurrection, he will come forth disapproved of God, and his resurrection opportunities will be those described as the resurrection of judgment.—John 5:29, R.V. He will come forth to shame and contempt, which will continue until he shall, under the judgments of that time, learn his lesson and form a better character; or refusing to do so, he will be cut off in the second death. R 5396 (1914)

Parable of the Returning Bridegroom and the Waiting Servants

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

"And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us; or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then

is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." — Luke 12:35-48.

Today's lesson continues the Master's exhortations to his faithful ones—that they prepare themselves for his "Well done!" and the participation with him in his kingdom. He said "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The Lord purposely left his followers without definite information respecting the time for the establishment of his kingdom. He had illustrated the interim of time between his going and returning in the parable of the talents. He as the Master had left his servants in charge of his goods while he went to a far country, even heaven itself, to be invested with the kingdom authority; and at an appropriate time he would return to receive his servants, and according to their faithfulness would make them sharers with him in his kingdom, and then would begin his rule over his subjects, for their blessing and uplift out of sin and death conditions—for their deliverance from the reign of Sin and Death.

Regarding the Lord's Second Presence

Today's lesson opens with a parable. If in a great house, the master were about to be married and to bring home his bride, the servants would on that particular night be especially active, wakeful, and attentive that they might receive their lord with proper attention. They would not know exactly the time of their master's coming, but they would be continually on the alert that they might hear his knock and open instantly. So Jesus declared all of his followers should be on the alert for his second presence. It was not that he would bring his bride with him; rather he comes that he may receive his bride here. Indeed, the faithful servants are then to be made the bride, according to the other picture.

The thought is that Jesus' followers should take their ideals of alertness from the extremist experience of earthly service. Jesus intimated that his followers might be looking for him sooner than he would come, saying that if he should come in the second watch or in the third watch or whenever, blessed are those servants if he finds them watching for him, alert, ready to receive him. He declared that he will grant such servants a special honor. He will gird himself, make himself their servant, and cause them to sit down to a sumptuous feast which he will provide.

This Bible students understand to signify that at the *parousia* of Jesus, his second presence, he will first of all make himself known to his faithful followers, while the world in general will be ignorant of the fact that he has come. His manifestation to the world will come later; as we read, “He shall be revealed in flaming fire”—judgments. When he shall appear (to the world), we (the church) shall appear with him in glory.—Colossians 3:4.

It is our Lord’s *parousia* that is described in today’s lesson—his earliest manifestation of his second advent. The world will see him not, and know not of his presence, and his church will know of his presence only by his “knock”—by the intimations given in the Scriptures—the fulfillment of prophecy. It will then be for the watchful ones to recognize this fulfillment, and by faith to open their hearts and minds promptly to acknowledge the Master’s presence and all that presence implies of the nearness of his kingdom and of the proving of all who will be found faithful, worthy to share in that kingdom as members of his bride.

For such as receive him he will make a feast. Out of the divine Word he will bring things new and old, for their refreshment and comfort. The Bible will become to them a new book; they will feed upon the riches of God’s grace, and the dark things will become clear, the hidden mysteries shall be revealed. The Master himself will be the servant, the revealer, the setter-forth of these viands of truth. Many Bible students believe that we are now living in this very time; and that each faithful, watchful follower of Jesus will be granted a hearing of the knock and the privilege of participating in this feast, which many tell us they are now enjoying.

“But know this that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken into.” The great Teacher here intimates that Satan, the prince of this world, is the master of the present order of things on earth; and that at his second presence he will bind this strong man, or master of the present order, and overturn present institutions, and establish instead the long-promised reign of righteousness. It will be this thorough transition from the reign of Sin and Death to the reign of Righteousness and Life, which will cause the great time of trouble mentioned everywhere throughout the Bible as marking the closing of this Gospel Age—“a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation.”—Daniel 12:1; Mark 13:8; Matthew 24:21.

Here and elsewhere Jesus speaks of his second presence as thief-like. The thought is that he will be present for a time; unobserved by the world, known only to the bride class, the salt of the earth, whom he will remove—changing them from earthly nature to heavenly. Verse 40 confirms this thought, and instructs all the Lord’s faithful that they should be ready for his presence, to render up at any hour their accounts and experience the change.

To Give Them Their Portion

St. Peter was perplexed. Was this parable especially for the apostles, that they should watch, etc., or was it for all the people? He inquired. The Lord did not answer him directly. He merely assured St. Peter that at the appropriate time the Lord would appoint a steward over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season. This is not very different from

what has been the Lord's usual method of dealing with his family. While a measure of the Spirit is given to each for his profit, and while the Holy Spirit thus given is to guide the recipients into a knowledge of the things of God, nevertheless the Lord has been pleased to use special instrumentalities at various times.

For instance, St. Peter apparently for a time was a leader amongst the apostles, in opening the Pentecostal door, and later in opening the door to the Gentiles—preaching to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. Later on the Lord seems to have specially chosen St. Paul to be his particular messenger to the Gentiles, as we read, “He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name unto the Gentiles.”—Acts 9:15. Similarly Enoch, Abraham, Moses, the Prophets, and others during the Gospel age, have seemed to be especially used of the Lord to draw the attention of his people to his Word. In the case of the apostles, there was of course a plenary or special inspiration, which does not appertain to others of this age since.

While the Lord has thus appointed special servants in handing to his household meat in due season at various times, it was required of each one who would partake that he should prove, test, determine whether or not the teaching was of God. He was to prove all things by the written Word of God, which the Apostle Paul declared is sufficient that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished. Any servant not found faithful, it is intimated, would be supplanted by another.

The servant at the end of the age, at the time of the Master's coming, if found faithful, would be especially blessed, and be given a general charge respecting the spiritual food to the Lord's family, the “meat in due season.” However, if he should prove unfaithful and fail to recognize the Master's presence, and manifest an unkind spirit toward the household, ministering to his own earthly wants rather than to the spiritual needs of the family of God, he would be removed in that day—cut asunder, separated, allowed to go into outer darkness with the world in general, in utter ignorance of the times and seasons, etc., of his Lord. The assumption is that the displacement of the one servant would mean the recognition of another to supply the household of faith.

On the basis of this parable the Lord explained a general principle of his dealings; namely, that any servant, knowing his Master's will and not doing in harmony therewith, would receive stripes, punishments, tribulations, of some sort in proportion to the degree of his knowledge and opportunity. On the other hand, any servant, even if he did things worthy of stripes, yet did them ignorantly, would receive proportionately fewer stripes. In a word, the general principle is that “to whom much is given, of him much is required.”

Our Golden Text

“Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.”

The heart of this lesson is found in the Golden Text, which refers to all of the Lord's servants who will be living at the time of his second coming—who in the earliest stages of his second

coming, in the time of his *parousia*, his presence, will be faithfully watching, on the alert to serve every interest of the Lord's cause, seeking his will, doing his will, searching the Scriptures, obeying the Scriptures to the best of their ability. These will be informed to a certain degree respecting the time in which they will be living, as the Apostle points out, saying, "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." "Ye are all children of the light, children of the day." "For the day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night, in the which they (the world) will say, Peace and safety; and they (the world) shall not escape (the tribulations of that day)."—1 Thessalonians 5:1-8. "Let us therefore walk, not in darkness, but in the light."

The secrecy observed respecting the time and the manner of the second presence of Jesus will prove to be a strong test. All of the Lord's consecrated ones who are overcharged with the cares of this life—business, pleasure, etc.,—will be slow to hear the knock; and even when they hear, they will be too much engrossed to give heed.

However, there will be a great blessing on those servants whom the Lord at that time shall find watching—not watching the sky, as though they would see Jesus, when he is now a spirit being, invisible to humanity, but watching the Bible testimonies, watching the trend of the times, watching their own hearts, watching also the interests of the church of God, seeking to build one another up in the most holy faith, laying aside every weight and every besetting sin. Let all of us who claim to be virgins—pure ones—who claim to be the Lord's servants as well as his brethren—let us be found of him in peace, seeking first the kingdom of God and the righteousness which it inculcates; let us be found alert, watching for opportunities of usefulness in the proclamation of the kingdom message, and in helping the bride to make herself ready.— Revelation 21:9; 19:7. R 5399 (1914)

Parable of the Leaven Put into the Bread Dough

"And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."—Luke 13:20, 21; Matthew 13:33.

Again the Master illustrated the experiences of his church as an embryotic kingdom. His second parable tells of a woman who hid some leaven in three measures of meal until the whole batch was leavened. This, Bible students are coming to understand, signifies a corrupting of the divine message—the spiritual food which God had prepared for the church. A woman in symbolic language represents a church system; and the Master tells us that such a church system will mix leaven, or ferment, in the food of the family of God until the whole mass will be corrupted. For be it noted that leaven in the Bible is always used as a symbol of corruption, of sin. This parable shows that the faith once delivered to the saints would be lost, vitiated, mixed with error, until it would be no longer nourishing to the family. St. Paul pictures the same matter, saying that in the latter days "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons."—1 Timothy 4:1.

These false doctrines are what are troubling the people of God today. Our hearts are better than our heads; for the hearts of the consecrated are in tune with the Infinite One, while the creeds of the Dark Ages are quite out of tune. The blessings that are lately coming to Bible students are largely the result of breaking loose from the creeds formulated in the Dark Ages; and getting back to the teachings of Jesus, the apostles, and the prophets—the only inspired authorities. Their words alone constitute the proper food whereby we are to be nourished. The Word of God is sufficient, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished.
—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

Some dear Christian people, looking at matters evidently from a wrong angle, are still deceived into thinking that it is possible for the church, as the Kingdom of God in an embryotic condition, to do the work which God assigns to that church in her future glorified, perfected condition. Such shut their eyes to the fact that the number of heathens in proportion to the number of Christians doubles every century. Such try to count up Christians by the hundreds of millions, entirely ignoring the fact that Jesus has declared that the Gospel church, the elect, who are walking in his steps, will be altogether but a little flock.—Luke 12:32. R5406 (1914)

Entering in at the Straight Gate and the Closing of the Door

“Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

“And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north; and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.”—Luke 13:23-30; Matthew 7:13, 14.

The blessing of the heathen is not merely for those now living, but for all who have ever lived. Messiah’s kingdom will triumph gloriously in the Lord’s due time. The knowledge of the glory of God will fill the whole earth—Isaiah 11:9, until none shall need to say to his neighbor or to his brother, Know thou the Lord; for all shall know him.—Jeremiah 31:33, 34. It is in order that all may come to a knowledge of the truth that God has promised that “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust;” that “all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth.” A faithful few will come forth to glory, honor, immortality, and a share in the kingdom; and the unreconciled many will come forth later, that the love of God may be testified to them, and that they may have the opportunity of the rewards and chastisements of the kingdom, to help them back to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed at Calvary.

Some inquired of the Lord, Will there be but few saved? Jesus did not give a direct answer to the question, doubtless for two reasons: (1) The Holy Spirit had not yet come, and his followers could not then be prepared to understand the plan of God thoroughly. (2) It was not due time to explain all the particulars of the spiritual salvation of the church, to be like unto her Lord, and then later the human restitution of the world to the image and likeness of the first Adam. Jesus applied the matter to his hearers personally, saying: "Strive ye to enter in (to the kingdom) by the narrow door; for many, I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up and shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open unto us, he shall answer and say to you, I know ye not whence ye are."

For a certain period of time the door to the high calling of the church stands ajar. Jesus opened up this new way of life through the veil; that is to say, his flesh—his sacrifice.—Hebrews 10:19, 20. The possibilities of entering into this way were first presented to the Jews; and after finding the suitable ones of that people, God has directed the message hither and thither amongst the Gentiles for these more than eighteen centuries. Apparently the gathering of the elect has been nearly completed. As soon as the last one completing the elect number shall have qualified for glory and shall have passed through the door, it will shut.

About that time, a great awakening of religious thought will come to the world, in the midst of a great time of trouble. Then many will begin to see that they have been neglecting the great prize, that they have failed to purchase the pearl of great price on the cheap terms on which it was offered to them—their little all. Then there will be great lamentation amongst this class, and a crying, Lord, Lord, are we not to be of the bride class? But the Lord will disown them as respects the bride company. Then they will be in great sorrow. Weeping and gnashing of teeth will prevail. This will not be in some far-off place of eternal torment, as once we supposed; but, as the narrative intimates, it will be right here on the earth, amongst a class who neglected the privilege of the high calling when they knew of it.

Bringing the matter down to his hearers, but still leaving it applicable to all who have heard the message throughout the Gospel age, the Lord intimates that some of these will have been in close touch with him and his followers. They had a form of godliness and claimed to have done many mighty works, yet the Lord will disown them as respects any privileges in the kingdom. They will not even have a share in the earthly kingdom. It will be given to the worthies of the past who lived and died before the high calling was opened up.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets and faithful ones of the past are to be princes in all the earth, the visible representatives of the invisible Messiah and his church in glory. The heirs of the kingdom will not be entirely Jewish, because the Jews as a nation were not sufficiently holy and because the Lord could accept only the holy. When the call to joint-heirship in the kingdom would go out to the Gentiles, some would come from the East, the West, the North, and the South, and have a share in the kingdom. The Jews were first in God's favor and the Gentiles last; yet some of the first with privilege and opportunity would fail.

R5407 (1914)

A Guest at a Feast Choosing a Humble Seat

“And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden (to a supper), when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

“Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”—Luke 14:7-14.

The Humble To Be Exalted

It was probably in answer to some question that our Lord propounded the parable of the guests bidden to a marriage feast, warning against the custom of seeking prominent positions, and the danger incurred that a more honorable person might come in later, and thus they might get the least honorable seat in the company. Our Lord noted this mark of selfishness in those who were gathered with him at the table of his host, but we must suppose that he did not rudely intrude the matter as a reproof at such a time without having a question or some reasonable cause for bringing the matter forward.

The entire lesson of the parable seems to be an illustration of the proper course amongst men as viewed from the divine standpoint, and hence an illustration to all of the way in which God will deal with those whom he invites to the antitypical marriage feast. The chief places will not be given to those most bold, most inclined to usurp authority, but, on the contrary, the Lord will not forget the man or woman of humble mind who, thinking little of himself or herself, would thankfully and gratefully seek for and appreciate the very humblest place in the divine presence.

Ambition is a very necessary faculty of the human mind, without which the world would make comparatively little progress; but it is a very dangerous element as respects the formation of Christian character. We may be sure, from all the Scriptures set forth, that God’s principle of dealing with us in the distribution of the glories and honors of the kingdom will be along the lines laid down by the Master: He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, he that exalteth himself shall be abased.

Love of Power to Do Good

We are frequently charged by those who, from blindness or other reasons, would disparage the glorious Gospel of the kingdom that those “of this way” are seeking selfishly for the glory and honor and immortality of the kingdom as something superior to what others will receive at the Lord’s hand. This as a whole is an unfair and an unjust charge, for as far as we know the majority of those who are interested in “present truth” are not so much ambitious for the dignities of the kingdom as they are for any place in the great marriage feast, any membership in the glorious Bride company, any opportunity to share with the heavenly Bridegroom in the great and wonderful work of blessing all the families of the earth. It would not occur to any of us to think of ourselves in connection with such high honors and dignities, glory, and immortality, except as we find it plainly stated in the divine Word, but finding it there, it is the duty of faith to accept whatever we may be deemed worthy of, and to allow it to work in us to will and to do the Lord’s good pleasure, as he intended.

The chief difficulty, so far as our experience goes, is not a mere ambition as respects glory, honor, and rank in the kingdom, but rather an ambition as respects the present life—a seeking who shall be greatest on this side the veil. Our observation is that some of the most talented, most able, most conscientious of the Lord’s followers are in danger along this line, and it is a part of our duty to call this matter to the general attention, that each of the Lord’s dear people may do all in his power to help any who are in such a position to see that an ambitious striving for glory and honor and dignity and position in the present time would surely mean a loss of the Lord’s favor and the ultimate attainment in the kingdom of a much humbler position, if indeed pride did not hinder them entirely from being accepted as members of the “little flock.” Let us remember the Apostle’s exhortation, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”—1 Peter 5:6.

Remember the Poor and the Friendless

Perhaps it was in answer to some other question that our Lord gave his dissertation respecting the making of a feast and who should be invited to it, the conclusion of our lesson. He set forth a new proposition: The custom was to invite to a feast those whom you would expect and desire to ask you in return to a feast at their home. The thought of recompense was thus associated, a selfish thought. Our Lord’s suggestion would not necessarily, we think, mean that it would be wrong to invite a person to a feast at our home if we thought it at all probable that he would ask us to his home. His thought rather is that, while this would be a pleasant and profitable interchange, there would be no merit in so doing in the Lord’s sight—each would get his reward in such a reciprocity.

Perhaps the Lord wished to show his host that in inviting himself and his disciples, who were not so situated as to be able to invite the others of the company in turn to their homes, he had really done a gracious act, provided he had the gracious motive back of it. In making a feast for the poor, the helpless, the maimed, and the blind, a work of charity and mercy would be done, and no recompense coming in the present life, they might be sure of a blessing in the future

life. In other words, our Lord intimates that every good deed willingly, intelligently done from the right motive, may be sure to have a blessing, as surely as will every evil deed, every injurious matter done with a wrong thought and evil sentiment, be sure to have some kind of punishment either in the present or in the future life.

Our Lord declared that such a good deed will be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, but since he was not addressing his disciples, not addressing justified ones, we feel that his words should not be understood to mean that such a feast to the poor, etc., would secure the highest place in the first resurrection among the blessed and holy who shall be priests unto God and reign as the kingly class, the bride class, with the Bridegroom. This would not be a reasonable view to put upon the words, because other Scriptures intimate that not only faith in Jesus as the Mediator is necessary, but a travelling faithfully in the narrow way in order to attain a share in the first resurrection.

What then did our Lord mean? We answer that the first resurrection, which will include only the “blessed and holy,” the saints, the bride of Christ, the bride with the glorious Head and Bridegroom, will mark the beginning of the kingdom which our Lord preached and which he taught us to pray for, saying, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven.” Those who will have part in the first resurrection are to be the priests and judges of the world.—1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 20:6. Surely after that first resurrection the blessing of the world, the times of restitution of all things, will begin! Then the whole world will stand before these judges during the thousand years, to be helped up, if they will, to the full of human perfection, or if failing to respond to their glorious opportunities, they will be destroyed in the second death.

In that day of their judgment every deed of kindness to the poor will be found to have wrought some blessing in the character of the individual which will have to do with his station, with his starting- point on the highway of holiness. The most degraded, those who have accomplished nothing in the present time in the way of character development, must begin at the very start of the road and have the longer journey to its farther end of perfection; while those who in the present time have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and have sought to comfort and benefit their fellows, especially those who would give even a cup of cold water to a disciple of the Lord because he was his disciple—all such would be found to be benefitted proportionately in that day of glorious possibilities. Thus the Lord’s words would signify that any who would give a cup of cold water or who would bless the maimed and the blind and the poor would experience a reward and blessing in that future time which would follow the resurrection of the just—in the Millennial age. R3832 (1906)

Parable of the Rich Man’s Supper and the Reluctant Guests

“And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God.

“Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground and must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

“So the servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

“And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”—Luke 14:15-24; compare Matthew 22:1-14.

God’s Great Feast

A person at the supper, after hearing Jesus’ comments, remarked that it would be a blessed thing to have a share in the great feast with which the Kingdom of God will be inaugurated. Jesus seized upon this as a text, and preached another sermon in a parable. As usual, his parable-sermon was in respect to the Kingdom of God:

A man made a great supper and bade many guests. When the time for the supper arrived, he sent his servant to inform them saying, “Come for all things are now ready.” However, these with one accord began to make excuse. One said, I have bought a field; I must go and take a look at it; please excuse me. Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must be proving them; please excuse me. Another said, I have recently married; therefore I cannot come. When the servant returned and told his experience, the Master of the house was provoked, and said to the servant, Go out quickly into the streets and the lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame.

The meaning of the parable is not far to seek. God had indeed provided a great feast. Long years before he had sent word to the Jewish nation that in due time such a great blessing would be open to them—the privilege of becoming members of the Kingdom of God—sharers of it with Messiah. Yet, when Jesus appeared and the time came for the feast to be spread, those who had been bidden were careless.

Jesus and his disciples had been going about for some time declaring that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and that all who believed should make haste to associate themselves with it—to come to the feast—should be getting a part of the blessing. However, the invited ones were full, covetous, money-lovers. When they heard the message of the kingdom they said, I am too busy with my worldly prospects. So they slighted God’s invitation extended to them through Jesus and the Apostles.

The ones especially invited were the ones who specifically claimed to be the “holiness people”—the Pharisees and the Doctors of the Law. In the parable, the rejection of the ones originally invited led to the invitations being sent to others, in the streets and lanes of the city. This meant that the poor had the Gospel preached to them. Publicans and sinners were received by our Lord, told about the kingdom, and invited to leave all their sinful and injurious practices, to accept forgiveness of sins, and to come in and participate as heirs of God’s promise of joint-heirship with Jesus Christ their Redeemer.

Nearly all of the preaching of Jesus and of his disciples, up to Pentecost and after, was to the poor of Israel—the publicans and sinners. The charge made against our Lord by the Pharisees who rejected him was that he received sinners, and that he ate with them.

Great Feast Represents Rich Blessings

The great feast of the parable figuratively represents rich blessings of God’s providence for the church—the knowledge of the truth, justification from sin, the begetting of the Holy Spirit, the privilege of appropriating the great and precious promises of God’s Word. All this is the feast which the Lord has spread for now eighteen hundred years, and to which he has been inviting, or calling, certain ones. First the Pharisees, the “religious lights,” representatives of Moses, and secondly the poor, the sinful, the weak, the outcasts of Israel, and the prodigal son class were invited.

Some of the latter class came, but not enough to fill the places already provided. In other words, not enough of the Jews were “Israelites indeed,” acceptable to God, to fill the foreordained number of the elect church. Hence the Master sent out his servants the third time, saying that they should go outside the city, into the highways and hedges, and urge the people to come in that his house might be filled—not a seat left vacant.

This applies, evidently, to the sending of the Gospel to the Gentiles. For eighteen hundred years the Message has been going up and down through the highways and hedges, calling and inviting, drawing, such as have hearing ears and responsive hearts. In all, they will not be a great company. In all, they will not represent very many of the lights of the world. The Apostle writes, “Ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble,” hath God chosen, but chiefly “the poor of this world, rich in faith,” to be heirs of the kingdom.—1 Corinthians 1:26, 27; James 2:5.

Ultimately the full number purposed by the great Householder will have been called, accepted, and found worthy through Christ to have a place at that table—to share in that great feast. It will be the nuptial feast, in honor of the marriage of the Lamb, after his wife hath made herself ready—Revelation 19:7-9. At that feast, we are assured, will be a secondary company, not worthy to be of the bride class. These may be figuratively styled the bridesmaids, the great company class; for after the account of the gathering of the bride we have the Lord’s message to these subsequently delivered from Babylon, saying, “Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

You can imagine the honors and joys of that great banquet! The aroma of the good things coming, already reaches us in the anteroom, before we enter the banquet hall. These odors come to us through the exceeding great and precious promises of God's Word, assuring us of his faithfulness and of his provision of the things that "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," but which "God hath provided for them that love him" supremely.

Those originally bidden will not taste of that supper; though, thank God! Divine provision has arranged for another banquet, which through the kingdom will be spread for all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples—"a feast of fat things."—Isaiah 25:6-8. R5415 (1914)

Parable of the Prodigal Son

"And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his field to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

"Now his elder brother was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, and was lost, and is found."—Luke 15:11-32.

The setting of this parable shows the Master's object in giving it. He was seeking in this parable...to show the Pharisees that their position regarding the publicans and sinners was wrong. He here pointed out that their wrong attitude toward the common people was likely to cost them their own share in the kingdom.

In the parable the father who had two sons evidently represents Jehovah God. The two sons here represented the two general classes into which the Jewish nation divided itself. The elder son represented those who sat in Moses' seat, and who remained loyal to God in their outward profession at least, and in their endeavor outwardly to keep the law. The younger son represented the common people, not as religiously strict as to their ideals. This class, the younger son, misused their privileges and opportunities as members of the nation of Israel, as beneficiaries of the divine promise. They wasted their opportunities in self-gratification. They were known to others, and acknowledged by themselves, as publicans and sinners—not attempting to live godly lives.

This younger-son class of publicans and sinners felt their degradation, just as described in the parable. They were spiritually hungry. They were ragged. They felt a longing to be back in the Father's house, yet they hesitated to go back. It was just such characters that Jesus especially encouraged, saying "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus represented the Father's house, and prompted the younger-son class of the Jews to have confidence that the Father would receive them when they had come to Him penitently.

The parable tells us that some of this class, repentant, came back to God and were abundantly pardoned. Not only were they pardoned, but because of their penitence they were granted special manifestations of God's favor. Referring to the parable, all this was illustrated by the prodigal's feeling his hunger and wretchedness and saying, I will return to my father's house. While he was yet a great way off, the father saw him, ran to him, embraced him, had compassion on him, and kissed him. The prodigal said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Then the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it. Let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.

How grandly this illustrates to us the love of God—its lengths and breadths and heights and depths! The best robe and other attentions given to the repentant one well illustrate the provisions God has made for all who return to him from the ways of sin. The robe and all the blessings are provided through Christ—covering for all the imperfections of the fallen nature. The fatted calf well represents the "feast of fat things" which God has provided for the penitent class.—Isaiah 25:6-8.

Making a particular application of the parable, we might say that the time when the Father accepted the prodigal, kissed him and put upon him the robe of Christ's righteousness, provided in his sacrifice and freely granted to all who during this age come unto the Father through him, was at Pentecost. The feast and merry-making may well represent the blessed

promises of God, which become applicable to those who are covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness and accepted into God's family by the begetting of the Holy Spirit.

This is the marriage feast represented in another of our Lord's parables.—Matthew 22:2-14. The elder brother of our lesson was indeed bidden, but refused. He would not go in. He was jealous that the father should receive the young spendthrift. This jealous spirit on the part of the Pharisees apparently kept many of them from appreciating the gift of God in Christ. Just as shown in the parable, they refused to enter in.

The parable represents the father as entreating the elder son to come in and join in the feast, rejoicing in the reclamation of his brother; but he was angry and declined. Likewise the elder-brother class of Jews did not show the right spirit for those for whom the kingly privileges were intended, all of whom must be meek, loving, copies of God's dear Son in their generous good-will toward all who desire to come to the Father.

The refusal of the elder brother to participate in the festivities reminds us of another of the Lord's parables respecting the marriage feast.—Luke 14:15-24. Those who were originally bidden appreciated not; one went to his farm and another to his merchandise. They dishonored the host who had invited them to his banquet. Then the servants were sent out into the streets and lanes to gather any who desired to come, and afterwards they were sent to invite all everywhere who desired to share the feast, and finally the full number foreordained to be of this class was found.

While the parable of our lesson illustrates the two classes of Jews, the principles set forth in it are more generally applicable. For instance, there are noble characters in the world who love to do right—people who are well born, and well environed after birth, and who apparently should be the first ones who would be chosen of God to be the joint-heirs with His Son in the great kingdom that is to bless mankind in general. Nevertheless, the Scriptures make clear that not many of this kind may be expected to be of the kingdom class—not that God is unwilling to have them because of their education, wealth, and good morals, but that these very qualities make them less ready to accept the terms.

All are sinners, whether they know it or not. All should be honest enough to confess the fact; and God requires this very honesty, this very confession of our need, before the merit of Christ can be imputed to us as covering our blemishes. This better class, represented in the elder brother, seems to feel that in contrast with the lower strata of society they are perfection itself, and that God would be sure to desire them. His declaration, however, is that not many great, not many noble, not many learned, not many wise, are being chosen, but chiefly the mean things of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom.

God evidently wishes to have a class honest enough to acknowledge their own imperfections and their own unworthiness of His favors. So doing, he will bless them with a knowledge of themselves and of his righteousness; whereas others, self-satisfied and unwilling to accept the

grace of God in Christ or to confess their need of any covering for their blemishes, are not humble enough to be of the class that the Lord desires for the great work of glory by and by.

Thus it comes about that the majority who accept God's favor and become his children are from the younger-brother class—that described by the apostles—not many rich, not many noble, not many learned, and not many wise, but chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith. These have the ear to hear the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest." These have the hearts to respond to this invitation. They realize their wretched condition and their need of help, while frequently the others who have lived more open lives do not recognize their need of forgiveness and help.

Perhaps no other parable has been so helpful to the poor and needy, the sinful and the weak who have a desire to return from the ways of sin and to be received back into the family of God. They see their own picture in this parable, and are encouraged by its representing the Father as willing to receive them. It is quite contrary to the thought generally entertained by sinners. The heavenly Father's character has been so misrepresented to them by the creeds of the Dark Ages that they fear Him and expect no kind reception from Him. As the proper thought of God's character reaches the poor and the depraved, they receive a suggestion of hope from this parable and other Scriptures. This hope leads and assists many of them to a full return and a full surrender to the God of all grace.

The prodigal is represented as coming to himself, as awakening to a realization of his dire necessities, as coming to a knowledge of the fact that his father has an abundance, and probably will be willing to let him have a share of the blessing which he no longer merits. His expression, "I will arise and go to my father," represents what should be the attitude of all repentant ones—the attitude which all Christian people should help them to attain—reliance upon the love and mercy of the heavenly Father and the provision which He has made in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and for their reception again to His love and care.

R 5434 (1914)

Parable of the Rich Man and His Wasteful Steward

(Article 1 of 2)

"And he said unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.

"Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and

write fifty. Then said he to another, How much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and write fourscore [eighty].

“And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

“And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?

“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”—Luke 16:1-13.

Because the Pharisees were the leading exponents of the law, Jesus pointed many of his parables against them, while he comparatively ignored the irreligious Jews, the Sadducees, who made no profession of faith. Today’s lesson is in line with this. This parable was spoken as a rebuke to the spirit of the Pharisees, who bound heavy burdens upon others, but shirked them themselves, while pretending hearty obedience to the law.

In olden times, more than now, it was the custom for rich men to appoint stewards. Such a steward had as absolute control of his master’s goods as had the master himself; he had as it were, the power of attorney. Some stewards were faithful; others extravagant. The one mentioned in our Lord’s parable was extravagant, unsatisfactory. His master had concluded to dispense with his services, and had asked him to render up his accounts.

On his books were the accounts of certain debtors who apparently were left with no chance of being able to meet their obligations. The steward concluded that he would scale off these debts, so that the debtors probably could pay before he turned over his office to his successor. He did so. One owing a hundred bath of oil was told that he might scale off the debt to fifty. Another owing a hundred measures of wheat was told that he might scale it down twenty percent. And so he went down the list. Such a use of his authority made him friends amongst those whom he had favored; and his lord complimented him upon the wisdom he had displayed.

Applying this parable, Jesus proportionately condemned the Pharisees for taking an opposite course. He had declared that the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses’ seat as interpreters of the Mosaic law, and that, had they followed the course of this steward, they would have made friends of the poor publicans and sinners by trying to minimize their shortcomings, and to encourage them to do the best they could to comply with the demands of the law. Instead, they bound heavy burdens upon the people and discouraged them.

All this on their part was hypocrisy; for they could not help knowing that they themselves were unable to comply with the requirements of the law, which is the full measure of a perfect man's ability. Their proper attitude would have been to confess their own shortcomings, to strive to do their best, to appeal to God for mercy, and to teach the common people to do similarly. So doing they would have been better prepared to be received into the Gospel favor in the end of their age. As if was, by their hypocrisies they were hindering themselves from becoming disciples of Jesus and from seeking grace and forgiveness of sins. They were also hindering others from becoming disciples by claiming that it was possible to have God's favor through keeping the law.

Applying the Parable

Jesus then said to his disciples, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail—at the end of your stewardship, at death—the results of your benevolence may cause that ye be received, in the resurrection, into the everlasting habitation (verse 9 paraphrased).

There is room for dispute in respect to the teachings of this parable, but to us it seems clear that Jesus meant that the wisdom of the unjust steward should be exercised by his disciples in their dealing with the mammon, the riches, of the present life. From the moment God's people give themselves to Him, they give also their earthly rights and interests, and become merely stewards of their time, talents, influence, wealth, etc. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God." Use all you have energetically in the divine service.

These stewards of the mercies of God have his approval in the use of all of earthly things to the forwarding of their spiritual interests; they will not be counted unjust squanderers, as they use their earthly opportunities for advancing their heavenly interests. On the contrary, this will be reckoned to them for wise stewardship; and being found faithful in the use of earthly things in God's service they can safely be entrusted with the greater things of the future. They will be received into the everlasting habitations and be granted a share with Messiah in his glorious kingdom. They will be entrusted with all of God's favors to be bestowed upon mankind. Their unselfishness in the present time, their willingness to sacrifice, will be the basis of the divine approval and glory to follow.

Unfaithfulness in the present time respecting things of trifling value in comparison would mean unfaithfulness in the future great things. Whoever, therefore, selfishly appropriates to himself the things of which he is steward will not be trusted with the future great things; and whoever is sacrificing will thus demonstrate his faithfulness, his loyalty to God, and to such the greater things will be entrusted. Would God entrust the riches of the future life and glory and honor to any who now prove themselves unfaithful, selfish, covetous, using present blessings merely for self-gratification? Surely not!

He asks, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who shall give you that which is your own?" With the followers of Jesus all things of the present time are God's—the things

of the present life belong to God, because we have consecrated or devoted them. The things of the future life belong to us, because God has promised them to us. However, there are conditions; namely, our faithfulness, our loyalty. If we are not faithful in handling the things which we have devoted to God, he will not give to us by and by those things which He has promised shall be ours conditionally. If then, we should misappropriate the things consecrated to God—if we should abuse our stewardship and use those opportunities selfishly could we expect God to give us the things which He has promised to give to the faithful?

Serving Two Masters

There are two great impelling powers—one evil, the other good. These are known by different names and are in every way opposite. God is the Good Master; Satan is the evil master; but each has representatives and various interests. Thus God, His Spirit, and His teachings, are represented by the word love; while Satan and his course are represented by selfishness, covetousness, mammon. Through the fall of man the whole world has lost the Spirit of God, and has been under the domination of Satan for centuries. All have become more or less evil. The spirit of selfishness, covetousness, leading on to unrighteousness in general, has gotten hold upon our race, so that even after we see the wrong course it is with great difficulty that its power over us can be broken. “We cannot do the things which we would.”

Now here comes in the proposition of the Gospel: God desires some faithful souls to be associated with Jesus in dispensing his blessings. He offers this great prize of the kingdom to those who will demonstrate that they have the right spirit. This prize is a pearl of great value. No other consideration can compare with it. Whoever intelligently accepts the Gospel call turns his back upon sin, selfishness, and all the works of the flesh and the devil related thereto, and sets his face Godward, loveward, rightward.

However, it is not sufficient that he shall enter into a covenant to give up the world and walk in the footsteps of Jesus. It is not sufficient that God accepts that covenant and begets such a one of his Holy Spirit. More than this is needed. He must demonstrate not only that he prefers right to wrong on equal terms, but also that he is willing to suffer the loss of all things that he may be on the side of right—on God’s side.

Then comes in the trial and testing. He seeks to serve God and to gain the reward of glory, honor, and immortality in the kingdom with Jesus; but he finds a tendency in his flesh to look after and appreciate the rewards of mammon, selfishness. This brings about the great battle. One or the other must conquer. In addition to growing in grace, in knowledge, and in love, the new creature in Christ must feed upon the divine encouragements and promises of the Bible. Otherwise he will be discouraged and utterly give up the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The Lord has promised grace sufficient in every time of need, to the faithful. He tells us that he knoweth that we are dust; He remembereth our frame, that we cannot do what we would

like to do. At the same time he requires that we do all that we are able to do, assuring us that for all such His grace will be sufficient; that is to say, to all such He will make up the deficiency.

In our lesson Jesus forewarns us that the choice we make must be a permanent one, that the supposition that we can serve God and mammon at the same time is a mistake. In proportion as we are faithful to one, we are unfaithful to the other. It is, therefore, for us to choose the service of God, counting it as the greatest of our privileges, and its reward the greatest of all rewards, and these for eternity.

After all, much will depend upon the degree of our faith. If we have faith in God, in His promises of great reward, if we have faith in the promise of the Savior to give us His grace and assistance in every time of need, it will be quite possible for us to fight the good fight and to gain the crown which the Lord hath in reservation for all those who love him supremely.

R 5436 (1914)

Parable of the Rich Man and His Wasteful Servant

(Article 2 of 2)

God's chosen heritage was the Jewish people. Under the Mosaic Covenant there were certain members of that nation who were representatives of God and of the people Israel. Therefore Jesus could say to his disciples, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Whatsoever, therefore, they bid you do, that observe and do; but do not after their works; for they say and do not."—Matthew 23:2, 3. God had committed to them these special responsibilities, blessings, privileges, and knowledge, and the people were more or less dependent upon them; and they were unjust in their dealings with the people.

Through His Son, the Lord sent word to these Scribes and Pharisees that they were to be cast out of the stewardship. They had come to understand in a general way that a new dispensation was coming in—the Gospel age. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, had also proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Now Jesus gives a parable, which explains the reason for the course which these classes should take. He assumes the case of an unjust steward who was called upon by his lord to render up his accounts, because his stewardship was about to end.

When notified that his dismissal was at hand, this steward tried to make friends of all who were debtors to his master. No matter how unjust the steward had been with these debtors before, he now minimized their accounts, as he had a right to do. In olden times a steward had the right to make contracts, etc. for his master. So this steward cut down the accounts and made friends of the people. Commenting upon his course, our Lord said that this was a very wise procedure on the part of the steward, for thus he would be ingratiated into the favor of those who could help him. While our Lord commended this course as good worldly wisdom, he did not commend the steward's injustice, but his shrewdness in adopting a policy which would win the favor and friendship of those whom he had unjustly treated before.

Applied to his time, our Master's words would teach that the Scribes and Pharisees should have sought to win the love and gratitude of their Jewish brethren. Had they tried to make the people happy and contented, it might have gone better with them afterward. But they did not do this, and when the great time of trouble came upon the nation in the year 70 A. D., these religious rulers were among the chief mourners and sufferers in the trouble. They had not been as wise as the unjust steward.

Then our Lord applied the parable to his disciples, and gave them a lesson. "Likewise I say the same unto you." The application of the parable to his followers is somewhat different from its application to the Scribes and Pharisees. "I say unto you: Make for yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." In other words, the Lord's people are here advised to use whatever of the unrighteous mammon they may have in doing as much good as possible, in blessing and assisting others; and thus they will make grateful, appreciative friends.

This does not mean that our good deeds and our use of whatever means the Lord has given us should be with a view to bringing commendation and material advantage to ourselves, but with a view of being of real service in blessing others along the lines laid down in the Scriptures. Thus the Lord's children make themselves truly worthy and pleasing to God. We believe this is a good plan to follow now. The Master declared that the children of this world are generally wiser than the children of light in recognizing what is for their best interests.

The ecclesiastical powers of today are professedly sitting in the seat of Christ. The masses of the people know nothing better than what their religious rulers tell them. Now that these Doctors of the Law see the present dispensation coming to an end, they should seek to correct their former mistakes in dealing with their flocks, should seek to make some reparation for all their past delinquencies. They have been to a greater or less extent hiding "the key of knowledge"—Luke 11:52, to a greater or less extent imposing on the superstitions of the people, and taking the people's money under false pretenses. They should now seek to rectify all this so far as possible by telling the people the truth. They should try to save themselves from the violence of the fall which is coming to them. Were they to do so they would not fall so hard when the great disaster comes. However, in antagonizing the interests of the people more and more they are adding to their own distress in the near future, as the Scriptures point out.

We should not be surprised if the priests and ministers will suffer more distress in the great trouble time nearing than will the people, because of their having deceived the people. The Catholic priests suffered terribly at the time of the French Revolution, which was a picture on a small scale of the approaching great cataclysm. The French Revolution, we understand is clearly referred to in Revelation 12:15, 16. We believe that the nominal church clergy and leaders will particularly suffer in the universal overthrow of the present order near at hand—some of them because they have actively opposed the truth; some because of posing as representatives of truth and enlightenment and the liberties of the people, and failing really to stand for the truth which they recognized—keeping quiet about it for policy's sake. They have failed to conserve the interests which they pretended to serve.

In applying the words of Jesus to ourselves, they would seem to teach that to whatever extent we have the mammon of unrighteousness, worldly goods, we should be inclined to be liberal rather than penurious, according to the measure of our ability. We take it that the Lord is showing us here that we as his followers have more or less of means, opportunity, influence, etc., and that we should use these talents he has given us in forwarding his cause. If in our presentations of truth a certain amount of denunciation may be met with, we should rather let the matter go unnoticed and seek to be generous, so far as is compatible with fairness to the Lord and the spirit of his Word.

The Master adds, "That when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Those who could receive us into everlasting habitations would be only the Lord and his angels. He has promised to receive all his faithful ones. Our use of the unrighteous mammon, our sacrificing of earthly interests, which might in some cases bring us blessings from men, would surely at last bring us the crowning blessing from the Lord, as is promised. Our "failing" will be the reaching of the end of our sacrificial course. All of the Lord's people are to die—that is the purport of their consecration; it is a sacrifice even unto death. If they are of this class who make friends with, or of, or through, the mammon of unrighteousness, if they sacrifice these earthly things, then when they fail, when they die, when they have finished their course, they will be received into everlasting habitations—the place prepared for the faithful class of "more than conquerors," the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

We would not apply the word "they" necessarily to those of whom we made friends. God is our friend, if we as His children live a life of self-sacrifice and ignore the selfish use of earthly mammon in favor of the service of the Lord. Then our friends, those who will receive us when we fail, will be not those alone or those necessarily who may have been benefited by our sacrifices, but will be especially those beyond the veil—the Father, the Lord Jesus, the glorified saints, and all the holy angels. Blessed expectation!

R 5749 (1915)

Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

"But Abraham said, Son remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all

this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.

“Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father’s house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”—Luke 16:19-31.

Did our Lord mean that all rich men and all rich women are to spend eternity in misery because of faring sumptuously every day, and wearing purple and fine linen? Can it be true that in order to get to heaven we must be poor beggars, covered with sores, and have them licked by dogs, and must eat crumbs from a rich man’s table? Has character nothing to do with future rewards and punishments? Again, will it be so that for all eternity the rich tormented in fire, will see the poor in bliss, and the honored poor see the rich in eternal misery? Can this be the arrangement of an all-wise, all-loving Creator—one who knew the end from the beginning?

For many years this parable has caused distress of mind to the more saintly of God’s people; both heart and head have rebelled. We remember that Abraham was very rich, likewise Isaac, Jacob, King David, King Solomon, etc. We remember that God himself is very rich. Then we looked up the subject in the Hebrew and the Greek, and found that Abraham [as a rich man] did not go to Gehenna, the hopeless condition, but to sheol, hades, the tomb, the grave, the state of the dead, where there is no fire.

Our greater knowledge increased the mystery; for the Scriptures declare that sheol, hades, the tomb, is to be destroyed that all are to be brought forth from it in the resurrection. No other Scripture seemed to agree with this parable. It stands in a class by itself, except as we might use for its support one text in Revelation which speaks of a symbolic beast and a symbolic false prophet in torment. Thus have the thinking people of the church been stumbled and perplexed by the story of this lesson.

Now All Is Clear, Plain

Now we see that our lesson is a parable. It is not to be taken literally, any more than are the other parables and dark sayings of our Savior; such as, “Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,” or again, “If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out...if thine hand offend thee, cut it off.” Indeed, we find that Jesus spoke to the people only with parables.—Matthew 13:34. None were ready for the depth of his teachings until after the Holy Spirit at Pentecost began to give qualification.

How simple it all seems now! How beautiful! Many of God's people are rejoicing that in the light of the present understanding of the Bible the divine character is shining forth, beautiful in its justice, wisdom, love, and power.

It is not difficult for us to understand that our lesson is a parable. To take it literally, as we have seen, would involve the absurdity of supposing that all beggars go to heaven and that all wealthy people go to hell; for the parable says nothing about character—either that the poor man was good or that the rich man was bad. Viewed as a parable, we see that the thing said is not the thing meant. Thus in other parables wheat and sheep represent children of God; tares and goats represent those dominated by the adversary, the god of this world.

The Rich Man of the Parable

In the parable under consideration, the rich man represents a class, and the poor man, Lazarus, another class. Let us see. The rich man was the Jewish nation, which had been in God's favor for more than sixteen centuries. To the Jew had been given the promises, the prophets, the blessings, and the privileges of the Law Covenant. These symbolically were their purple, fine linen, and sumptuous table. The fine linen symbolized their typical justification through typical sacrifices. Their purple raiment symbolized royalty; for they were the typical kingdom. Their sumptuous fare represented the divine promises, as St. Paul's words imply.—Romans 11:9.

In Jesus' day Jewish favor began to wane. They were completely cut off in A. D. 70, as all Jews will admit. During the interim of forty years the rich man, the Jewish nation, sickened, died, and was buried. Nationally they went to hades, to the tomb; and their resurrection has not yet been accomplished, although Zionism is the beginning of it.

Although nationally dead and buried, the Jews individually have been very much alive during the last nineteen centuries. They have had anguish of soul, as they have received persecutions—sometimes, alas! from those who profess the name of Jesus, but who deny him in their practices. For all these centuries the Jews have cried out to God, who in the parable is represented as Abraham, the father of the faithful. The only answer that they have had is that there is a gulf of separation between them and God. Thank God, this cannot much longer be the case! The new dispensation dawns, in which the rich man will return from hades. Israel will be nationally rehabilitated, and God's favor will again come to those of them who shall learn needed lessons.

The Poor Man of the Parable

The poor man of the parable represents an outcast class. It included publicans and sinners, who had alienated themselves from God's favor. It also included Gentiles, to whom divine favor had never been extended—"aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel."—Ephesians 2:12. These had no fine linen of typical justification, and no purple, representing a

share in God's favor as part of His kingdom. None of the promises belonged to them. All that they could have would be merely such crumbs as would fall from the rich man's table.

The Scriptures illustrate two such crumbs given to this class by Jesus. When he healed the Roman centurion's servant, it was a concession at the request of the Jews, who declared that this man was a friend and had done them good, by building a synagogue, etc. The healing of this servant was a crumb. Similarly the Syro-Phoenician woman got a crumb when she came to Jesus entreating the recovery of her daughter, who was possessed of a demon. The Master answered, "It is not proper to take the children's bread and give it unto dogs." He here used the customary Jewish phraseology respecting Gentiles—Gentile dogs. The Syro-Phoenician woman was not a Jewess and had no claim on God's favor, but she replied: "Yea Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the children's table." Jesus noted her faith and gave her the crumb which she desired.

As the Jews died to their favor, so the outcast publicans, sinners, and Gentiles died to their disfavor; such of them as desired the favors of God, hungering and thirsting for His word of promise, were received by Him. The early church was made up of this Lazarus class, rejected by the Pharisees as publicans, sinners, and Gentiles. Instead of being any longer alienated from God, these became the children of God and heirs of His promises. In the parable they are represented as children of Abraham—in his arms. In the type, Isaac was the beloved son of promise to the literal Abraham. In the antitype, Jesus and his followers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, received to God's bosom of favor. Thus St. Paul writes, "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"—made to Abraham.

A Great Gulf Fixed

The great gulf between Judaism and Christianity has been fixed for more than eighteen centuries. During all this period no Jew has been permitted to take his former position or in any manner to claim favor aside from Christ. In the divine plan the gulf was fixed unalterably. "There is none other name given under heaven amongst men whereby we must be saved"—whereby we may come into heart relationship with God. This gulf dates from the time that Christ came and offered himself to Israel, and was rejected and crucified.

Thank God, His Word points us to another change of dispensation at the second coming of Christ! Then the Lazarus class, now children of God by faith, will be made actually and gloriously His children beyond the veil. In association with Jesus their Lord, they will take control of the world; for they will be his bride and joint-heirs in the kingdom. What will happen to the rich man then? Oh, he is to have a resurrection from hades!

While God's kingdom will be represented on the spiritual plane by the Lazarus class, it will be represented on the earthly plane by another class, which will be Jewish. The Jews who crucified Jesus will not be made princes in the earth in association with Messiah's spiritual empire, but some of their brethren will be—a class whom they have been accustomed to call fathers will be made princes. These scripturally are known as "Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all

the prophets,” and all who during the Jewish epoch proved themselves loyal to God and faithful, described by St. Paul in Hebrews 11:32-40.

St. Paul refers to this recovery of the Jews to divine favor in Romans 11:25-33. He there points out that as we who are now the children of God were not always so, but were received to divine favor when Israel was broken off from God’s favor, so in due time those Israelites cut off from the favor of God will receive favor through our favor. That is to say, when the church shall have attained the prize of glory, honor, and immortality, as spiritual Israel, then the gulf separating natural Israel from God’s favor will have been passed. Then favor will return to natural Israel. Coming to them through the glorified spiritual Israel it will extend through them to all nations, peoples, kindreds, and tongues of humanity, during the Millennial age.

This is the divine promise, “In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” The spiritual seed of Abraham, the church, gets the first share in the promise, and the natural seed of Abraham gets the second part; but both together will be used by the Lord in rolling away the curse and pouring out, instead, favors and blessings upon humanity, upon whosoever will accept them.

The Rich Man’s Five Brethren

The parable represents the rich man praying for a drop of water to cool his parched tongue. Symbolically, parabolically, this represents the Jewish people in great distress, asking God to allow Christians to give them some help from their troubles. Have the Jews ever appealed to God for help? Have they prayed for relief from the persecutions which have come to them in the past and which to some extent still continue? Surely they have! Moreover, they have appealed to representatives of the Lazarus class—representatives of Christianity—desiring that their release and relief should come through them.

An illustration of this prayer for relief in our own day was afforded in the appeal of the Jews to President Roosevelt that he would use his influence with the government of Russia for the amelioration of Jewish persecution. Did they get this drop of water? Nay! Mr. Roosevelt replied that the comity of nations would not permit such a communication from a friendly nation.

The parable goes further and develops the fact that the rich man had five brethren in danger of joining him in the trouble that was upon him. Who were his five brethren? We reply that the Jews of Palestine in Jesus’ day represented chiefly the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, while the majority of the other ten tribes were scattered abroad in various lands. The question raised is, Did this trying experience affect merely the Jews of Palestine, who had enjoyed most of God’s favors, or did it include also the Jews scattered abroad? The answer is given in the parable, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” This proves that Jews only were referred to; for no Gentiles had Moses and the prophets. The number five is also in full accord. Whereas two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, were represented by the one rich man, so proportionately the other tribes would be represented by five brethren.

So it was. The message of the Gospel, which began with the Jews in Palestine, was extended to every land; and the Apostle Paul, in going to any cities amongst the Gentiles, preached first to the Jews, saying, It is expedient that the Gospel should be preached first to you; but seeing ye reject the grace of God, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.—Acts 13:46, 47. In other words, the test upon all Israelites was the same.

Thus we are finding a depth of wisdom in Jesus' teachings beyond anything we could even have dreamed. We are finding, too, that the horrible nightmare doctrines of the Dark Ages poisoned our judgments, crossed our spiritual eyesight, and hindered us from seeing the beauty of the Lord's Word. Thank God for the new day and the light that it is shedding upon the Bible!

R 5444 (1914)

Parable of the Unprofitable Servants

“But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me, till I have eaten; and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink?

“Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

“So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”—Luke 17:7-10.

(Article 1 of 2)

These verses show that it is in the Lord's service we are to look for the rewards of faith, the special manifestations of divine favor, in the removal of obstacles and difficulties found to be in the way of our progress in his service by cultivating Christian character in ourselves and others, and in ministering generally to the furtherance of the divine plan. We may not expect these rewards of divine favor except as we prosecute the service. When they are received we are not to regard them as evidences that we have done any more than it was our duty to do. As servants of God we owe Him the full measure of our ability; hence we may not feel that we have merited or earned the great blessings of heavenly inheritance and joint-heirship with Christ. We have merely done our duty; but God, with exceeding riches of grace has prepared, for those who lovingly serve Him, rewards far beyond what they could have asked or hoped for. We can do no works of supererogation [more than duty requires]; even at our best our service is marred by many imperfections, and could never find acceptance with God except as supplemented by the perfect and finished work of Christ.

R 1967:6 (1896)

(Article 2 of 2)

Some amongst the followers of Christ, naturally progressive, are sometimes too aggressive, self-conceited. Becoming his disciples does not change these traits instantly. The old things pass away gradually, and the new take their place. A lesson for all of his disciples to remember, but especially forcefully to the classes mentioned, is taught in this study. They must remember that the work of God's grace, of which they are subjects, is his favor toward them; and that their obedience to his commands is primarily for their correction and development, and a future life of blessing. They should remember that even their service for the Lord is a privilege—that God is not profited by their services.

We are all unprofitable servants in the sense that God could just as easily do without us, indeed, could more easily do His work otherwise than through us. He could use as His messengers the angels or the various providence of life. None of us is indispensable to His work and to His glory. Quite to the contrary the opportunity for entering into the Lord's vineyard and laboring therein is chiefly for our own advantage. The service brings us certain joys which we could not otherwise have. It brings us certain experiences necessary to our development and qualification for higher services beyond the veil.

As the Apostle declares, "By grace (divine favor) are ye saved through faith." To some extent the faith is a matter of our own development. However, the Apostle hastens to add that the faith is not of ourselves, that even it is the gift of God—we have not the opportunity of glorying even in our faith. What have we that we have not received of the Lord? The elemental faith was based upon certain knowledge that God's providence brought to us, and possibly we were prepared for even that by a favorable parentage. R 5446:5 (1914)

Parable of the Unjust Judge and the Importunate Widow

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

"And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

"And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?"—Luke 18:1-8.

Again we have a lesson on prayer, from various standpoints. The disciples needed to learn certain lessons respecting prayers, and the Lord gave the instruction through two interesting parables. The first lesson was respecting persistency: that they should continue to pray and not

faint, nor grow disheartened and discouraged because of the delay in the answer. They were to be assured of the real character of our God, of His willingness to hear their petitions and to give them all necessary good things in the proper manner and in the proper time. The delay of the answer was to work out for them a blessing of increasing faith and trust.

The Unjust Judge

The parable illustrating this represents a judge in an oriental country, void of reverence for either God or man—ready to defy divine commands and to violate public opinion in the attainment of his selfish ends. Judges in Christian lands we believe to be honorable and trustworthy: We recognize this as the rule and anything else as the exception; but in oriental lands it is often regarded as a matter of course that officials will indulge in graft of every kind, and that whoever is in office is there for personal benefit and profit. In olden times, indeed until the last century, judges were to a large degree lawmakers as well as executives. Today in civilized lands these functions are separate, the lawmaking or legislative department of the government being entirely separate from the judicial and executive departments, much to the advantage of the public and to the forwarding of the ends of justice.

Before the unrighteous judge of the parable came a widow who was suffering from certain indignities and injustices from which she desired to be relieved by the judge. Since she was not wealthy and could not bribe him, since she had little influence, her demands for redress and justice were ignored. However, she was persistent until finally the judge, admitting to himself that it was not love of justice on his part but merely selfish desire to avoid further trouble, took up her case and granted her the necessary assistance and justice.

God Not Unjust Though He Delay

The parable does not compare this unjust judge with our heavenly Father, and thus imply that the latter is an unjust judge. On the contrary it contrasts the two and gives us the thought, the lesson, that if an unjust judge would finally grant relief simply from selfish motives, surely our heavenly Father, who is neither unjust nor unloving nor careless of the interests of his people, will heed their prayers. If, therefore, a matter be one that in our judgment is very importune, demanding our earnest prayers, and if the answer to those prayers be not quickly forthcoming, we neither conclude that God is an unjust judge who cares not for us because we cannot bribe him nor otherwise advantage him, nor are we to think of him as selfishly careless of our interests except as we would bother him; but we are to think of him as our loving heavenly parent, whose arm is not shortened that he cannot assist us, whose love for us is not deficient but strong, who loveth us as a father pitieth his children, and on the strength of our knowledge of God's character and trust in his faithfulness, we are to have patience, and to trust the fulfillment of our petitions to His wisdom, love, and power, knowing that all things shall be made to work together for good to them that love God, to the called ones according to His purpose.

Our Lord applying the parable says, “And shall not God avenge His elect which cry to Him day and night?” though He manifest no special haste in the matter. The lesson is that we are to have confidence in God and in His promise that eventually the right shall triumph. This confidence is to amount to an absolute faith which will grasp the promises, never doubting but merely waiting. Those who thus come to God in faith and trust may come repeatedly and be refreshed at every coming, because they come not with a hope of changing the Almighty, altering any of His plans and arrangements, which they recognize as righteous altogether. On the contrary, they come because they believe His promises and because they desire to rest and comfort their hearts by communion with Him, by assuring their hearts in prayer that the Father himself loveth us and that He has a due time for the deliverance of those who are His from the bondage of the adversary, of sin and death. The time may seem long, but if the proper faith be exercised, a blessing will come with every step of the delay that will more than compensate.

Our Lord concludes this parable by saying, “I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.” This may mean that when the Lord’s time shall come for the delivering of his people he will make a short work with the great adversary and all the machinery of unrighteousness which, under the prince of this world, has come to occupy so prominent a place in the affairs of life—in opposing truth, righteousness, etc. Or on the other hand it might be understood to mean that the Lord will really not long delay in bringing in his kingdom of righteousness. From the human standpoint the more than eighteen centuries from the time when our Lord redeemed the world until now, the time for the setting up of his kingdom, seems a long time: How could it be spoken of as “speedily?” We reply that “a day with the Lord is as a thousand years,” hence from this standpoint the whole period would be less than two days. What we need today is to take the Lord’s standpoint in viewing matters. Both views are Scriptural, and therefore we need not dispute as to which one the Lord intended. Possibly he meant that we should take both.

Shall He Find the Faith?

Separate and distinct from the parable the Lord interjects the statement, “Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?” The intimation is that at the second presence of the Lord the true faith would be seriously lacking, almost extinct—just as at the first advent we read, “He came unto his own [people] and his own received him not.” So, in the end of this age, our Lord’s second presence for the establishment of his kingdom will similarly try and test nominal spiritual Israel. Again he will come unto his own and his own will receive him not—he will not find the necessary faith in the earth. However, as respects the first advent we read, “But to as many as received him to them gave he liberty,” etc. So at the second advent, to as many as have faith and receive him, to these also similarly he will grant a special blessing.

Associating these words with the parable foregoing, the implication is that the church, the very elect, the little flock, throughout the Gospel age will be expected to look to the Lord continually for help and deliverance, but that they will not actually be helped or delivered until the first resurrection, at the Master’s second advent, at the time he will set up his kingdom. It

is in line with this that the Apostle exhorts us saying, “Brethren, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” — Romans 12:19. Hence we find the Scriptures throughout indicating clearly that the second advent of our Lord will be a time of tribulation to the world in general, a day of vengeance, a day of rectifying the wrongs of the people. Thus through the prophet the Lord declares, “The day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year [‘time] of my redeemed is come,” and again, “It is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion.” —Isaiah 63:4; 34:8.

Taken as a whole, the lesson to the Lord’s people through this parable is that we are to have patience, not attempting to render vengeance upon our opposers, but to love our enemies and to do good to them that despitefully use us, and to look to the Lord for such relief as he sees proper to send; and though we find the full measure of relief long deferred, we are to have rest and refreshment through faith that the time is coming when all the gracious promises will be abundantly fulfilled, “According to thy faith be it unto thee.”

Those who believe little of the Lord’s promises, who trust him little, will pray to him little, will exercise little faith, and will have little joy and blessing in consequence. Those on the contrary who have faith, and who go continually to the throne of grace and appreciate the Lord and trust in the glorious outcome of their prayers and labors, will have joy now and fullness of joy by and by. R 3841 (1906)

Parable of the Pharisee’s and the Poor Man’s Prayers

“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—Luke 18:9-14.

In our Lord’s parables he dealt chiefly with the Pharisees and the publicans; for the Sadducees were Jews in name only, not believing the Scriptures nor expecting a future life. The Pharisees were orthodox, revered the law and taught it to the people. Outwardly they were very correct; but Jesus in various parables pointed out that with many of them religion was a ceremony and the keeping of the law an outward obedience, which did not extend to the heart. The Publicans did not profess holiness; but rather confessed estrangement from God and lack of harmony with his law.

The Pharisees treated the Publicans as though they were Gentiles—refused their company and would not even eat with them. The Pharisees recognized Jesus as being exemplary, and his teachings in full accord with the highest principles. They wondered, therefore, that he did not join with them, and wondered still more that he would have fellowship with Publicans—confessed sinners.

The secret of the matter is that Jesus looked not upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart. He did not love the Publicans because they were sinners, nor disapproved of the Pharisees because they outwardly kept the law. We remember the case of the young Pharisee who came to Jesus and who when questioned about the law, said, “All these things have I kept from my youth up.” We read, “Jesus beholding him loved him.” He was a sincere Pharisee.

The parable of our lesson illustrates this matter. It shows us the heart-attitude of some of the Pharisees and of some of the despised Publicans: Both men went up to the Temple to pray. The one said in his heart, How thankful I am that I am not a sinner, like the majority of men and like this poor publican! I thank God that I am a Pharisee—that I am righteous! But the Publican felt differently. The weight of sin was upon him. He could not look up to heaven. Striking his hand on his bosom, he exclaimed, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!”

From God’s standpoint, both men were sinners—both needed forgiveness of sins. However, the one trusted in his own imperfect works, and asked no forgiveness; the other realized his blemishes, and prayed for mercy. We are not to get the impression from this that God is more pleased with people who live in sin than with those who strive to live to the best of their ability in harmony with His law. The lesson is to the contrary. We must all realize that we come short of perfection, and that we need divine mercy. The sinner who recognizes this is more pleasing to God and nearer to forgiveness than the more moral person who fails to see his blemishes.

At another time, Jesus referred to this same error of the Pharisees, saying, “The whole need not a physician,” and “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” By these words he sought to call attention to the fact that although the Pharisees claimed to be righteous, they were not so. They were sin-sick, imperfect, needing a Savior. They were not in a condition to appreciate their need and to come to the Lord for forgiveness—not until they should learn their need—that they and all other members of the fallen race are sin-sick and need the remedy which only Jesus can give.

Not realizing their need, the Pharisees did not come to Jesus, did not become his disciples; and thereby they missed a great blessing. On the contrary the majority of Jesus’ followers were made up of publicans and sinners—people who had not been living proper lives, but who were earnest, who acknowledged their faults, turned from them, and accepted the forgiveness and healing of the Good Physician.

Both classes are still represented in the world, amongst Christians. Some are trusting in their church membership, their benevolence and general morality, for salvation, and ignoring the fact that all are sinners, and that forgiveness of sin is obtainable only through faith in the

crucified One. Others today, not so conspicuous in religious circles, are all the more ready to discern their own weaknesses, to confess them, and to accept forgiveness of sins and everlasting life as unmerited gifts of God based upon the sacrifice at Calvary. These latter, we may be sure, will have much advantage every way over the others as respects divine acceptance to joint-heirship with Christ in his kingdom.

The general lesson to us all is expressed by the Apostles James and Peter: “God resisteth the proud, but showeth his favor to the humble”—the penitent. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” Confess your sins, strive manfully against them, and trust for deliverance, ultimate victory, and life everlasting through the merit of the crucified One, whose footsteps you seek to follow. R 5464 (1914)

Parable of the Servants and the Pounds

(Compare “Talents” Parable, Page)

“And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

“But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

“And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou layest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he said unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked (Greek: hurtful, evil in effect or influence) servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then takest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds). For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away.

“But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.”—Luke 19:11-27.

We are not to confound the parable of the pounds with the parable of the talents. They teach totally different lessons. In the case of the talents, the amount given to each of the servants differed. In the case of the pounds, it was the same—each servant received one pound—approximately sixteen dollars. This parable, therefore, deals with something that is common to all of the class to which reference is made.

The object in the giving of the parable is stated in the lesson. The Lord and his disciples were approaching Jerusalem, where shortly he was to be crucified. The disciples had supposed, on the contrary, that the Messianic kingdom would immediately be established in power and great honor. This parable was intended to inform them that a considerable period of time would elapse before the kingdom would be established.

The disciples knew that the kings of Palestine were appointed by the Roman Emperor, and they had recently had an experience along this line, when one of the Herods went to Rome, seeking an appointment to a kingdom. Some who hated him sent a message to Rome, discrediting him and declaring their preference for another king. Jesus seized this circumstance as an illustration in his own case. He was the appointee for the Messianic kingdom of the world; but he would go to heaven itself and there appear in the presence of the heavenly Father, the great Overlord or Emperor of the universe. He would be invested by the Father with the ruling authority and later return to earth and exercise his dominion.

This is exactly the presentation of the matter given us prophetically.—Psalms 2:8. The divine regulation is that Messiah, after finishing his work, shall in heaven itself make application for a kingdom which divine providence has already arranged for and which divine prophecy has already foretold. “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”

“Occupy Till I Come”

During the interim of the Master’s absence—in heaven, waiting for divine investiture with the government of earth—he has committed to his disciples, his servants, otherwise styled his brethren, one pound each. He has left them with full liberty to use their best judgment and to show their love and their zeal in his service. At his return, all these servants will be reckoned with, and the degree of their zeal and efficiency as servants will be manifested by the results; and the rewards given them will be proportionate.

The parable distinguishes between these consecrated servants of God and the masses of the people. It shows that nothing is committed to the masses of the people; and that no judgment, reward, is made in their case at the return of the Master as King. Only to his servants did he give the pounds—only his servants had the responsibility of those pounds, and only those servants will be reckoned with or held responsible, either for reward or for punishment in respect to the matter.

In considering what is signified, or symbolized, by the pound, we must keep in memory the fact that as the same amount was given to each, the fulfillment must show some blessing or responsibility given in each case alike to all of God's consecrated people—all who are His servants. There is but one thing that we can think of that is given to all of the Lord's people in exactly the same measure. They have not talents and opportunities alike, but on the contrary, very unlike. Some have more and some less wealth; some more and some less mental capacity; some more and some less of favorable or unfavorable environment. None of these varied talents belong to this parable of the pounds.

The pound is the same to all; it represents justification. The one thing which the Redeemer does for all who becomes his followers is to justify them freely from all things. This leaves them all on exactly an even footing; for justification makes up to each individual in proportion as he is deficient—in proportion as he by nature is short of perfection, the divine standard.

"Be Thou Faithful unto Death"

All who in the present time become children of God, servants of God, followers of Christ, must receive from the Lord, as a basis for his relationship, the pound—the free forgiveness of sins—justification. On this basis he has a standing with God, and whatever he may do or endeavor to do will be to his credit. Because all are alike qualified by justification, the results will show the degree of loving zeal controlling each servant. Those who love much will serve much. Those who love little will neglect to use their opportunities. As one in the parable gained ten pounds, so such noble characters as St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John and others, sacrificed themselves over and over again in the divine service. In their zeal they counted all earthly things but as loss and dross, that they might be pleasing to their Master, the coming King.

These, and such as these, who have gladly spent themselves zealously in the service of the Lord, are to have the highest rewards, as represented by the Lord's words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Because thou wast faithful in a very little have thou authority over ten cities." In the parable another came, reporting a gain of five pounds. He had not done so well as did the first, but he had done well. He received the same commendation: he had been faithful, although less faithful than the first. He received his master's "Well done," however; but the reward was less—dominion over five cities. This will mean a less influential place in the Messianic kingdom.

Then came a servant saying, "Lord here is the pound that you gave me; I have kept it carefully laid up in a napkin." This represents a class that say, "I endeavored to maintain my justification. I endeavored to live justly and honorably, but I did not sacrifice myself. I am glad to be able to say that I have lost nothing. I was really afraid to use my opportunity, to use my privilege; for I realized that you would be expecting considerable return from the amount which you gave me."

The master in the parable addresses this one still as a servant, but a wicked servant, who knew his master's will, who had undertaken his service, but who had been found unfaithful in

respect to it. Had he not professed to be a servant, he would have received no pound and would have had no responsibility for it. He should have made use of his privilege and opportunity. He should have lived for his master. If not so actively and as directly as did the others, he should have made at least some use of the pound entrusted to him, so that he would have had some results to show.

We may assume that this one represents a considerable class of those who have entered into a covenant with the Lord to be his servants, and who have received justification at his hands, but who have neglected to comply with their engagements for self-sacrifice in his service. This neglect indicates their lack of loving zeal; and all this means that they will not be fit for a share in the kingdom. This class is referred to on several occasions by the Lord; for instance, they are represented in the foolish virgins, who failed to enter into the wedding; and so these will fail to become members of the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Saved So As by Fire

The same class seems to be pictured by St. Paul when, speaking of the same testing of the church in the end of this age, he declares, "The fire of that day shall try every man's work of what sort it is." He proceeds to say that those who build with gold, silver, and precious stones will suffer no loss, but will receive a full reward; while others building upon the same Rock, Christ Jesus—the same justification by faith—will suffer the loss of all their time and opportunity. He adds, however, that they themselves shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

This we understand to mean that this class of servants who maintain their justification, seeking to live harmless, honest lives, but who fail to sacrifice as they had covenanted to do, will not be lost, in the worst sense of the word. They will indeed lose the great prize—the highest blessing—the kingdom; but because they still remain servants and have a love for righteousness they will be saved so as by fire; that is, through tribulations. They will ultimately gain everlasting life on the spirit plane, but will be quite inferior to the bride class. They seem to be represented in the Scriptures as the virgins, the bride's companions, who follow her.—Psalms 45:14.

They seem again to be pictured in Revelation, chapters 14 and 17. Here the elect church is referred to as 144,000, who will stand on Mount Zion, because they followed the Lamb whithersoever he went. Then a great multitude is pictured as coming through great tribulation, washing their robes, and attaining a place before the throne, instead of on the throne. To these are given palm branches, instead of crowns. They are victors, but not "more than conquerors." In this respect they are not wholly copies of God's dear Son, and are not esteemed worthy of being members of his bride class, who are to share with him the honors and glories and services in his kingdom, as set forth in this parable.

The fear expressed by this servant, saying, "For I feared thee," reminds us of the Apostle's words respecting this same class. He declares that Christ at his second coming will deliver those who all their lifetime were subject to bondage through fear of death. The consecration of

the Lord's servants is unto death, and those who fear death are fearful of performing their covenant vow. They will not be worthy of the Lord's approval as faithful servants. Nevertheless, there are many vessels in the house of the King—some to more honor and some to less honor.—2 Timothy 2:20, 21.

"Those Mine Enemies"

Not until first he shall have finished dealing with his own servants at his second coming will the glorious Messiah begin to deal with the world, and especially with his enemies. This is the statement of the parable, and it is borne out by numerous Scriptures. When Jesus prayed on the night before his crucifixion, he said: "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; ...for all those which shall believe on me through their word."—John 17:9, 20. Thus we see the work of the Gospel age outlined by our Lord. It is merely for the selection of his servants, and the testing and proving of these. It is with a view to determine which of them will be found worthy of association with himself in the great Millennial kingdom which God has decreed, and whose work will be for the blessing and uplifting of the whole world of mankind.

So the second Psalm points out that the Redeemer will not pray for, ask for, the world until, at his second advent, he is ready to establish his kingdom, his church having first been gathered to glory. Then he will ask for the heathen. By the term heathen, or Gentile, is signified all out of fellowship with God, "enemies through wicked works." The Psalm proceeds to say that Messiah will deal rudely with the heathen. "He will dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel," etc. This, interpreted by other Scriptures, means that the inauguration of Messiah's kingdom will bring a great time of trouble, symbolically styled fire, or fiery judgments. "He shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance." Everything appertaining to present institutions contrary to the divine standards of justice will be rudely shaken and eventually destroyed.

However, the Lord wounds that he may heal. The lessons of the time of trouble will be salutary; as we read, "When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." These judgments will not in any sense continue upon all throughout the thousand years of Messiah's kingdom, but will be inflicted only upon those deserving them. Hence the judgments will be especially severe at the beginning. All who learn righteousness will thereby deliver themselves; and as they come into harmony with the King of kings and Lord of lords, blessings will be their portion, uplifting them gradually to human perfection.

"Slay Them before Me"

At first thought, we might gather that these words signify that the King of Glory will be implacable, ferocious, unsympathetic, with his enemies. We might wonder how this shows sympathy! He admonishes us to love our enemies and to do good unto them that spitefully use us. Gradually we come to see that this will indeed be the policy which the great King will pursue. He will be doing the greatest good for his enemies in bringing upon them punishments

for their wrong course—shame, publicity, and contempt. These things will be necessary to arouse them to an appreciation of their true condition and show them their privileges.

We are not to forget that during this age the Lord's dealings with his faithful servants have been in permitting fiery trials to try them and to instruct them. It should not be a wonder to us, therefore, that fiery judgments upon the world are the Master's design, not for the world's injury, but for its blessings. We read that as a result of St. Peter's preaching at Pentecost, the truths struck home to the hearts of his hearers—"They were cut to the heart." However, we realize that this was a great blessing, in that it prepared them for the message of divine mercy. So here we read of the Lord's slaying his enemies; they will be cut to the heart. A picture of this slaughter is given us in Revelation, where the Lord is represented in glorious majesty, with a sword proceeding out of his mouth, that with it he might smite the nations.—Revelation 19:15. Blessed smiting! The sooner it begins the better for the world, we might say; and yet we remember that God's time is best for everything.

Another similar picture of the progress of Messiah's kingdom is given us in figurative language, as follows: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows shall be sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies; whereby the people shall fall under thee."—Psalms 45:3-5.

Hence the establishment of Messiah's kingdom with power, great glory, and majesty, is presented in pictorial imagery, and the sharp arrows of divine truth are represented as slaughtering the hosts of error. This terrible carnage will mean a great blessing; for the Lord smites to heal, and when his Word cuts to the heart the effect is to destroy the enemy. Unless the enemies of the Lord be thus brought into subjection to him, nothing will remain for them but the final extinction mentioned by St. Peter: "It shall come to pass that the soul that will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from amongst the people."—Acts 3:23. R 5492 (1914)

Parables from Mark's Gospel

Parable of Not Fasting While the Bridegroom Is Present

“And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his (Matthew's) house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him...And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

“And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”—Mark 2:15, 18-20.

It would seem from other narratives of this same banquet...that a large number of people were gathered at Matthew's house aside from those who partook of the banquet—Luke 5:29, and from the connection of the narrative it is supposed that it was one of the regular fast days of the Pharisees. (These facts led to the question): Why is it that your Master and all who affiliate with him are banqueting and feasting and rejoicing while we Pharisees “fast twice in the week,” and the followers of John's teachings also fast? Is not this a sign that you and your Master are not so devout as we?—Luke 18:12.

The Lord's answer is very comprehensive and far reaching, and requires considerable study to be appreciated. He explained that it would be inappropriate for his followers to be in sadness and mourning at a time when they were receiving such wonderful blessings—at a time when the Bridegroom himself was present, cheering their hearts, refreshing and strengthening them, opening the eyes of their understanding, and giving them hearing ears to appreciate the divine favor that was coming unto them. Such would not be an appropriate time for fasting and mourning. By and by, when the Bridegroom would be away, there would be an abundance of perplexity and sorrow and then fasting would be in order. So surely it has been: The Lord's people throughout the Gospel age have frequently felt called upon in times of darkness and adversity to seek a very close approach to the Lord by a humbling of the flesh, and have found fasting a valuable means to this end.

However, fasting has a typical significance—it means self-denial. So long as the Master was with his people, and especially so long as he was honored by the multitudes, it required comparatively little self-denial to be one of his followers—it was in many respects an honor to be called to follow him, and an honor to sacrifice something of earthly interests to be a follower; and this made his kind of self-denial or fasting really a feast of pleasure. Later on trials came, when the Master got into the toils of his enemies, when his cause was unpopular, and the multitudes clamored for his death—then it required self-denial (antitypical fasting) to confess him and follow him; and so it has been all through the Gospel age—none can be a follower of the Lamb without self-denial, fasting, refusing the desires and appetites of the flesh,

sacrificing some and mortifying others in the interest of the new creature and its spiritual development.

Now in the Lord's second presence, we might say that the feast has begun again—that from a spiritual standpoint there are so many and so great blessings, so much and so dainty spiritual food, that to those who are invited into the Lord's banqueting house and whom he causes to sit down to meat, and to whom he brings forth things new and old, newly and refreshingly served, it almost appears that the fasting time has passed, and that the feasting and "joys of the Lord" have begun. Not that there are no trials and difficulties, according to the flesh, but that as new creatures his people are so refreshed and exhilarated with the meat in due season that the trials and difficulties and self-denials (fastings) incidental to the way may now be esteemed so lightly as not to be worthy to be compared with the spiritual refreshments enjoyed, though these be but foretastes of the great marriage feast soon to be enjoyed. R 2591-2592 (1900)

Parable of the Sower and the Seed

"And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

"And he said unto them. He that hath ears to hear let him hear. When he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked him the parable. He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

"And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables? The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise that are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

“And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.” —Mark 4:2-20; Matthew 13:3-23; Luke 8:4-15.

The salvation open at the present time has been obtainable only through faith, and faith is dependent upon a measure of knowledge, or revelation, and this knowledge, or revelation came to us from God, for said St. Peter, “Holy men of old spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” God in this age is calling a class possessed of ears of appreciation for His message. These are mainly the weary and heavy laden and sin-sick, chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith.

It is not enough that they hear the message, not enough that additionally they accept it, turn from sin and consecrate their lives to God and His service and be accepted of Him, through the merit of Jesus, and be begotten of the Holy Spirit. From that point they may be said to be saved and to have everlasting life, if they follow a certain course. That course includes a continual study of the divine instructions and promises and the exercise of faith and prayer, and obedience and trust, even unto the end.

The point of this lesson is to show the importance of having the right kind of spiritual food, and of using it and not allowing the new nature to become choked by earthly hopes, aims, or ambitions. Such as thus overcome will be inheritors with Jesus of his glorious Messianic kingdom of a thousand years, which is to bless Israel and, through Israel, all the families of the earth.

Jesus gave the parable of the Sower of the “good seed,” some of which fell by the way side, and was devoured by the fowls; some fell on rocky ground where it had no depth of earth, and brought forth no fruitage; some among thorns which choked it; some into the good ground, which yielded thirty fold, sixty fold, and one-hundred fold. The disciples were perplexed and unable to understand it and inquired of the Great Teacher its meaning.

His answer was that he was quite willing that they should understand the parable, and that it related to the Kingdom of God, but it was not to be understood by outsiders. He explained that it was for this reason that he always spoke in parables, so that the general public might see and hear and not understand, because the masses even of the Jews were not in a heart condition to understand and be profited by these lessons respecting the kingdom. Only such persons as desired to become members of the kingdom class and were willing to undertake the stringent conditions of the “narrow way” —only such were to fully and clearly understand the parables of the kingdom. This is in harmony with all of God’s dealings in the present time. We read again “None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise (toward God) shall understand.” Again we read, “The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence him, and he will show them his covenant.”

In verse 13 the Master indicates that this parable would serve as a general key to his followers for their interpretation of all his parables. “Seed” does not mean literal seed, “birds”

do not mean birds, “thorns” do not mean thorns, etc. Proceeding, the Great Teacher expounded the parable as follows: (1) The seed that was sown represents the Word of God. More than this, it represents that particular element or feature of God’s Word which relates to the kingdom.

This is shown by St. Matthew’s account of the same parable—Matthew 13:19: “When anyone heareth the word (message of the kingdom), and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he that receiveth the seed by the wayside.” Our lesson says that the wicked one meant is Satan. Satan and his evil agents are therefore represented in the parable by “birds,” and the lesson is that however much of the Gospel of the kingdom we may read or hear preached, we lose the benefit of that which we do not understand.

Evidently then, much of the Bible study and much of the religious reading is lost, because not understood. The secondary lesson is that one reason why the “good seed” does not enter into the understanding is that the heart is not in a receptive attitude. Like the wayside path, it is hard. Such hard hearts, selfish hearts, proud hearts, are of the kind which the Savior does not wish to have understand his parables nor understand the glorious kingdom plan which they expound. (2) The seed sown in the stony place represents those who, when they hear the message of the kingdom, are delighted. They say, How good that sounds! What a grand time there will be when Messiah rules in righteousness to bless the world and lift up the poor, degraded members of Adam’s family! How great is the privilege of becoming members of the bride of Christ, to be associated with him in his glorious kingdom work! However, the class represented by the stony ground has little depth of character; they are merely emotional.

The “seed” or message of the kingdom, which these heard with such delight at first, never matures in their hearts, because they are too shallow, too superficial in their love of righteousness. Below the surface those are hard hearts and selfish, and so when they find that the good seed of the kingdom is unpopular and that it will bring them a certain amount of reproach and contempt and perhaps persecution—then all their ardor oozes out, their zeal is at an end. The kingdom message fails to produce in them the fruitage desired. The trouble was not with the seed nor with the sower, nor with the sun of persecution necessary for the ripening—the fault lay in the fact that their hearts were not right; they were hard, stony. (3) The seed sown in the thorny ground represents those who have good hearts and have heard the message of the kingdom and appreciated it and rejoiced in it, but their hearts are divided. They allow the cares of this life and the love of riches to have such a share of their heart’s affections that the kingdom message does not have the opportunity to bring forth such fruitage as will be pleasing to the Lord.

Let us note carefully that these thorns do not as some suggest, represent gambling devices, card parties, saloons, and other places of ill-repute, nor secret sins and vices. None of these things should appeal to Christians at all. The Master distinctly tells us that the thorns represent “the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches.” Thus every Christian man or woman who has received the message of the kingdom and has allowed the cares of this life and the

deceitfulness of riches to choke and frustrate his prospects as respects the kingdom is represented in this parable. Very nice people, hospitable, educated, etc., belong to this class of the parable represented by the thorny ground. (4) According to the parable there will be three classes of believers who will attain the kingdom—or we may say, they will all be one class in the sense that they will bring forth the one kind of fruitage and be acceptable to the Lord as joint-heirs in his kingdom, but the difference between them will be in the amount of fruitage such yield: some thirty fold, some sixty fold, and some a hundred fold.

The Lord does not explain the differences between these fruitages, but we may well understand that the amount of fruitage will be measured by the amount of love and zeal in the heart. The fully appreciative and the fully loving will be the most energetic to know and do the Master's will, and they will bring forth the largest fruitage—a hundred fold—and they, too, will have the chief places in the kingdom.

St. Paul declares that as star differs from star in glory, so it will be with those who attain unto the first resurrection—all will come forth glorious, but some will blaze with a more resplendent brilliancy, because of their great zeal and therefore their great likeness to their Redeemer and Lord. Jesus likewise mentions the distinctions amongst those who will sit with him in his throne, he assured James and John that, if they were willing to drink of his cup and be baptized into his death, they should surely sit with him in his throne; however, as to whether or not they would have the chief places of honor and distinction was not for him to say. Those places will be given according to the Father's determination; that is to say, according to principles of justice.

Those will have the places of honor next to the Redeemer, who in this life will manifest to God the greatest harmony with his character, in their zeal, their love for God, the truth, and the brethren.

We are not to understand that those people represented by the thorny ground and the wayside will suffer eternal torment because of their unfaithfulness in respect to the kingdom, nor are we to understand that others, who do not hear about the kingdom in the present life at all, will on this account suffer eternal torment. They will all, however, lose the grand privilege and glorious blessing of participation in the kingdom, whatever they may obtain under the restitution blessings which that kingdom will inaugurate for the blessing of mankind in general.

R 5038-5039 (1912)

Parable on the Growing of Sown Seed

“And he said, So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.”—Mark 4:26-29.

Many of us in the past have overlooked the fact that nearly all of the teachings of the Redeemer appertain to the kingdom—his Messianic kingdom. Some of us indeed had gotten the unscriptural thought that Messiah’s kingdom would consist merely of a sovereignty in the hearts of his followers and in the present life.

Now we see the real import and connection of the Great Teacher’s numerous utterances on this subject. As he taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven,” he meant that we should have in mind God’s glorious promise that eventually, through Messiah’s kingdom, ignorance, sin, and death will all be overthrown, and the willing and obedient of mankind will be released from these until “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess” to the glory of God.

Our Lord meant that we should connect this kingdom with the great promise made to Abraham, “In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” The Master’s teachings and the message which he commissioned us to give in his name is the Gospel of the kingdom—the message of coming glory, and the message that now God is selecting a “little flock” to be the spiritual seed of Abraham, joint-heirs with Jesus in the throne of that kingdom. Paul refers to this in Galatians 3:29: “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Today’s study sets before us a number of Jesus’ parables respecting the kingdom. The majority of these refer to the kingdom class of the present time rather than to the kingdom in its fully developed state during the thousand years of his glory. All of God’s consecrated people, begotten of the Holy Spirit during this age—since Pentecost—constitute together the kingdom class, the kingdom in embryo—unfinished, undeveloped, and incomplete. Some of these embryo members of the kingdom may yet fail to make their calling and election sure, and they may become “castaways” as respects the glory and honor to which they have been called.

The Kingdom Development Slow

The...illustration of our lesson is that God’s kingdom in its present embryotic condition is of slow, gradual, methodical development, covering the entire period of this Gospel age. It is like seed cast into the ground, which brings its maturity after many days and varied experiences—when it is finally harvested. Jesus and the Apostles did the seed sowing, not only for their own day but for the whole wheat class developed throughout this age. As Jesus explained in another parable, “The harvest is the end of the age.” The gathering for the heavenly garner will be accomplished by the first resurrection. R 5049 (1912)

Parable of the Mustard Seed

“And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the Kingdom of God? Or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it growth up, and becometh greater than

all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”—Mark 4:30-32; Matthew 13:31, 32; Luke 13:18, 19.

The different parables do not view the embryo kingdom from the same standpoint. It is because it may be viewed from such a variety of angles that so many parables are given us. Just so we might take various photographs of a building. One might show the eastern side, another the western, another the front elevation, another the floor plan, and another show it with its scaffolding. Or, if a concrete building, the frame work might be pictured, inside of which the concrete is cast.

The parable of the mustard seed appears to represent the kingdom from the viewpoint of the world—as the nominal church, developed from the original little seed of the true Gospel. From that little seed we have a great institution today with many denominational branches. Alas! Its thrifty development has invited into its branches the fowls of the air, which the Lord elsewhere describes as representing the wicked one and his angels—Satan and his representatives—who of course should have no place in the church; and they would have no place in it if the church were loyal and zealous enough to proclaim only the true Gospel and the narrow way of self-denial.

Indeed, it is the neglect to preach this Gospel of the “narrow way” that has brought such prosperity to nominal Christianity and made it a desirable place for the fowls of the air—Satan and his deluded ones—to lodge in its branches, to be the real life of ecclesiasticism. This seems to be the same picture which the same Great Teacher gives us in Revelation 18:2. There we read that the nominal systems are represented symbolically as Babylon; and there we read, “She hath become the hold of every foul spirit and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”

The word “cage” would seem to imply that these unclean birds are considered very desirable, and are held on to by nominal Christianity—probably because regarded as being amongst their best paying members and because of having the most attractions. R5049 (1912)

Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

(Article 1 of 2)

“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, “Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?”

“And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”
—Luke 13:6-9.

John (the Baptist) points out to his Jewish hearers that the time of judgment had come upon their nation. The axe was laid at the root of the tree; every Israelite who was not an Israelite

indeed was to be overthrown, and to be cast into the “fire” of trouble with which that age and national polity terminated. The three and a half years of our Lord’s ministry to the Jewish nation, and their final rejection by him, are represented by the barren fig tree parable, in harmony with the statement of John foregoing.

John evidently struck the chord of fear to some extent, but he struck it properly. There is a proper presentation of the truth, and a proper fear of God and his retribution which may properly be kept before the mind of the transgressor; however, this is wholly different from the terrorizing fear of eternal torment, which plays so important a part in all the theological teaching, directly and indirectly today, and which has driven some to insanity, some to skepticism and infidelity, and has hindered the great majority even of saints from appreciating the true character and plan of our God. Let us present the wrath to come truthfully, not misrepresenting the character of our God for assuredly He will not hold them guiltless who blaspheme His holy name.

Under John’s preaching the people began to inquire what course they should pursue, and summing the matter up John’s instruction was that they should practice justice, mercy, love, generosity; they should avoid violence, extortion, etc.; and should seek to be content with such things as they had. This was excellent advice, and undoubtedly those who followed it would be in just the right condition of heart and mind to welcome the Lord Jesus, and his good tidings of remission of sins through his blood and thus to become reconciled with the Father. Similarly if any now inquire respecting the coming trouble, the wrath that is to come in the end of this age upon “Christendom,”—what must we do? We answer them: Practice righteousness, truth, godliness, kindness, benevolence, justice, trust in the Lord, and seek to walk in his ways. Or we may quote them the words of the prophet, specially bearing upon this time, viz., “Seek meekness, seek righteousness, it may be that ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.”—Zephaniah 2:3. Furthermore, we may rely upon it that those who thus seek righteousness, etc., will be the ones most ready to welcome our King and his kingdom, and we may be sure that when in this harvest time some fail to make their calling and election sure, and prove themselves unworthy of the crowns apportioned to them, the Lord will be pleased to accept from among such penitent seekers of righteousness, some as substitutes to complete his elect church.

So powerful was John’s presentation of the truth, that the people began to wonder whether or not he might be the Coming One, the Messiah, but he set the thought at rest speedily, assuring them that he was so inferior to the Messiah that he would be unworthy the honor of doing toward him the most menial service of removing his sandals. Then having given them a little glimpse of the character of Messiah, he proceeded to tell them respecting his work, that it would be higher than his own, and that those who received him would receive a higher baptism also: “He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire”—some of them (the few) with the Holy Spirit, the remainder (the mass) with the fire—judgments, the great time of trouble which destroyed their national life and many individual lives.

He gave them an illustration of the matter, showing them that they had reached the harvest-time of their age, and that now a separating was to be expected—the separating of the true wheat from the chaff; and he represented our Lord’s work with Israel as being that of a reaper winnowing the “wheat,” freeing it from the “chaff” element. How forceful was the figure! How true the facts! Our Lord indeed gathered from that nation all the true “wheat;” we may be sure that not a solitary grain was lost. All that wheat was gathered into his barn, into a place of safety, into a higher dispensation—they constituted the beginning or first members of the Gospel church. It was upon this wheat class that the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and it has abode with this true church since. After the separating (winnowing) of the “wheat,” and the gathering into the barn, and its baptism of the Holy Spirit, in due time, the “chaff” of that nation was burned up with unquenchable fire—a time of trouble which nothing could stop or hinder. It will be remembered that various steps were taken to hinder the destruction of the nation of Israel, but all failed: even the Roman Emperor was desirous of preserving the nation, and of establishing order there, and the Roman army went not to destroy them but to establish peace in their midst; but the Lord had declared that the fire of trouble which he enkindled should not be quenched by any power, that it should do its work to the full, and it did.

Likewise it will be with the great “fire” of trouble with which this Gospel age will end, and into which the “tare” class of Christendom will be cast, it will not be an utter destruction of life (although many lives will perish in the great trouble of this Day of Wrath), but it will completely consume earthly governments and Churchianity in a fire of anarchy. Nothing shall quench that fire, or hinder that utter destruction of present systems. But praise God that when this fire shall have consumed the stubble and the falsities and deceptions of present institutions, it will have but prepared the way for the great blessing which he has designed and provided for in his coming kingdom. This “fire” and the blessing to follow it are particularly referred to in Zephaniah 3:8, 9. R 2564:4 (1900)

Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

(Article 2 of 2)

“And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And his disciples heard it..

“And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.”—Mark 11:12-14, 20-22. (See Matthew 24:32).

The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was a past incident. After spending a portion of the day in the Holy City, Jesus returned to Bethany, which is merely a suburb. The next morning, going again to the city, Jesus noted a fig tree by the wayside; bearing plenty of leaves. He approached it, seeking figs, but found none. The good show of leaves was deceptive. Then

Jesus put a ban, a curse, a blight, upon the tree, declaring that it should not bear fruit forever, or to a completion. What did this mean? Surely it was not an intimation that the followers of Jesus should place a curse upon every unfruitful tree or unfruitful field! There must have been some deeper lesson in it, not apparent on the surface.

Bible students believe that they now see the deeper significance of this carefully noted incident. They believe that the fig tree was used as a type or picture of the Jewish nation; and that that blight upon the tree because of its unfruitfulness corresponded exactly to the blight pronounced the day before upon the Jewish nation because of its unfruitfulness.

On the day previous Jesus had said to the Jewish nation, "Ye shall see me no more until that day." So he declared of this tree that it should be blighted to the end of the aion, or age. Again, when speaking to his disciples respecting the end of this age, Jesus declared, "When ye shall see the fig tree putting forth leaves, then know that summer is nigh"—that the winter time, the blight time of the nation of Israel and of the world, is at an end. In other words, one of the signs of a new dispensation would be the sprouting, or indication of life, hope, promise, amongst the Jews.

Significance of Zionism

These same Bible students are now pointing to the revival of hope amongst the Jewish people, as especially manifested by Zionism. It is being pointed out that this return of hope and faith to the Jews respecting their land and the divine promises of the past is opportune—exactly in line with prophecy. They point to Isaiah 40th chapter as now in process of fulfillment. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

These Bible students are telling that Ezekiel's prophecy of the valley of dry bones which came together, were clothed with flesh, and finally received the breath of life, is an allegory respecting the Jews. They hold that it does not refer to a literal resurrection, but to the revival of Israel's hopes in the divine promises. This is in harmony with the Prophet's declaration, "These bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off from our parts."—Ezekiel 37:11.

The same Bible students declare that St. Paul teaches that the Jewish nation was typically represented by Ishmael, the son of Hagar.—Galatians 4:22-31. As Hagar and her son were outcast for a time only, so the Law Covenant and the Jews have been cut off from divine favor only for a time. Ishmael had almost fainted for thirst in the wilderness, and then was revived by the angel of the Lord, who pointed out a spring of water. This is typical. Jewish hopes of God's favor had almost died. Zionism is the well-spring which is reviving them—rescuing them from death as a people. Under Messiah's kingdom, soon to be established on the spirit plane, the Jews will receive a great blessing on the earthly plane.

We know of no other interpretation which seems to fit the facts of this lesson or to show a reason why Jesus should manifest displeasure against an inanimate object, which had no personal responsibility or accountability. R 5503 (1914)

Parables from John's Gospel

The Samaritan Woman and The Parable of the Water of Life

“Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour (noon). There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat). Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

“The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.”—John 4:6-14 (read verses 3 to 43).

John the Baptist had testified of Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease.—John 3:30. It is in harmony with this that we read that Jesus (at the hands of his disciples) baptized more than did John and his co-laborers.—John 4:1. The growing popularity of Jesus aroused to bitter opposition the Scribes and Pharisees, and they sought to kill him. Hence, we read that “He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him”—John 7:1. They had greater animosity toward Jesus than toward John, for in him they recognized a superiority over themselves, and because the ignorant, common people heard him gladly and said, “Never man spake like this man.” Thereafter we hear little of Jesus being in Jerusalem except on festival occasions, when great multitudes gathered in accordance with the requirements of the Law.

En route to Galilee, the home country of the majority of his apostles, the journey took them through the country of the Samaritans, concerning whom we remember that our Lord charged the disciples, saying, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”—Matthew 10:5, 6. The Samaritans are thus classed with Gentiles—aliens, strangers, foreigners from the Commonwealth of Israel. We recall their history—that at the time when the king of Babylon took the Israelites captive into Babylon, he planted some Gentiles in the land of Israel—immigrants. Cut off from their former idolatries, these people became interested in their new home country, its theology, traditions, religious sentiments, etc. Furthermore, some of the careless, ignorant, and vicious amongst the Jews, disregarding their divine law on the subject, intermarried with the Samaritans. Thus an element of Jewish blood was intermingled amongst

them. They called themselves the children of Jacob, and trusted that this meant some special blessing for them.

A sharp religious controversy was thus established between them and Jacob's natural progeny, the Jews. The latter, following the Law given by Moses, recognized Jerusalem and the Temple as the center of all acceptable worship to God. The Samaritans, being thus excluded, claimed that they had something better—that right in their own country they had the very mountain in which Jacob worshipped God, and toward this mountain they went or looked in their worship of God, esteeming it as a great natural temple and superior to anything else on earth. These facts account to us for some of the Lord's expressions connected with this lesson, and also show us why his message excluded the Samaritans, as well as all Gentiles, from the call which he was giving, the kingdom invitation, which was exclusively for the Jews. It was not until the Jews had as a people neglected their opportunity that the special privileges of the kingdom were taken from them and subsequently tendered to such as would have an ear to hear in every nation, people, kindred, and tongue of the earth—including the Samaritans.

“Give Me to Drink”

The road leading to Galilee branched off at Jacob's well, and the disciples went to the nearby Samaritan village, Sychar, to purchase food, while Jesus rested at the well, which was 75 feet deep and whose mouth was so walled up as to form a circular seat at its top. A Samaritan woman, laboring in the fields nearby, came to draw water, and was intensely surprised when Jesus asked her the favor of a drink. So tightly were the lines of social etiquette drawn that under ordinary circumstances no self-respecting Jew would ask a Samaritan for any favor, and especially for a drink of water. A gift of water or of food extended or received, at that time signified fellowship, a covenant of good will. The woman asked an explanation of the Lord's peculiar conduct, but he gave none. We perceive in the entire Gospel narrative the humility of our Lord, that he was quite ready and willing to mingle with any class, that he shunned no opportunity for doing good to any class, publicans or sinners—and that he reproved and rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees for their aloofness. One of his parables was especially directed towards the self-righteous sentiments which feared even to touch garments with the outwardly more degraded. Our Lord, without approving of the outward degradation, showed that God looketh upon the heart, and that some of those highly approved amongst men were more abominable in His sight than some despised of men.

Tactfulness Exemplified

Our Lord displayed great tactfulness. Instead of replying to the woman's query, he attracted her attention to a deeper truth. This lesson of tactfulness many of the Lord's people need to learn. We know some who mistakenly believe that they must use no tact—that to do so would be dishonest. Hence, they are frequently blunt to the extent of injuring the feelings of others, and hindering their own usefulness. Such should note in this lesson, and in many others, our Lord's tactfulness. He did not feel that it was necessary for him to answer the woman's question. On the contrary, he said, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith

unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”—John 4:10. Similarly, let us in all the affairs of life try to turn the attention of those with whom we have contact toward the heavenly, the spiritual things—not that we should obtrude religious matters on every occasion, nor that we suppose the Lord would have done so. Quite probably he saw something in the way of honesty of character in the woman he addressed; else he would not have conversed with her. So we should be on the lookout for every opportunity to speak a word in season, to be helpful to others, to honor the Lord. [The words our Lord used, “*The gift of God,*” were words customarily used by water-carriers who, with water-skins filled with drinking water, went about the city carrying their ware with the very words, “the gift of God.” Water being thus termed the gift of God, the woman presumed the Lord’s meaning to be: “If you had known about *the* water, the gift of God, etc.” R3496:2]

The woman understood the expression “living water” to mean fresh water, as distinguished from stagnant water. The woman perceived that our Lord was not provided with the necessary lowering bucket and camel’s hair cord, and said, If you had ever so much desire to give me to drink, it would be useless for me to ask you, since you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep, and there is nowhere else that you can hope to procure better water than this. Where would you get it? “Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?”—John 4:12. Again our Lord tactfully ignored the question in the woman’s interest—not to deceive her or to take advantage of her, but for her benefit. He was instructing her, and leading her mind up from the natural water to the spiritual, and from the natural foundation to the spiritual. He said, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst,” for that water “shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”—verse 14.

That our Lord talked to no ordinary woman is evidenced by the quickness with which she grasped his presentation, and her earnestness to get the living water he had described. She said, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.”—verse 15. Again we note our Lord’s tactfulness. He turned the subject. It was necessary that the woman should appreciate the fact that she was a sinner and under the death sentence and needed water of eternal life, which God alone could give, and which He has provided only in Jesus, the Fountain. Our Lord turned her thoughts inward very quickly by saying, “Go, call thy husband.” The answer was, “I have no husband,”—verses 16, 17—and with that reply came a flood of thought, which our Lord riveted upon her by declaring, You have well said that you have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband. The woman was now thoroughly aroused. She perceived that she was in the presence of one who knew her very deepest heart secrets. Yet she feared him not. She fled not from him. His kindness, his gentleness, his willingness to talk to a Samaritan woman, indicated that she had “found a friend, Oh, such a friend.” Her answer was, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.”

Shrewdly then the woman led the conversation away from matters too personal to herself, and too solemn and too tender for discussion, and our Lord did not follow up the subject, but left it. Many of his followers need to learn this lesson of first awakening in the hearts of their hearers a consciousness of sin, and then leaving it to work for them, at greater leisure, sorrow

and repentance, and reformation. It is not for us to break the hearts of those around us, but to find those who are broken-hearted. The command is, “Bind up the broken-hearted”—Isaiah 61:1. In many instances, as in this one, the broken heart needs to be touched in connection with the binding-up process, in the application of the healing balm of grace and truth, but the touches should be gentle. If more breaking of the heart is necessary, it is not for us to do.

Salvation Is of the Jews

Not only would the woman escape a discussion of her personal character and affairs, but she would embrace this opportunity of settling in her own mind with the aid of this one whom she had proven to be a great prophet, a question which had long troubled her—were the Jews or were the Samaritans right as respected religion and worship? Before her was a proven prophet, and one in whose words she could have great confidence; hence her inquiry, Who are right—our fathers, who claim that this mountain is the place of worship, or you Jews, who say that Jerusalem is the only place? Our Lord was not bent upon making of her a Jewish proselyte: the time for that was past; the harvest time had come. He would tell her something that would be to her advantage, and through her to the advantage of others in the near future, when the middle wall of partition would be broken down which still separated the Jews, in God’s favor, from all others. His answer, therefore, applied to the Gospel dispensation in general, and this was already beginning so far as some of the Jews were concerned, and would later reach Samaritans and all Gentiles. He said, “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.”—verse 21.

That hour began after the Jewish house had been left desolate, after the new dispensation had been inaugurated, and it still continues. Believers do not have to go to a certain place, a certain mountain, a certain city, a certain house, but may approach the living God, through the great Redeemer, at any place and find him. That coming hour had already begun, since our Lord himself was the first of the Spirit-begotten ones; and his disciples, accepted of the Father through him, were taught to pray, to seek, to knock, to find. Those who worship under this Spirit dispensation will not be accepted along the lines of former worship and places—not in families, or nationally. Their acceptance will be as individuals, and because they come unto the Father through His appointed way, the Redeemer, and come “in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.”—verse 23. During past times he did indeed prescribe forms of worship and times and places, but now all that come unto the Father “in spirit and in truth” through Christ are accepted.

While it is most absolutely true that forms and ceremonies are not commanded, but the true worship of the heart, nevertheless we feel that some still maintain too much of a relationship to forms and ceremonies, and thus lose much of the spiritual blessing of prayer and communion. But, on the other hand, we seem to see a danger into which some of the Lord’s dear people fall, through ignoring all regularity in prayer, and sometimes through too little formality in approaching the throne of heavenly grace, without a sufficiency of humility and reverence for him who has granted us so great a favor as to receive us into his presence and to hearken to our petitions. While thankful that we can call upon the Lord in every place and at

any time, let us approach his courts with reverence, and an awe of heart befitting to us in our humble, lowly condition, and to him in his great exaltation. Thus we enter into the real spirit of prayer, which should recognize our complete dependence and the greatness of the Almighty.

“We Know What We Worship”

Very pointedly, though we are sure in no rude manner, our Lord declared the truth to the woman when he said, “Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.”—verse 22. The Samaritans, not being of the stock of Israel, were in no sense of the word heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant. Not discerning this cardinal truth in its true light, they were confused as to every feature of the divine plan. The Jews, on the contrary understood that they were the natural seed of Abraham, and that from them must come the great Messiah, and that eventually, through him and some of their nation associated with him, all the families of the earth should receive a blessing. Our Lord said, “Salvation is of the Jews.” He did not say, For the Jews, nor, To the Jews, exclusively. It was of them in the sense that the Master was of that nation according to the flesh. It was of them in the sense that the promises were exclusively to that nation, so that Messiah could not have been born of any other nation and yet inherit those promises. It was of that nation also, in that from them our Lord selected the earliest members of his church, his body, through whom the invitation to membership in that body has during this age been extended to every nation, people, kindred, and tongue.

We would not say that the Samaritans were typical of a certain class of people here—typical would be too strong a word. We would see, however, that as there were true Israelites there in the type, and a class of people somewhat resembling them, who were not of them, so here in spiritual Israel we find some like the Samaritans, who are strangers from the covenant and promises, because not of the same family—not begotten again of the Holy Spirit. Some of these are estimable people, honorable, and with a form of godliness, but denying its power. Then amongst the true Israel, all begotten of the Holy Spirit, all therefore related to the Lord and the promises, there are two classes: the little flock of Israelites indeed, whose love and zeal the Lord approves, and a great company whose love and zeal are not sufficient to gain them the distinguished title, “More than Conquerors”—joint-heirs.

In our conversation on religious subjects with those corresponding to the Samaritans, it may not be using the wisdom of serpents for us to say, “Ye worship ye know not what,” even though this be strictly true. Nevertheless, to those of this class who give evidence of desire to know the truth, it would be proper for us to kindly attempt to show them this matter—to show them how different are the hopes and aspirations and promises which apply to the consecrated saints of Spiritual Israel from anything they have ever known or thought. In all our dealings with the Israelites and others, let us remember the Master’s words, “Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”—Matthew 10:16.

When Messiah Cometh

The mind of the Samaritan woman swept forward in thought. She recalled the expectation of her own people and of the Jews that God would provide a great Messiah, an Anointed One, who would be all-wise and all-powerful to the relief of all perplexity and to lift out of all difficulty. She wondered if the Messiah could be more wonderfully wise than the prophet, the teacher, to whom she talked. She did not like to ask the question direct, but suggested it sidewise, saying, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things,"—verse 25. Seeing her readiness of mind, our Lord expressed to her—more plainly, perhaps, than to any other person during his ministry—the great fact that he was the Messiah: "I that speak unto thee am he."—verse 26.

The disciples, returning at this time, marveled that he talked with the woman, but had too great respect for him to question him; and many since, all through the Gospel age, reading the account, have marveled at the Master's humility thus displayed. It has brought a good lesson to many of the Lord's followers—that they are not to despise opportunities for service, for preaching of the truth, even though they have an audience of but one. Indeed the opportunity of speaking to one earnest listener should be esteemed far greater than that of addressing a thousand inattentive ones. Doubtless our Lord saw in this woman something that indicated her worthiness of the time and energy thus bestowed upon her.

However, from another standpoint, what worthiness could she have? What worthiness do any of us possess by nature? Fallen and imperfect, the only thing remaining that could in any way be pleasing to the Lord would seem to be our honesty of heart. Honesty this woman evidently had, and hence we believe she was favored, and many of the Lord's dear people have received this message since. Here, too, we have another illustration of the importance of using every opportunity that may come to us. Time and energy spent in the assistance of some worthy one may, as in this case, flow out in widening influence to many. Eternity alone will show the value of some of the little things, the feeble efforts put forth in the name of the Lord; and this reminds us that our Lord is judging us by our faithfulness in little things and small opportunities rather than by our great achievements. His own words are, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."—Luke 16:10. Remembering this, let us be careful in the little things, little opportunities, the hours and the moments, that we may show ourselves zealous for the Lord and his cause, and have his eventual approval, as well as his present blessings.

The Missionary Spirit

The character of this woman is further displayed in the fact that leaving her water-bucket, she hastened to the city to tell her friends and neighbors that she had found a great teacher, possibly the Messiah, and to ask them to come and share the privilege of hearing him. The selfish spirit, which would have bidden her to keep the information to herself, or the slothful, careless spirit, which would have led her to say, I would be pleased if my friends might know, but will not bestir myself to inform them—either of these would have marked the woman as

unworthy of the Lord's favor, and had such been her disposition, we doubt if the Lord would have entered into conversation with her. And so it is with those who have been reached with present truth; they are, as a rule, not only the honest and sincere, but the generous who love to give the good things to their neighbors, and who, having heard now of the second presence of the Son of man, and the kingdom about to be established, and having come to a clearer knowledge than ever before of the truth of the divine plan—these rejoice to lay down their lives in its service, the promulgating of "good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people."—Luke 2:10. This is the true missionary spirit, and home missions come first.

"Come Unto Me and Drink"

Our Golden Text: "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink,"—John 7:37, is quite in line with the lesson intimated—that before anyone can come unto the Lord he must thirst, he must have an appreciation of that which the Lord has to give, the water, the refreshment of eternal life. This means that he must learn that he is a sinner, and under sentence of death, and that there is no hope for a future life except through Christ. The coming to the Lord is the approach of faith. Our thirst is our desire. We drink, or appropriate to ourselves the divine message, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth—John 17:17—and water is the symbol of truth. The promise of a blessing to those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" is in full accordance with this. The promise is, "They shall be filled." This too is in harmony with our Lord's statement in our lesson, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."—verse 14.

In the present time our thirst is in one sense of the word insatiable—we are never satisfied—in the sense that the Lord's blessings are so great and so good that we can never, in the present day and in present conditions, have enough of them. We shall be satisfied thoroughly when we awake in his likeness—Psalms 17:15, when the "change" of the first resurrection shall have completed our transformation as new creatures into our Lord's likeness—"from glory to glory."—2 Corinthians 3:18. Nevertheless there is a measure of satisfaction to our drinking, even in the present time—just as with a thirsty one at a fountain, he drinks with relish, with appreciation, with satisfaction, only to take more and more. So with those who are the Lord's. He pours into their cup blessings rich and satisfying, and fills the cup repeatedly, even while they are in their present tabernacle. Let us appreciate more and more the truth, the water of life, and let us see that we get it pure from the fountain, and that we recognize no other fountain than the Lord Jesus, however much we may appreciate the channels through which the supply may have come to us. R 4130 (1908)

"I Am the Bread of Life"

(John 6:25-69)

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."—John 6:35.

After partaking of the miraculously provided supper, the multitude, evidently according to their habit, lay down in the fields, wrapping themselves in their outer garments. Indeed, this is even today a prevailing custom in Palestine with the poorer people when on a journey. In the morning they looked about for their benefactor, evidently expecting to find Jesus in the same vicinity, and no doubt also expecting that he would miraculously provide for their breakfast. However, not finding him nor the boat in which the disciples had come they journeyed onward towards Jerusalem, but still on the lookout for the reputed Messiah. When finally they came upon the Lord and his company they told of their search—and our lesson for today begins with our Lord's reply, You seek me not because of the miracle, but because of the satisfactory and free supper which you received. Here we perceive the wisdom of the Lord in not pressing matters too earnestly. He preached no sermon when he performed the miracle, but allowed it to have its effect; now instead of working another miracle, he preached a sermon, using his miracle as a text.

His reproof was not harsh, although it was quite pointed: Strive not for the food which perisheth, but for that kind which will produce everlasting life. This is the kind which the Son of man is preparing to give unto you, for Him the Father, even God, hath sealed, indicated, marked as his appointed channel for blessing. The lesson contained in these words is obvious, it is as applicable today as then...

Our Lord would have his hearers, including all his followers down through the age, note this message from his lips: that although the meat that perisheth is necessary under present conditions, those who are his followers will remember that their heavenly Father knoweth that they have need of these and will not suffer them to come to serious want. Thus being without anxious care for the bread that perisheth they might turn their entire attention not to earthly but heavenly ambitions—the noblest, the grandest of all they might aspire to; because such blessed children come within the range of divine blessing of life everlasting. The meat, the food that would develop in them such an ambition and lead to its satisfaction, would be food indeed and well worthy of every exertion to obtain it.

What Shall We Do?

The discourse had its effect; the people realized that they were leading comparatively aimless lives, or that their aims were earthly and therefore would perish with their dying, and they asked the Lord what kind of work or labor he meant they should perform to secure the food that would bring the divine favor and gain them eternal life. What do you mean by works that would please God? This is just the point that Jesus wished to bring them to and that he wished to answer. He replied that the work for them to do at once was to exercise faith in him as the Sent of God—the Messiah. They replied, What reason have we to think of you as the Messiah? Work for us some conclusive sign that will prove that you are Messiah and we will believe. The fact that you fed five thousand of us last evening with five loaves and two small fishes does not prove your Messiahship. Messiah is to be like Moses, only greater than Moses, and the miracle you performed is not as great as some that Moses performed. You furnished five thousand one meal and had the loaves and fishes to start with, but Moses fed our fathers

for years in the wilderness without any bread as a start. The manna which he provided came down from heaven; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." They were good reasoners in some respects—they were not going to be too easily converted, they wished to be thoroughly convinced before they would believe Jesus to be the Messiah; they had heard of others who had been deceived by false Messiahs; they were intending to stick close to the Scriptural record and to see that the one they would accept as Messiah must be greater than Moses, able to feed them and all the people every day—and with bread superior to that which Moses gave in the wilderness.

Then it was Jesus' turn to expound his teaching and to show that the comparison as between himself and Moses was not as to who would give a finer kind of earthly food and more of it, but that he would give a heavenly food, a spiritual food, which would secure to them a heavenly life. He therefore called attention first of all to their mistake in thinking the giving of the manna to be the work of Moses, saying plainly, It was not Moses that gave the bread from heaven, but my Father; do not credit that to the wrong source. Moses was indeed an honored servant of the Lord as the Lawgiver of Israel, but he neither gave the manna nor sent it. My Father who sent the manna in the wilderness has now sent another kind of bread, another kind of food, another kind of manna from heaven—not literal but symbolical. The bread which God is now about to send to his people, also comes down from heaven and is intended to be the Bread of life for the whole world—not merely day by day for a few years, but for life everlasting.

"Evermore Give Us This Bread"

The lessons were going home to their hearts, as we know by their reply, "Lord, evermore give us this Bread." We note the similarity of expression here with that used by the Samaritan woman to whom the Lord mentioned the gift of life under the figure of the water of life—"Evermore give me this water." The answers in both cases show us the longings of the people of that time, both Jews and Samaritans, for something superior to what they had. As the poet has declared, "There are longings infinite in the human mind"—longings for life eternal. From remote times history tells us of how people in every clime have sought for health-springs and health-foods that thus they might have a longer continuance of the present life and, if possible, an annulment of death entirely. All realize that this has not yet been attained, and the war still goes on. It is on the strength of such longings of the soul for continued life that patent medicines thrive. We are glad that there is such a longing in the human mind for a perpetuation of life; it becomes, as in this case and in the case of the Samaritan woman, a basis for further investigation for the eternal life which the Lord proffered.

Our Lord replied, "I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Again our Lord's words would undoubtedly be beyond the depth of the people's understanding. We can imagine their consternation, and to assist us in sympathizing with them we should remember that they were not Spirit begotten, because Pentecost had not yet come, "the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified."—John 7:39. Indeed, we find that this question is a very abstruse one [hard to understand] with many of the Lord's people today, and few comprehend it with any clearness

except the Spirit-begotten. Let us make the matter as plain as possible by continuing the investigation of the context. Therein Jesus explains that he himself had come down from heaven—not merely like the manna from the clouds, but from heaven itself, having laid aside the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, having humbled himself to an exchange of his previous spirit nature for the earthly nature in which he was then addressing them—the man Christ Jesus. However, they could not eat him while he was alive, nor could they even understand what he meant when he said, “My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed,”—John 6:55, and they reasoned Will this man give us his flesh to eat? Is that what he means? The lesson was too deep for them; but, thank God, not too deep for us. As then some of the disciples forsook Jesus and walked no more with him, saying, “This is a hard saying, who can receive it?” so today here are some who cannot receive this teaching, which is the fundamental one of the Gospel of Christ. Whoever cannot receive this lesson cannot receive the other lessons which are built upon it. Our Lord further explained, “My flesh I will give for the life of the world.” He had not yet given his flesh, though he was in the process of giving it; he was drawing out its vitality, its strength, in their service, but would complete the work of his sacrifice by surrendering his all to death—even the death of the cross. This he did later.

“We Eat His Flesh”

We do not eat the flesh of Jesus literally—we eat it by faith; that is to say, we appropriate by faith to ourselves the merit, the efficacy which was in his flesh and which he surrendered to death on our behalf. Why was this, and what did he surrender, and how do we partake of it? We answer that Adam as the head of the race had forfeited his life through disobedience and hence, instead of being able to propagate a race of perfect beings in harmony with God and privileged to have eternal life, his offspring was like himself, dying, unworthy of eternal life. In God’s arrangement a redemptive sacrifice was necessary—someone must take Adam’s place, suffer death for him in order to release him and to justify his race from the original sentence. No human being could be found who was perfect and who could give to justice a ransom for his brother—for all were sinners, coming short of the glory, the perfection, which God recognizes as essential to eternal life. It was to meet these requirements that God made the arrangement with his Son by which the latter freely, gladly, for the joy set before him, died, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.—1 Peter 3:18. So, then, it was our Lord’s flesh or human nature that was given for Adam and his race, and hence given for the life of the world, that the world of mankind might be recovered from under the sentence of death. Thus Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man and we are all redeemed, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood (life) of Christ, as a lamb without spot or blemish.—1 Peter 1:18, 19.

We see, says one, how it was necessary for Christ to be made flesh and how it was necessary for him to give his flesh for the life of the world by going into death, but how shall we eat his flesh? is the question. Ah, we answer, the matter, as put in the figurative form is beautifully simple and meaningful when we understand it. The eating of the Lord’s flesh must be an individual matter on the part of all those who would benefit by his sacrifice. The eating

represents the appropriating by faith. Thus, when one comes to an understanding of the fact of the redemption and believes therein and goes to God in prayer and by faith accepts the forgiveness of his sins and reconciliation with God, he in so doing is eating the flesh of the Son of man; he is partaking of those benefits or advantages which our Lord's flesh or sacrifice secured.

Justified By Our "Eating"

The result of such eating by faith signifies the appropriation to one's self of all the blessings and privileges which our Lord possessed as a perfect man; it implies our justification on the human plane, our relationship to God as those whose sins are graciously overlooked or covered and who have joy and peace and fellowship with God through faith in the precious blood. We are to continue to eat that we may grow stronger and stronger—that we may be able to appropriate more and more the wonderful blessings and privileges, (relationships), and divine favors that belonged to our Lord, but which he surrendered on our behalf and on behalf of all the members of Adam's race. Additionally, those who are rightly influenced by the eating—those who are drawn nearer to the Lord and led to a full consecration of their all to him—these receive a special invitation during this Gospel age to drink of his blood. The blood is the life in Scriptural language, and hence ordinarily the Jews were not to drink blood; to do so would make them guilty or responsible for the death of the person or creature. Thus the Jews said of our Lord, "His blood be upon us"—we assume the responsibility of his death.

The Apostle also explains that those who partake of the blood of Christ symbolically in the communion cup are symbolically representing themselves as being guilty of the blood of Christ, guilty of the death of Christ—unless they partake of it with the proper, the intended signification. What is that intended signification? We answer that our Lord stated the matter at the Last Supper, saying to his disciples, "This is the cup of the New Covenant in my blood—drink ye all of it."—Matthew 26:27. This cup of the fruit of the vine represents my blood, my death; by it the New Covenant will eventually be sealed, and I invite you who believe on me to partake of this with me, to partake of this not as those who caused my death, but as those who voluntarily gave up their own lives and joined with me in this death, in this self-sacrifice. As you partake of this cup with me it signifies that you lay down your lives as I laid down mine and that you become participants with me in this cup which speaks, which means the great sacrifice, the great life given through which the New Covenant will be established, under which all the families of the earth will be blessed.

So then, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the words of the Apostle, we may see a depth of meaning in our Lord's words which the people whom he addressed did not comprehend. Indeed, we believe that while our Lord addressed these words to the Jews he intended them more particularly for us to whom they have been communicated and by whom they have been more fully understood. We rejoice, then, in the justification which we have through partaking of his flesh—through being justified by the sacrifice of his humanity—our appropriation of our share of human justification. We rejoice also that eventually the whole world shall be privileged to eat of that flesh—to accept the grace of God in the cancellation of

their human sins and weaknesses, and to realize that all those blessings of restitution times, the blessings of the Millennium, will come to them because Christ died for their sins, because he gave to them his flesh to eat. The whole world is to eat of that Bread and, as the Apostle intimates, the church is now privileged to be a part with the Lord in the Loaf that is being broken, as well as to be participants in the cup of ignominy and self-sacrifice which the Father poured for him and which he permits us to share with him—for if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him, if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him, if we drink of his cup we shall also share in his joys in the kingdom by and by.—2 Timothy 2:12.

Whom the Father Giveth Shall Come

The multitude who had eaten of the bread the night before, and who now had received the explanation respecting the higher food necessary to eternal life, did not believe, although they recognized Jesus as a very wonderful personage indeed, and probably, like another multitude, were ready to declare, “Never man spake like this man.”—John 7:46. Was our Lord disconcerted and disappointed because these thousands of Israel, heirs of the promises, received him not, heeded not his message? Nay, verily! Nor should we his followers think strange of it that in this harvest time the divine message should be incomprehensible to the great majority of the household of faith of our time. We read nothing of our Lord’s becoming excited to a frenzy and appealing to the people and teaching them that they were about to fall into an eternity of torture if they did not receive him. We read nothing about the apostles going out amongst them and urging them to a mourner’s bench. Quite to the contrary of all this. Jesus evidently expected that few would believe; he even turned to his disciples and said, “Will ye also go away?” They answered, No, to whom should we go? From you we have the message of eternal life which comes from nowhere else. Master, we will stand by you; we could not do otherwise, our every interest is bound up in this glorious message which we have heard from your lips. We are ready to die with you, to drink of your cup.

Instead of manifesting any disturbance our Lord said to the multitude, This is what I told you before; ye have seen me, ye have believed not. Why? Because ye are not of the flock of sheep whom my Father hath given me to lead at the present time. Other sheep I have which are not of this flock; by and by I will attend to them. But now “All that the Father hath given me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”—reject. What is this if not an election, a selection? How much in harmony it is with what our Lord uttered in his prayer on the night before his crucifixion, “I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me...that they all may be one; as thou, Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may [then later] believe that thou hast sent me!”—John 17:9, 21. As our Lord was not expecting all to come to him and to accept of his gracious offer and God’s gracious provision in him and thus to be justified through eating his flesh, so he could not expect either that many would go on still further and make the consecration to walk in his steps in the narrow way and thus be partakers of his cup and prospective joint-heirs with him. These in all, from first to last, are but a little flock, but a very blessed little flock to whom, as the Master declared, the Father will give the kingdom.—Luke 12:32. When they shall be changed and are like their Master and shall receive the kingdom power and glory and dominion—then will come

through that kingdom the overthrow of the prince of darkness, the prince of this world; the overthrow of sin and the work of blessing, enlightening, and uplifting all the poor world of mankind who are not now called and drawn by the Father!

Note our Lord's words in this connection "No man can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him."—John 6:44. There is an exclusiveness about this: the time had not yet come, mentioned in Revelation, when the water of life shall flow freely, and whosoever will may come.—Revelation 22:17. That glorious time belongs to the Millennial Kingdom and not to the present time, which is devoted to the election or selection of the Bride class of joint-heirs which the Father is now drawing, calling, and sealing. Mark the distinctive difference between this drawing of the present time by the Father and that later drawing of the Millennial age, which will not be by the Father but by the Son, and which will not be exclusive but inclusive, including all mankind. Harken to our Master's words to this effect, that "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."—John 12:32. All men are not yet drawn to the Lord. Why? Because the lifting up is not yet complete. The Head was lifted up not only at Calvary but was subsequently highly exalted as a reward, and the members of his body, the members of the Bride class who follow in his steps, must finish their course and also be highly exalted as his joint-heirs before the lifting-up process will be complete.

With that glorious "change" of the first resurrection, the Millennial Kingdom will be ushered in and during that wonderful reign of righteousness, that shining forth of the sun of light and truth for the blessing of the world, all mankind will be drawn away from sin and selfishness, away from sickness, pain and sorrow, away from everything that is evil, toward the lord, that they may partake of his flesh indeed and have eternal life with all the blessings of restitution which God has provided through the great Redeemer. We are not in this teaching Universalism, for as many of those who are called and drawn now to be of the Bride class can, and many do, resist the drawings, or as the Apostle says "receive the grace of God in vain," so it will be possible to resist the drawings of the Millennial age, as is pointed out in the Scriptures in various statements, of which this may suffice: "It shall come to pass that the soul that will not hear [obey] that Prophet, shall be destroyed from amongst the people"—in the second death, without hope of any recovery—Acts 3:23. Note again the Lord's promise to these Elect ones whom the Father now draws and who now come and feed upon our Lord's flesh and who drink of his cup, his blood, and participate with him in his sacrifice. Their hope is stated in these words, "I will raise him up at the last day." The last day the great seventh day, the Millennial day. Ah, yes! We remember it is written respecting the church, the bride class, "God shall help her right early in the morning"—Psalms 46:5—the morning of that Millennial day. The six days, epochs of one-thousand years each, from Adam have passed, the seventh is already dawning and the time is near at hand when the bride, all glorious, shall be presented to the great King, the Father, by the great King, his Son, our Lord—"with gladness and rejoicing shall she be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace."—Psalms 45:15.

“I Will In No Wise Cast Out”

How glad we are that our dear Master added these words. Without them we might have doubted the efficacy of the calling and drawing which we receive; and some might have said, Yes, I was indeed drawn, but evidently the Lord Jesus did not count me worthy of a place amongst his followers. He here assures us that the drawing of the Father which brings us to him with a desire to be his disciples will insure for us his aid, his succor, his assistance, his acceptance. Thus we may know that if we fail of the grace of God now provided for us in the high calling, it will be our own fault, because of failure to give heed to the voice of the Shepherd and to walk in his steps. R 4146 (1908)

The Great Shepherd and His Son, the Good Shepherd

(John 10:1-16)

“The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

David the Psalmist wrote prophetically, “Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want”—Psalms 23; for in David’s day the arrangements for the Shepherd and the flock of this lesson had not been completed. True, the heavenly Father had purposed his entire plan as respects humanity’s redemption and return to his care as his flock, but he had not yet sent his only begotten Son, the Good Shepherd, to give his life for the sheep, to call the flock, to open the door, and to lead them out and into pasturage and to rest. Nevertheless, in the Lord’s providence the nation of Israel had already been gathered, as those who would be prepared to be the flock of the Good Shepherd when he should come. These were “shut up under the law”—Galatians 3:23, waiting for the coming of the Good Shepherd to open the door and to call them by name as his own sheep. Others, indeed, came before the Messiah, affecting to be the true shepherd, leaders sent of God but they were mere pretenders, who sought their own good and glory, and not that of the sheep. They were thieves and robbers, who sought to gain possession of the sheep for their own selfish ends.

The “porter” (representing the law) would not recognize any of these pretenders, nor approve them, nor open to them access to the sheep. However, when the true Shepherd came he satisfied the law (the porter), and bought the sheep from justice, giving his own life as their redemption price. Thus he gained the full right to open the door, the full sanction of the porter, the full authority to lead forth the sheep to the green pastures and still waters of divine truth which then became due to them.

At the time of the giving of this parable our Lord was laying down his life, and at the same time uttering his voice, that the true sheep might learn to know him. Not only will all the true sheep learn to know the Shepherd but, precious thought! the Shepherd knoweth his own sheep individually, so that he calleth each by name as he leads them out. This suggests to us the intimacy of the relationship between Christ and each member of his flock.

The treatment of sheep in this part of the world is very different from that described in the parable, which is still maintained in Oriental countries. Here sheep are driven, and have little or no acquaintance with the herdsmen. In Palestine, for instance, every sheep has a personal acquaintance with its shepherd, and he with it, and it is said that this acquaintance is so particular that the shepherds have a separate name for each sheep, and know each individually by its name, and that the sheep knows its own name and will respond to a call from its own shepherd at any time. How beautifully this illustrates the close relationship between Christ and his flock, the church! He gives to each one of us a new name, and we are each personally known to him—our peculiarities of character, temperament, etc., our strong points, and our weaknesses—he knoweth them all. He loves us, cares for us, helps us over our trials and difficulties, and shields us from the temptations which would be too strong for us, “He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation provide also a way of escape,” and causes that “all things work together for good to them that love God, the called ones according to his purpose”—his “little flock” of this Gospel age.

We note also the care of the Shepherd over the sheep, for he says, “He putteth forth his own sheep and goeth before them.” The words “putteth forth” have the significance of looking after them, that they all get started in the way to the green pastures and still waters for soul refreshment. He is not heedless, careless, respecting them, whether they go or do not go; nevertheless, having started them in the way, he will not drive them; he goeth before them to lead, that they may follow. Our Good Shepherd has indeed set us a noble example, so that we may walk in his steps; and whoever will, to the extent of his ability, trustfully do this, will find his wants abundantly supplied, for “No good thing will he (the Shepherd) withhold from those who [thus] walk uprightly.” “He will guide them with his counsel, and afterward receive them to glory.”—Psalms 84:11; 73:24.

Our Lord’s parable does not tell us about the disciplines which the sheep are sure to receive, but these are set before us in the prophetic Psalm on the subject, in the words, “Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” The thought is that the Shepherd, while going before and not driving the sheep, nevertheless has such an interest and care that he will not suffer one of the sheep to wander away without administering certain chastisement designed for its good, and to correct it and to bring it back into fellowship in the flock. This is a comfort, and yet it should certainly be the desire of all true sheep to follow the Shepherd so closely that the rod shall not often be necessary.

The link between the Shepherd and the sheep, as here indicated, is love. The Shepherd loves the sheep, and has demonstrated this in having laid down his life for them, and the sheep speedily learn to love the Shepherd as their care-taker; they recognize him through his voice—the Word of God. This voice appeals to the hearts of all the true sheep, who quickly respond: “Never man spake as this man.”

The voice of the Good Shepherd is a blending of various sounds in a manner in which they are blended by no other voice. His voice sounds forth the chord of justice commingled with the chord of love, and the whole intoned with wisdom and power. Other theories, plans and

schemes of men and devils, have no such harmony of sound as has the message which the great Shepherd has sent us through His Son. His voice speaks to us of a just penalty for sins—death; it speaks of love in our redemption and the forgiveness of our sins, and the opening to us of the way of life through resurrection. This “word of grace” constrains all the true sheep as no other message or voice could do. Moreover, when the true sheep hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, it satisfies their longings as nothing else could do. They will no longer be in danger of being attracted by other sounds or voices, theories or schemes, but will reply to all: “Jesus has satisfied; Jesus is mine.”

There are many false voices in the world today, seeking to lead the Lord’s sheep astray, and these are sometimes sounded in deceptive tones, to imitate the Shepherd’s call, to draw away sheep after those who would be shepherds, but whom the great Shepherd has not appointed: shepherds who not only have not purchased the sheep, but who also seek to ignore the great sacrifice by which the Good Shepherd did purchase them. We might mention many such false voices, or false would-be shepherds—Christian Science, Theosophy, Spiritism, Evolution, Higher Criticism, etc., but we have the Good Shepherd’s word for it that his true sheep will not be deceived by any of these. Well do they know his voice, and its combination of justice, love, and mercy cannot be duplicated by others—its message of redemption by the precious blood, justification by faith, the high calling, the begetting of the Holy Spirit, the by-and-by deliverance of the sons of God, and eventually of all who will obey him of the entire groaning creation, through restitution.

This voice, once heard, can never be mistaken for another, and those who know this Shepherd and his voice need never be misled by others. The Lord’s true sheep, which he knows by name and who follow him, will not heed the voice of strange shepherds, but will flee from them. They know when they hear a false voice, that it means that the adversary is seeking to ensnare them, and such will flee from the voice of error that they may come the closer to the true Shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep. If, therefore, we see some whom we had supposed were of the Lord’s flock heeding another voice and following after strange shepherds, and heedless of the voice that speaketh from heaven, we need not be fearful; for if they are true sheep of the Lord’s flock they cannot long be deceived, if at all. We may indeed sound out the voice of the Good Shepherd calling their attention afresh to the harmonies and beauties of the “voice from heaven.” However, if still they do not hear and heed, we may know that they do not belong to the flock which our Shepherd is now collecting and shepherding.

Amongst those who heard this parable from our Lord’s lips, not many comprehended, not many had the hearing ear for the true Shepherd’s voice; only a small proportion of the Jewish people followed him and became his true sheep. Similarly now, many are professing to be the true sheep of the Lord’s flock; however, in this day of the Shepherd’s presence his voice, the truth, becomes the test. All of the true sheep will hear and be attracted by the voice of truth now uttered, and will obey it. Those who are not of the Good Shepherd’s flock, and who have not his spirit, he desires shall now be separated; to this end they will hear the voice of other shepherds, and be deceived thereby because they are not truly of the Lord’s flock.

Dr. Porter tells of a scene he witnessed, in which several flocks of sheep were for a time commingled, and how, when the due time was come, the separation took place. He says:--“As we sat and looked, almost spell-bound, the silent hillsides around were in a moment filled with life and sound. Thousands of sheep and goats were there, grouped in confused masses. The shepherds stood together until all came out, and then they separated, each shepherd taking a different path, and uttering as he advanced, a shrill, peculiar call. The sheep heard them; at first the mass swayed and moved as if shaken by some internal convulsion; then points struck out in the directions taken by the shepherds. These became longer and longer, until the confused masses were resolved in long, living streams flowing after their leaders.”

So at the present time there are many sheep in the nominal Church, but they are not all the Lord's sheep. Some belong to human leaders of various sects, and some are God's. The harvest, or end of this Gospel age, the time for separating the wheat from the tares, is the time for separating the different flocks of sheep. In harmony with this, we now hear various voices calling the sheep in various directions, as never before. This is the Lord's providence, for the purpose of separating all others from his own “little flock.” His sheep will hear his voice and follow him—other sheep, consecrated to human leaders, human institutions, human theories, human efforts, will follow their own bents and thus be separated from the “little flock,” and this is now the Lord's good pleasure. Thus he will “gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them that do iniquity,” before the glorifying of his church.

Christ the Door of God's Sheep-Fold

As a further explanation of the matter, our Lord refers to himself as the Door of the sheep-fold, the lawful, proper entrance-gate, by which God's people might enter into rest. All who had ever come previously, claiming to be messiahs, had attempted to climb up by some other way than that of keeping the divine law and purchasing the sheep. They were thieves and robbers, attempting to take what they had not secured a right to, and that for selfish gain. However, none of the true sheep would heed them nor follow them. Now the Good Shepherd had come, and had purchased the sheep, opening a legal door of entrance to them and liberty for them, and it was appropriate that all of the true sheep should know it. Now it had become possible for the sheep to have in Christ the liberty so long desired and to be led out and into pasturage and refreshment and to rest and security. Henceforth God's flock should never lack for pasturage because, having bought them through His Son, they shall be cared for. They may now say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Others who had approached the sheep, seeking to be their leaders, had done so selfishly; had been willing to sacrifice the sheep in their own interest; but the Good Shepherd, solicitous for the best interests of the sheep, demonstrated this by the sacrifice of his own life on their behalf, that they might have life more abundant, better than they had every known hitherto—eternal life. Hireling shepherds labor for the hire, and not from personal interest in the sheep, and consequently, instead of being ready to lay down their lives for the sheep in times of extremity and persecution for righteousness' sake, they are ready rather to flee the trouble and

avoid persecution. They think chiefly of their own ease and comfort, honor and dignity, and of how much of the golden fleece they can get from the sheep. They are not very deeply concerned respecting the spiritual progress of the sheep, their growth in grace, and in all the fatness of love and spiritual welfare, but specially in numbers and collections.

Perhaps never more than at present is this truth clearly illustrated amongst those who are professedly representatives of the Good Shepherd—under-shepherds in his flock. Many of them give evidence of wanting to be on the popular side of every question—of unwillingness to suffer anything for the sake of the truth; of carelessness respecting the real spiritual condition of the flock; of interest rather in the human institutions through which they obtain their support, and with whose welfare their honor, dignity, and titles are associated. Of such shepherds Milton, the poet, wrote styling them:--

“...blind mouths,
The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,
But, swollen with wind and the rain mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread.”

The Christian philosopher, John Ruskin, commenting upon this says: “These two monosyllables, ‘blind mouths,’ express the precisely accurate contraries of the right character in the two great offices of the church—those of bishop and pastor. A bishop means a person who *sees*; a pastor means one who *feeds*. The most unbishoply character a man can have is, therefore, to be blind. The most unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed—to be a mouth.”

Nevertheless, the Good Shepherd will always be represented amongst the sheep by those who have his own characteristics, and who are seeking to walk in his footsteps; and through these he will utter his “voice,” and lead his own sheep to pasture and to rest. These will not only have the same voice, the same Word, the same good tidings, but they will have the same devotion to the interests of the sheep—to feed the sheep, to lead them into the green pastures and by the still waters of present truth, and to preserve their liberties in the Lord, and not to pen them up as their own, nor to make merchandise of them.

The Father, the great over-Shepherd, Almighty God, is referred to by the Good Shepherd, Jesus, in verse 15: “The Father knoweth me [has confidence in me—has entrusted the care of the sheep to me] and even so I know the Father [having full confidence in him, and recognizing him as my Shepherd, director, leader] and [it is in harmony with his arrangement for me and for the sheep that] I lay down my life for the sheep.”

The sheep that I am now calling and leading to pasture and caring for and calling by their own names, and who know me, are a very special lot of sheep; in all only a “little flock,” for whom Jehovah, the Great Shepherd, has made special arrangements and provisions in his kingdom of glory. However, these are not all of his sheep, though they are all that are yet called and led forth. “Other sheep I have that are not of this fold.” I bought the whole world with the one sacrifice for sins, and all who have the true sheep disposition, all who desire to be

in harmony with righteousness, truth, and the Author of these, I must recognize as my sheep, and must search them out far and near, until every one of them shall be found. This will be by and by, after the present “little flock” shall be glorified with me. Then they, with me, shall be the shepherds who will gather in all of the true sheep, delivering them all from the power of the enemy, and bringing so many as will obey my voice ultimately into the glorious condition of oneness, harmony with the heavenly Father and with myself, in which condition, as my sheep, they will be entitled to everlasting life. “Then there shall be one fold and one shepherd,” as it is written: “Of whom the whole family both in heaven and in earth is named.”—Ephesians 3:15.
R 2672 (1900)

Parable of the Shepherd, the Door, and the Flock

(John 10:1-18)

“I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”—verse 11.

The Scriptures assign many very beautiful and expressive titles to our Lord as descriptive of his relationship to his faithful. Amongst the most beautiful and impressive of these is the Good Shepherd, or more literally, the grand Shepherd, the ideal Shepherd. Likewise amongst the various names applied to the Lord’s followers, the term “sheep” is the one most familiar as well as one of the most fitting. Surely it would never occur to the natural man to use such an illustration. In illustration of what we mean, note the fact that the barons and lords of England have adopted various signets, coat of arms, etc., on many of which animals or animals’ heads appear. Did anyone ever see a sheep’s head on one of these? We think not. If we could imagine any earthly lord as adopting a symbol of a sheep, it would surely represent a surly-horned ram. Lions’ heads, tigers’ heads, eagles’ heads, and nondescript heads of ferocious aspect, dragons, etc., are what are usually chosen. This represents the natural mind and the desire that the natural man has to appear strong and ferocious and to intimidate others. He who represented himself as the Good Shepherd and his followers as sheep had a very different idea of the whole matter from that of the natural man, and we who have become his followers should take note of this, and, appreciating it, should cultivate more and more of the sheep-like nature in our relationship to him as the Shepherd.

The Door into the Sheepfold

The parable of our lesson divides itself into two parts, representing Jesus first of all as the door into the sheepfold and secondly as the Shepherd. The fold described in the parable is a place of safety, rest, and protection from prowling beasts and from robbers. There was but one doorway into these folds, and it was supposed to be guarded by a porter who would know the true shepherd and admit him and no other. Our Lord declared himself to be the true Shepherd of Jehovah’s flock, the only one to whom the porter would grant admission and the only one, therefore, who had the right to control the sheep and who alone could provide for their safety. The porter who could thus discriminate between the true and the false was the Law Covenant. Those who could not answer the law, who could not fulfill its demands, could not substantiate their claims to being the Shepherd, the Messiah. However, our Lord did meet the demands of

the law fully, completely—"in him was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He was already holy, harmless, and separate from sinners. He is thus identified to us as the rightful Shepherd. Others had come in his name, professing to be the Messiah—false Messiahs—and had endeavored to attract the sheep; but our Lord declares of them that they were fraudulent, "thieves and robbers," who were merely assisting to steal the sheep, and who were actuated not with a desire to profit the sheep but by personal, selfish ambitions.

There was but one way to become the true Shepherd of the Lord's flock and to have a right to lead his flock—out to the green pastures and still waters of truth and grace and into the rest and security of the fold. That way was the way of the cross—to give himself a ransom for all. This our Lord did and thus he became the door to the sheepfold, opening up a new and living way, or more correctly, a new way of life. Nevertheless, this is not the making of a new door into the fold, but the opening of the door which had previously been closed. The door was the law, which could not open except by obedience to the law; and now our Lord Jesus, having kept the law, has made it possible for all of his true sheep to enter in by the same door, by the keeping of the law—not, however, the letter of the law, which would be impossible to us, but its spirit. Thus the Apostle says of the true sheep and their entering into the fold, "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit"—Romans 8:4; because our Shepherd has made an appropriation of his grace on our behalf which makes up for us all that we lack. So long as we are his and are striving to walk in his ways, every deficiency is compensated out of his abundance. To him the porter openeth, to him the law and the prophets bear witness.

"But They Understood Not"

It is supposed that this parable was uttered in the hearing of the man born blind, who had been expelled from the synagogue, and in the hearing also of the Pharisees, who had so much to do with his expulsion. No doubt the man was feeling discouraged, downcast, because of his excommunication from the supposed fold of the Lord's people. The presumption then is that the Lord gave this parable to illustrate the fact that he had not really been cast out of the Lord's fold, but merely out of a human organization by those who had no power in respect to the matter. Our Lord would have him and the Pharisees and his disciples and us see that there is no flock of the Lord except that of which he is the Leader and Shepherd; that there is no way into that flock except through him, through the work which he would accomplish by his sacrifice and through our acceptance of the same by faith. Verse 6 says the hearers understood not the meaning of the parable, therefore the Lord repeated it in slightly different terms, proclaiming himself as the doorway by which any could enter into divine favor as members of the Lord's flock. Thus the man who had been cast out of the synagogue might perceive that he really had lost nothing but that on the contrary he had been assisted toward the right door of the true fold, in which rest indeed could be obtained. Now he was invited to see that the Lord alone was the avenue to rest and salvation and to the spiritual refreshment of divine instruction. Others had selfishly sought to steal or to destroy the sheep, if thereby they could advance their own personal interests; but he, as the true Shepherd, instead of seeking his own welfare, was

seeking the welfare and advantage of the sheep that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

What a lesson for us! The Master did not say that he came to deliver the sheep from eternal torment, but that he came to deliver them from death. He does not say that they already have a life which they must spend somewhere either in joy or anguish, and that he had come to assist them, so that it should not be spent in anguish; his language, on the contrary, teaches that the sheep could have no life except through him, the Life-Giver; that he had come to give back in due time by restitution processes, to as many as would receive it, the life which was lost by father Adam's disobedience—human life. Yea, he declares that he intended to give life more abundant than that which was lost! How could this be, if father Adam was perfect and as such had everlasting life according to divine arrangement? We answer that the life which the Lord proposes to give to those who are his sheep of this Gospel age, this little flock, is a still higher form and degree of life namely, immortality, inherent life. These he proposes to make partakers of the divine nature by giving them a share with himself "in his resurrection," the "first resurrection."—Philippians 3:10.

He Gave His Life For Us

This is the central point of our lesson. The Good Shepherd, so far from self-seeking, gladly laid down his life for the sheep, and it was by virtue of thus purchasing the sheep by his own precious blood that their eternal life is possible; without his purchase there would be no flock, and it is by this that he becomes the Shepherd of the flock. How clear, how beautiful the thought, "Ye were bought with a price!"—1 Corinthians 6:20. No one else could give this ransom for us, no one else could purchase us or grant us life everlasting, no one else, therefore, could legally become our Shepherd or be able to lead us into the rest and peace of God, into the knowledge of the truth and ultimately into the heavenly fold, the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Worthy the Lamb that was slain to receive, glory honor, dominion, and power!

"The Sheep Hear His Voice"

The tales told respecting the shepherds of eastern countries and their flocks are remarkable and illustrate well our Lord's declarations of this parable. Let us examine a few of these that we may sympathetically enter into the spirit of the Lord's words. Those who heard him were familiar with these facts. One writer says:--

"It is one of the most interesting spectacles to see the number of flocks of thirsty sheep water at a fountain. Each flock in obedience to the call of its own shepherd lies down awaiting its turn. The shepherd of one flock calls his sheep in squads, and when the squad has done drinking, orders it away by sounds which the sheep perfectly understand, and calls up another squad. The sheep never make any mistake as to who whistles to them or calls them. In a flock of hundreds of thousands each individual sheep has a name, knows it and is known by it. The Greeks had a similar custom. The names frequently correspond to certain defects, as for

instance, 'Torn,' or 'Broken-legged,' 'One Eye,' 'Curly Horn,' 'Bald head.' As lambs they are taught to answer to their names by patient drill, being led back and forth from the rest of the flock and not allowed to go to their mothers for food until they respond properly to the calls. The shepherd never drives his sheep in the East, but goes before them, they follow him, they run after him if he appears to be escaping from them and are terrified if he is out of their sight or any stranger appears instead of him. He calls for them from time to time to let them know that he is at hand, they listen and continue grazing, but if anyone else attempts to produce the same peculiar sounds they look around, startled, and begin to scatter. A Scottish traveller changed clothes with a shepherd, and thus disguised began to call the sheep; they remained motionless; then the true shepherd raised his voice and they all hastened to him in spite of his strange garment."

"He Calls His Own Sheep by Name"

The foregoing illustrations help us to appreciate this statement and assist us in applying it to the true sheep of the Lord's little flock. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and it is also true that those who are his know him. "He goeth before them and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice and a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him for they know not the voice of strangers." The voice of the Lord is the voice of justice, of truth, and of love, and all who are his sheep are expected to be able to discriminate between his message and the various false messages which more or less particularly represent the adversary, who seeks to mislead the flock, using human instrumentality to accomplish the purpose. We have the Lord's assurance that none of the true sheep will be satisfied with the false Gospel; it will not appeal to their hearts, and equally we have the assurance that the true sheep will be satisfied with the true Gospel, because it will satisfy their longings as nothing else will do. This is an important point to keep before our minds. It indicates to us the importance of becoming fully, truly, emphatically the Lord's sheep, of entering into covenant relationship with him and thus making sure his protecting care and instruction.

"I Know My Sheep"

It becomes an important question then as to how and when we become the Lord's sheep. Are all the wise and the learned, the rich and the great, the Lord's sheep? The Apostle answers, No, and says further that not many of those will be found amongst the sheep—not many wise, not many great, not many learned, not many noble, not many rich, but chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith.—1 Corinthians 1:26-28; James 2:5. Are all of the poor then the Lord's sheep? We answer, No! These different flocks do in a general way indeed hold the name of Christ; surely not many of them give evidence of being his disciples, his followers. Many of them know little about his Word, his voice; many of them know nothing about his leading into green pastures and by still waters of divine truth and grace, many of them know nothing about the real fold with its rest and peace and protecting care. Their lack in these respects shows that they are not of the true flock whom the Lord is leading, though true sheep of the Lord may be found in each denomination. Wherever they may be, if they are his, they are being led and

being fed and know him and know his voice, his Word, and are dissatisfied with the husks of human tradition.

“The Hireling Fleeth”

Many, indeed, might have been glad of the honor of being the Shepherd, the caretaker of the Lord’s flock, but the test, the cost, was too great for them. We may well suppose that many of the angels would have been glad to occupy such a position—but would they have been willing to undertake it at the cost involved? Many amongst men have coveted the office of a shepherd both before our Lord’s Day and since; but while none of them could have bought the sheep, since all were under condemnation, we have no reason to suppose that any of them would have been willing to purchase them at the cost of his all. The Lord’s words seem to imply this. Only the true Shepherd was willing to make the sacrifice and to lay down his life for the sheep. We may remark here that while there is but one Shepherd of the Lord’s flock, he, in his absence, has made provision for his flock, that he would give them pastors and teachers who were to feed the flock of God and to watch for their souls, for their lives, to protect their interests.

It is in line with the Master’s teaching that we find that he expects all who would be worthy of this position of feeding this flock, shepherding them, must have his spirit, his willingness to lay down their lives for the sheep, and in their defense, as his representatives, to protect them from the adversary and his various snares and machinations; and from the wolves in sheep’s clothing who would make merchandise of them that they might bring them into bondage, into human pens separate and apart from the true fold opened by the true Shepherd, and who would feed them upon the husks of human tradition, instead of leading them to the green pastures of “present truth.” As the true sheep know the true Shepherd and are known by him, so the true Shepherd should know the true under-shepherds, and they should know the sheep intimately. Those who utter a voice or call of their own cannot be recognized by the true Shepherd or by the true sheep; the faithful under-shepherd will speak not only the words but also in the tones, in the manner of the true Shepherd.

How comforting the assurance of verse 14, “I know mine own and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father!”—Revised Version. What a beautiful description we have here of the precious relationship between the Lord and his own! The comparison between his knowledge and that of the Father is forceful, and as our Lord elsewhere pointed out, they that know not him, know not the Father. How important from the divine standpoint is knowledge, not merely head knowledge, but heart knowledge, intimate acquaintance with the Lord and his glorious plan!

One Flock and One Shepherd

An important truth is set forth in verse 16: There is only the one fold now provided for the Lord’s sheep, and in it all of his true ones of this Gospel age find rest and peace through faith and obedience. This is the little flock, to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the

kingdom. Many have supposed in the past that this little flock which will receive the kingdom glory, honor, and immortality will be the only ones ever recognized of the Lord as his sheep, that all others will be consigned to purgatory or to eternal torment. The erroneousness of this view is abundantly shown in this verse where our Lord distinctly declares that he has other sheep not of this fold, others who have not yet entered into its rest of faith which we have entered, hoping for the glories of the kingdom beyond. Let us have a good view of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of divine love and provision in Christ: that the whole world was lost in sin and death through father Adam's disobedience, and that the whole world was redeemed by the precious blood of Christ! Let us see that as yet only a special class has been called out of darkness into the Lord's marvelous light and into the privileges of the present sheep-fold conditions! Let us note that the great mass of mankind are without God and have no hope in the world, because their eyes are blinded and their ears are stopped, and they know not of the grace of God and have not yet received of the blessings!

Let us hearken also to the declaration of the Lord that in due time all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped! Let us hearken to his declaration that the little flock now being selected are to constitute his bride and joint-heirs in the kingdom and that then, through him and his glorified bride, the blessing of the Lord shall be extended to every member of the race. The Sun of Righteousness shall shine forth with healing in his beams, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. Then the gathering of the sheep of the other flock will begin, as recorded in John 10:16. At that time the present flock will have passed beyond the veil into the kingdom and its glories. Then the present fold will be at an end and there will be no use for such a fold in the future, for thieves and robbers will not be permitted then—"nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom]."—Isaiah 11:9. Then the great adversary will be bound for a thousand years that he may deceive the sheep no longer until the thousand years are finished. Meantime the whole world of mankind will be under the instruction of the Lord and his bride class, and the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth.—Habakkuk 2:14. The effect will be a test of humanity, and some will come gladly, voluntarily, into accord with the Lord as his sheep and be accepted to his right hand, to his favor, as the kind upon whom he is pleased to bestow everlasting life. Others under the same favorable conditions will manifest the goat-like, the wayward disposition and be gathered gradually to the left hand of disfavor as of those who have the spirit of the Adversary, which cannot be favored of the Lord. These ultimately, with Satan, at the close of the Millennial age, will be utterly destroyed in the second death. Their punishment will be everlasting, because their death will be everlasting; they will never be resurrected, theirs will be the second death—symbolically Gehenna, destruction.

None will deny that throughout the Gospel age there is a large class who has never heard of the only name given under heaven and amongst men whereby they must be saved and who, therefore, have never had an opportunity of becoming members of the Lord's flock. That they have gone to heaven without knowledge of the "only name" is unscriptural as well as unreasonable and that they have gone to eternal torment without an opportunity for salvation is equally unscriptural and unreasonable. That the Lord intends to use the very elect little flock of this Gospel age as his priests during the Millennium, to carry his mercy and favor to all of

these and to give them an opportunity of becoming members of the human flock to whom he will be pleased to give eternal life, is both reasonable and Scriptural.

One Flock, but Not One Fold

Our Common Version declares, “There shall be one *fold* and one Shepherd,” but this is not borne out by the Greek text, which is more properly rendered in the Revised Version and in the Diaglott—“There shall be one *flock* and one Shepherd.” This is in full agreement with the Apostle’s statement—Ephesians 1:10—that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one [literally, under one head] all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him. Ultimately all of God’s creation will be under the headship of this great Shepherd, who is now the Head of the Church, the little flock, and who in the future will be Head over angels also and over restored humanity. The flock will be one, but the sheep will be of various natures on various planes of being; as it is written, “In my Father’s house are many mansions,” many apartments, many planes, but all harmonious, grand. The highest of all these planes, the plane of glory, is that to which the Lord has invited the little flock, the Bride class of this Gospel age. Let us hear his voice, let us follow in his footsteps, let us make our calling and election sure! R 4157 (1908)

God’s House of Many Mansions

(Article 1 of 2)

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”—John 14:1-3.

After washing the disciples’ feet, and after the sop had been given to Judas and he had gone out; and after telling the disciples that they all would be offended that night because of him, and answering Peter that he would deny him thrice before the cock crew, we may well suppose that the hearts of the eleven were heavy, disturbed, troubled with fearful forebodings. Had they indeed been deluded, or had they misunderstood the Master when he told them that he was the Messiah, the heir of the kingdom, and that they should sit with him in his throne? How would they interpret his language, seeing that only five days before he had received the hosannas of the multitude as the Son of David, the King of Israel, when riding on the ass? What would it mean that the Master was now “exceeding sorrowful” and spoke of betrayal, and of their dispersion and of his own death?

It was in answer to these their troubled thoughts that our Lord spoke to them the beautiful words of comfort and consolation recorded in the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of John’s Gospel, beginning: “Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

The Apostles were already consecrated to God as his servants, they already believed in God, trusted in him, were Israelites indeed without guile. This is testified further by our Lord’s Prayer, in which he says, “*Thine they were*, and thou gavest them me.” The trouble in their hearts was not in respect to the foundation of their hopes, for these were all established. They not only knew and trusted God, but knew and trusted also the promises of God respecting the

kingdom and the blessings that should come to all the families of the earth through it. The whole question before their minds was respecting Jesus:—Was he indeed the Messiah, or had they built some false expectations upon his wonderful words and deeds? How should they understand it if now, after three and a half years of ministry he should die at the hands of his enemies, instead of establishing his kingdom and subduing all things to himself, as they had expected? He had said that he was going away, and that whither he went they could not come. How could they understand these matters, and harmonize them?

They had not yet learned the meaning of the words which early in his ministry our Lord had addressed to Nicodemus—“Except a man be born again, he cannot *see* the Kingdom of God,” “Except a man be born of water and of spirit, he cannot *enter into* the Kingdom of God.”—John 3:3, 5. These were spiritual truths, and could not be appreciated until Pentecost would bring them the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and permit them to “comprehend with all saints the lengths and breadths and heights and depths” of the divine plan. They did need some comfort, and the Master proceeded to give them the best and the strongest spiritual food, instruction, that they were able to receive. He had many things to tell them, but they could not bear them then, could not understand them, until the anointing of the Holy Spirit would prepare their hearts.

Our Lord began by reviving in them their faith in the Father and in His plan, saying, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me,” recognize the fact that all of the Father’s plans will be accomplished, and inasmuch as you have seen my loyalty to the Father in word and in deed, and inasmuch as you have seen the Father’s power unto good works manifested in me, let faith’s anchor hold; continue to trust me, continue to have confidence, and you shall have a blessing; wait for the development of the divine plan, and it will more than satisfy your highest expectations. You are perplexed because I said that I am going away—going to the Father, but let me explain to you that my going is in your interest: I go to prepare a place for you in my Father’s house of many apartments; and as surely as I do this I will come again and receive you unto myself, that we may henceforth be together forever.

Thus in a few words, the Master declared the work of the Gospel age, pointing to his second advent and the glorification of the church at the end of the age. He did not here stop to give them detailed explanations of the trials of faith and of patience through which they must pass; this he had done on other occasions, warning and cautioning them—Matthew 24; now their hearts were troubled, and he would merely console them with the assurance that his going away was necessary, that his second coming would be certain, and that the gathering of all to everlasting fellowship with him in the mansions prepared was assured.

The Father’s house is really the universe, and figuratively speaking heaven is his throne, the earth his footstool. Divine providence has made abundant arrangement for the everlasting blessedness of all the sons of God. In the divine arrangement a provision had been made for man when in harmony with God, before the fall, but by reason of sin all of man’s rights to a place in the everlasting abode of the just had been forfeited, and at the time of our dear Redeemer’s discourse he was in the world for the very purpose of redeeming man and all his

forfeited rights and possessions.—Luke 19:10; Ephesians 1:14. The purchase had not yet been completed—our Lord intended to finish the arrangements, therefore, within a few hours at Calvary. This would cost the sacrifice of himself—the full surrender of the man Christ Jesus as a man, and he could be with them no longer as a man. The hope was that by his obedience to the divine will he should not only redeem Adam and his race by the sacrifice of himself, the man Christ Jesus, but that he would be raised from death to a new nature on a higher plane—the divine nature. Thus it was necessary that he should go away from them as the man Christ Jesus, and that they should see him no more as the man, but that in due time, at his second coming, they also should be “changed” from human conditions to spirit conditions, and “be like him and see him as he is.”—1 John 3:2.

It was necessary also that, after laying down his life, he should ascend to the Father and present his sacrifice as on man’s behalf, as man’s ransom, and this he did. The Pentecostal blessing was the divine attestation that the sacrifice for sins was accepted of the Father on man’s behalf, and that hence the resulting blessing came forth upon all who accepted Jesus as their Redeemer. R 2453-2454 (1899)

God’s House of Many Mansions (Article 2 of 2)

In the larger sense, the Universe is God’s home or house, and this earth is His footstool. We know not how many angelic orders there are, but the Scriptures intimate that there are spirit beings of various grades, of different nature, each perfect, but differing one from the other. The Divine Plan, in connection with their creation, made full arrangement for their comfort and happiness to all eternity. Similarly, when God created man he provided for his welfare to all eternity, giving him an earthly home, mansion, or apartment in the great House. Our Lord, in calling his church, invited them to become God’s “New Creation.” He promised those who would become his footstep followers, bearing their cross after him, that eventually they should be with him, sharing his glory on the heavenly plane. They should be like unto the angels, but higher than the angels—his Bride. There is no place yet for this “New Creation,” except in the Father’s purpose, or plan, in which provision for the church, as the Bride of Christ, had already been made. But it needed to be prepared for them, and they needed to be prepared for it. This preparation has gone on from the time our Lord said, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”—John 14:2, 3. WPRS 775-776

The Parable of the True Vine and Its Fruits

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”—John 15:1-12.

Following the institution of the Memorial Supper, the Lord and his disciples, excepting Judas who had gone to betray him, went forth from the upper room toward the Garden of Gethsemane. It was while the disciples were troubled in heart in respect to various things the Lord had said unto them and his declarations respecting his coming death, and while the Lord, too, had in mind the parting from his disciples and their future experiences, that he gave them the parable of the vine.

The Lord announced himself as the true vine and His Father as the true Husbandman who planted the true vine, and his followers as the true branches of that vine. The expression “true vine” suggests a false vine, and this thought is accentuated and elaborated in our Lord’s last message to his people in the symbols of Revelation. There he speaks of the gathering of the fruitage of the “vine of the earth,” and the casting of the same into the wine-press of the wrath of God at the end of this age.—Revelation 14:19. There was, therefore, a deeper meaning in our Lord’s words, “true vine,” than the apostles could have possibly gathered from them. We who are living at a time when both the true vine of the Father’s planting and the false vine of the earth (earthly) have developed, have opportunity for noticing the difference between the two vines, and of noticing also that the vine of the earth is a counterfeit of the heavenly vine. In proportion as we see this matter clearly it will assist us not only in the understanding of the Lord’s parable, but also in our application of it in our daily lives. We will be in less danger of misunderstanding, misconstruing and being deceived by the false vine, or by the false branches and the false principles represented in connection with its development, for it is not under the divine Husbandman’s care.

The Vine of the Earth

The vine of the earth is the nominal Christian system organized along the lines of earthly wisdom. Its branches are the various sects and parties of Christendom. Its fruitage is cathedrals, temples, tabernacles, chapels, orphanages, hospitals, etc., political power, honor of men, wealth, and social standing. It is great and influential in the world and has the spirit of the world running through its branches and governing all of its affairs, and brings forth a fruitage which is not entirely bad, but which is entirely earthly, and which is relished and appreciated

because it is earthly and practical rather than heavenly. The vine has grown wonderfully, has some three hundred branches and claims four-hundred million adherents, and through its untold wealth of property and in its adherents it may be said to practically control the wealth of the world.

Great is the vine of the earth, wonderful in the eyes of men. However, the harvesting time will show that these nominal systems are not the vine of Jehovah's right-hand planting—Isaiah 60:21, and it is, therefore, the system which the Lord declares he will utterly uproot and destroy, and whose destruction is so graphically described in Revelation. In the wine-press of the wrath of God, in the great time of trouble that is nearing—which we believe the Scriptures to teach will be fully upon the world soon—the blood of Babylon's grapes will mean a flood of trouble and anguish to the world. By that time, however, the true vine and its branches will all have been glorified, and the results of their proper fruit-bearing will mean blessings to all the families of the earth.

Let us consider carefully the "true vine" and our relationship as branches of it, and the character of the fruit which the great Husbandman expects, that this last of our Lord's parables may greatly profit us, strengthen us, encourage us, assist us as it was intended that it should.

The True Vine

In the true vine the branches are not sects, parties, and it is only by delusions of the Adversary that any who are his (the Lord's) people recognize these systems of men. As the apostles were not Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, etc., neither should any of the Lord's followers be such, and it is only because we have been blinded by the Adversary's misteachings that any of the true children of God are in such error, and so we understand this parable and other teachings of the Word. The Apostles did not join each other, but each Apostle was united in heart, in faith, in hope, in love, in devotion to the Lord himself. So we should not join the Apostles, nor say I am of Paul, I am of Peter, etc., but each should individually join the Lord as a member, as a branch; each must have the sap of the vine if it would bear fruit. Sectarian sap is of no value in producing the real fruitage which the Lord desires—it is only a hindrance. By this we do not mean that none of the branches of the true vine are by mistake associated with the nominal church systems, the vine of the earth. We recognize that this is so, and we also recognize the Lord's voice—"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and receive not of her plagues"—the great troubles coming upon her, mother and daughters.

As the branches do not represent denominations and sects, but the individuals who are united to the Lord, so the teaching of the parable is that our Lord does not prune sects and denominations but the individual Christians, whoever and wherever they may be—"the Lord knoweth them that are his." Our Lord's word on the subject is, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth [pruneth] it, that it may bear more fruit." Everything in the Scriptures teaches us that our salvation and our relationship to the Lord are individual, personal matters; that we are not saved by congregations and sects and parties and families, but that individually and personally we must

be united to the vine if we would have the sap, if we would have the life, if we would be counted members of the church, which is his body.

Many Illustrations of Our Oneness

It is remarkable how fully the Lord has covered the whole range of illustrations in describing the oneness subsisting between himself and his consecrated followers. He gives us an illustration from the mineral kingdom, saying that we are living stones built together upon him as the foundation and capstone, to be the Temple of our God. From the animal kingdom our Lord drew illustrations of this oneness, likening himself to the good Shepherd and his true followers to the sheep under his care, one with him in fellowship. From the vegetable kingdom he drew the illustration of this lesson—I am the Vine, of which my true disciples are the branches. From the family relationship he drew the illustration of the true husband and true wife, and their complete, thorough union of heart and of every interest. From the family again he drew another illustration representing the Creator as the Father, himself as the elder Son and all of his followers as brethren. From the human body we have another illustration, Jesus himself being the Head over the church, which is his body, for as the Apostle declares, we are members in particular of the body of Christ. In proportion as our faith can grasp these declarations, in proportion as we can realize their truthfulness, in that same proportion we may have strong faith and confidence that he who has begun the good work in us is both able and willing to complete it. Whoever of a loyal, obedient heart can exercise faith has thus provided for himself strength and grace for every time of need, for every hour of trial, for every difficulty and perplexity and for all the affairs of life—the ballast which will give equilibrium and enable us to profit by all of life's experiences, the bitter as well as the sweet.

Our Lord's declaration that where two or three of his disciples are met together in his name they constitute a church or body of Christ, and he as the head is with them for their blessing in proportion as their hearts are loyal to him and seeking his guidance, leads us to conclude likewise that wherever two or three of his members are there we have a representation of the vine, and they may have all the blessings of branches and all the privileges of fruit bearing. Very evidently, however, the Lord did not wish us to understand that in every little company of those who have named the name of Christ there would be so thorough a purging, so thorough a burning, that only the true branches would remain. His intimation is that he deals with us individually, as well as collectively, and that if we would maintain our person relationship to him it must be by the receiving of the sap from the vine, the receiving of the Holy Spirit, as one of the results of the union and fellowship with him.

So surely as we receive the Holy Spirit into good and honest hearts the result will be a tendency to fruit-bearing, but the illustration our Lord gives teaches that some may become true branches in the vine and yet overlook and not possess the fruit-bearing disposition. Sometimes a healthy, strong branch develops from a good stalk and root but has no fruit-bearing qualities. The husbandman with a trained eye discerns between buds which would bring forth grape clusters and the buds which would have only leaves. Those which do not have the fruit buds are known as "suckers"—because they merely suck the juices of the vine and

bring forth no fruitage such as the husbandman seeks. These are pruned or cut off, so that the strength of the vine may not be wasted in such merely outward splendor, but may be conserved for its purpose of fruit bearing. Evidently a class of true professors resembles these suckers, who selfishly would draw to themselves as much of the righteousness of the vine as possible, and would make a fair outward show in the world with leaves of professions, but would have no thought of bringing forth the fruitage which the Lord requires and which can only be brought forth through sacrifice.

The Object of Pruning

Aside from the suckers there are branches which, while having fruit buds, would never bring the fruit to a good ripe development if allowed to take their own course and to develop themselves as branches merely, and hence the wise husbandman, noting the bud, is pleased with it and pinches off the sprout of the vine beyond the bud, not to injure the branch but to make it more fruitful. So with us who have not only joined the Lord by faith and consecration and been accepted as branches but who as branches desire to bring forth good fruitage, which the Lord seeks in us—we need the Husbandman's care so that we may bring forth much fruit, so that the fruit which we bear may be more to his pleasured, large fruit, luscious fruit, good fruit, valuable fruit. The methods of the Lord's prunings should be understood by all the branches, otherwise they may be discouraged and droop and fail to bring forth the proper fruitage.

It would appear that the great Husbandman prunes the branches of the Christ sometimes by taking away earthly wealth or property, or sometimes by hindering cherished schemes and plans. Sometimes he prunes us by permitting persecutions and the loss of name and fame, and sometimes he prunes by permitting the loss of earthly friendships toward which the tendrils of our hearts extended too strongly, and which would have hindered us from bearing the much fruit which he desires. Sometimes he may permit sickness to afflict us as one of these prunings, as the prophet declared, "Before I was afflicted I went astray." Many others of the Lord's dear people have found some of their most valuable lessons on the bed of affliction.

Some have written us how they were too busy, too much absorbed in earthly matters and interests that seemed to press for attention, so that they had not the proper time to give to the study of the divine plan of the ages and the cultivation of their own hearts and the bearing of the fruit of the Spirit, and how the Lord in much mercy had laid them aside for a season, and given them the opportunities which they needed for thought and Christian development, for growth in knowledge that they might have growth in grace. So far, then, from the true branches esteeming the prunings of the Husbandman to be injuries and wounds, they should conclude that according to the good promises of the Word all things are working together for good to them that love him—to the true fruit-bearing branches of the true vine. Such prunings, instead of causing discouragement, should be to us, rightly understood, sources of encouragement. We realize that the world is left to itself; that the vine of the earth has not special prunings of the Lord, and that when we have these special prunings it is an evidence that the Father himself loveth us and is caring for our best interests.

“Now Ye Are Clean”

Applying this lesson to his disciples our Lord intimated that the proper pruning work had already been done on them up to date, and in the Lord’s providence they had been purged of an unfruitful branch, Judas. He therefore said to them, “Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken unto you”—you are justified and accepted because of your faith, obedience, and loyalty. What a joy the eleven must have felt when they heard these words, and what a joy we may properly feel as we realize the truth of the same words applied to ourselves. Praise the Lord for this great gift of his favor through Christ—that we have in him not only the forgiveness of sins and the covering of his robe of righteousness, but that through him we are accepted of the Father as branches of the true vine, clean through the acceptance of the message or word sent to us. However, this is not all, this is merely the beginning. The thing necessary to be remembered is that our ultimate blessing and acceptance of the Father will depend upon our abiding continually in the blessed close relationship of branches in the vine.

If we will not bear the fruitage we may not remain in the relationship; if we do bear the fruit, if we have that spirit and disposition, and desire the Lord’s grace and strength and assistance, his grace will be sufficient for every time of need, and we will come off conquerors and more than conquerors through him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood. The bearing of the fruit which the Father desires cannot be accomplished, we cannot be pleasing to him, except as we are related to Christ and his fruit is born in us by our relationship to him and the power of his Spirit and his Word working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. The assurance is that if we abide in him we will bear much fruit and that without him we can do nothing, have no fruit that the Father will accept.

What is the nature of this fruit-bearing? How may we know the fruitage which the Father seeks? We answer that many, under the misguidance and wrong example of the vine of the earth, incline to think of grand earthly temples, orphanages, etc., as being the fruits which the Lord desires to see well developed. We answer, No. If these were the fruits then Jesus and the apostles bore no fruits; for they built no churches or cathedrals or temples, they neither built nor founded orphanages or asylums or hospitals. If these were the fruitage which the Father seeks then the Lord and the Apostles erred totally. We hold that they did not err, that the error rather has come from another quarter; that the vine of the earth guided by the spirit of the world has taken a utilitarian direction, and is bringing forth the fruitage of the kind which the world approves.

The World Makes Provision

We are not saying a word against hospitals, asylums, etc.—we believe them to be very good, very desirable, very proper adjuncts of society and civilization—but we believe that the world is thoroughly capable of providing for all of those things, and that the world is quite ready to provide for them; indeed we find that the world really does make provision as it is. For instance, the various St. Francis, St. James, and St. Agnes hospitals, asylums, etc., Protestant and Catholic, all seek support from the donations of the State for their maintenance and all get

them, and the State might just as well, and better in some respects, have full charge of these. Indeed we are not sure that it does not have full charge of them now as fully as possible. Not that we wish to intimate that there are none of the true branches of the true vine connected with any of these earthly institutions; but we hold that these are not their fruitage according to the Lord's parable, and that if they are members of the body as well as members of Babylon, they must bear the fruit of the vine of the Father's planting as well as be identified with other good fruits.

The fruits of the Spirit are sometimes taken to be activities in the service of the truth, as for instance, the scattering of the truth, the talking of the truth, the bringing of some out of darkness into the light and knowledge of the truth, the expenditure of money for the publishing of the truth—all these are sometimes considered the fruits which the Lord expects of the branches. Not so! The fruits are something still nobler and grander than these things, and are described by the Apostles as the fruits of the Spirit. The spirit of the vine must permeate all the branches, and the fruit of the vine must be in every branch. These fruits of the Spirit are enumerated:--meekness, gentleness, patience, long suffering, brotherly kindness, love; if these things be in us and abound, says the Apostle, they make us to be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

These fruits are all one in some particulars; that is to say, the essence of proper Christian patience is love; the essence of hope and faith and joy is love for our Father, and our confidence in his love, as expressed in his promises to us. So the name of all these graces of the Spirit is expressed in the one word, love. These are the fruits which must be found in every branch if it would retain its place as a branch and be of the glorified vine by and by. Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that other things will do, and that we may pass the divine inspection without these. The other things, the good works, the seeking of the truth, the distribution of the literature, etc. are only to be acceptable to the Father in proportion as they are the results of this fruitage in our hearts. The Apostle expresses this forcefully when he says, If I should give my body to be burned and all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it would profit me nothing.

The same thought is true in regard to service to the Lord; if we should spend every day and every hour in harvest work, if we should give all our money in printing tracts and books, or use ourselves in any other way for the service of the Lord's cause, it would profit nothing unless it were the result of love in our hearts. We see, then, that the thought is that we must cultivate in our hearts the graces of the Holy Spirit, meekness, gentleness, patience, etc., love, and that we must have these in abounding measure to be pleasing to the Lord, to bear "much fruit." The expression of these fruits, therefore, undoubtedly will be through various channels, perhaps of giving goods to the poor, perhaps of such faithfulness in the presentation of the truth as might lead us to martyrdom, that our bodies might be burned. If the burning of the body or the loss of all our goods comes in such a course through our faithfulness to the principles of righteousness, through our love and loyalty to the Lord, then happy are we indeed.

Withered Branches Burned

The declaration that those who will not bear the fruit of the vine will be cut off from being branches and will wither and ultimately be burned, seems to imply the second death, utter destruction of the class indicated. This is not the worldly class, for they were never united to Christ, never were branches in the vine and hence never were on trial in this respect. It refers only to those who have gone the lengths of making a full consecration to the Lord, a full union with him, a thorough consecration and begetting of the Holy Spirit. These words, then, seem to correspond with the Apostle's declaration, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The world is not in the hands of the living God, but is at the present time reckoned as dead in Adam, under the Adamic sentence, not being judged by the Lord. The Church only is reckoned as free from Adamic condemnation and placed on trial or judgment and these only, therefore, could fall out of the hands of Christ, and into the hands of the Father in the sense here indicated. Being cut off from Christ their case is hopeless; for such we can look forward to nothing better than the second death. Even then we are glad that the theory of eternal torment is not true; that when they die the death of utter extinction they have suffered all that God has pronounced, terrible as that loss will be to those who appreciate everlasting life.

This statement about the branches cut off, withered and burned does not seem to take cognizance at all of the household of faith class, which, though believing in Jesus, never comes to the point of becoming branches or members in the Christ. Nor does it seem to take into consideration the great company. Indeed this class is mentioned in but few Scriptures and then obscurely, the Lord thus indicating, we believe that none were called to such a company. The Apostle speaks of some as being "saved so as by fire," and a little suggestion in this same line might be taken from the Master's words that being cut off as branches, they wither and are burned—burned as branches, destroyed as members of the company to which they originally were by covenant attached, but not necessarily destroyed individually to all eternity. The Apostle speaks of this class saying that they shall be saved so as by fire, but their works shall suffer loss. Perhaps we should consider these as being included in this manner in the Lord's statement.

Fruits of Membership in the Vine

Our Lord proceeds to tell us what some of the fruits of this union with him will be:—
First, such may ask whatsoever they will and it shall be done unto them. There is only one condition or limitation, namely, that before they are thus prepared to ask they must see to it that they give attention to the Lord's word that they may ascertain what his will is and what they may ask according to his will. Those who abide in Christ must have no will of their own, theirs must be the will of their Head, and their Head has already declared that his will is the Father's will. These, then, are the limitations, that we have the Father's will in our hearts and the Father's promises in our hearts; then our requests will be in conformity to these and the Lord will be pleased to grant all such.

The second fruitage or result will be that the Father will be glorified the more in proportion as our fruit increases, and on these terms our discipleship shall continue, namely, that we shall habitually seek to know and to do the Father's will and to glorify and honor Him by lives obedient to His will. Anything short of this would forfeit our discipleship. Not that it would be forfeited instantly, as though the Lord would take occasion to cast us off lightly; but that it is a part of our covenant relationship that we will grow in grace, grow in knowledge, grow in harmony with God, grow in the fruits of the Spirit, and if we turn from this engagement or contract we cannot be considered as retaining our relationship as disciples, members.

The third fruit or evidence of this membership in the vine and of our continued growth as branches is stated in verse nine, namely, that as the Father loved the Lord Jesus, the vine, so our Redeemer loves us, his branches or members. What a wonderful thought this is, that our Master has toward us the same kind of love that the Father has toward him! Could our faith always grasp this thought and maintain this hold, we should indeed have nothing to wish or to fear—our summer would last all the year. The next thought suggested is that having reached, having attained this high position in the Lord's favor, if we are his disciples and truly appreciate what he has done for us in this respect, we will desire to continue in his love. Next in order come the terms and conditions upon which we may continue in that love, namely, that we keep his commandments.

By way of showing us that this is not an unreasonable proposition, our Lord declared that these are the same terms on which the Father deals with him, namely, "Even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." We cannot expect to abide in the Lord's love and be careless of his injunctions. The measure of our faithfulness to him will be indicated by our obedience to him, as the measure of his love for the Father was indicated by his obedience to the Father. The Apostle intimates this same thought and adds a little to it, saying, "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."—1 John 5:3. It is not enough that we keep the commandments, but that we keep them lovingly and loyally, of good pleasure, that we do not consider them grievous but rather are to be glad to be in line, in harmony, with all the Lord's righteous provisions and arrangements. Let us all more and more seek this spirit of full heart-harmony with all the principles of righteousness laid down by our Lord Jesus—his commandments.

Our Lord's commandments are not the Ten Commandments of Moses, but more or less according to the standpoint of expression. They are less in the sense of requirements on our flesh; they are more as respects the requirements on our hearts. Briefly summed up he tells us that his law is love with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength to the Father and for our neighbor as for ourselves. This is possible to our regenerated hearts though not possible to our imperfect flesh. The Lord's requirement, therefore, is that with our hearts we serve this law of God and with our flesh we shall do to the best of our ability, and we have the assurance that in the resurrection we shall have the new bodies in which we shall be able to serve the Lord thoroughly, completely, satisfactorily.

My Joy Remain, Your Joy Be Full

Our Lord concluded this little lesson, so short and yet so full of meaning and depth, by an illustration of why he gave it, saying, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be filled full." "This is my commandment that ye love one another even as I have loved you." Wonderful words of life are these that have come down to us through the centuries, that have helped to cheer and encourage so many of the Lord's followers in the narrow way.

Many are the objections that are raised to pure and undefiled religion. Some complain that it is gloomy, joyless, a fetter upon the heart and brain; that it drives men from every temple of pleasure with a whip of small cords; that it posts notice, "No trespassing here," in every field of enjoyment. Our answer must be that this is a mistake; that these are the words of those who know not, neither do they understand the things whereof they speak. Those who have truly made a covenant with the Lord, who have truly accepted him, who have truly laid down their lives at his feet and become his followers in sincerity, are filled with his joy, as he promised; and it is an increasing joy, which day by day and year by year becomes more nearly complete—a joy which will not be complete, however, until that which is perfect is come and that which is in part shall be done away, until in the resurrected condition we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known and appreciate to the full the joys of our Lord, hearing his welcome invitation, "Enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

We enter now into those joys through faith, through anticipation, through rest of heart, but by and by we shall enter upon them in the actual sense. Meantime it is the world that has not submitted itself to the Lord, that has no appreciation of the joys of the Lord, that is full of selfishness and ambition and strife and envy; it knoweth us not even as it knew him not; it knows not our joys in the Master's service even as it never appreciated the joys of our Lord in doing the Father's will, even at the sacrifice of his life.

"As I Have Loved You"

It does not astonish us that the Lord directs that we love one another, but we stand amazed with the thought contained in these words, "As I have loved you." How can we love one another with the same love which the Lord has for each of us? is our first inquiry. We reply that this is impossible at first, but as we become more and more filled with the spirit of the Lord, we approximate more nearly to this standard of perfect love to all that are his, a love that not only would refuse to do injury to another, but also a love which would delight to do good to a brother, yea, to do good at the expense of one's own time and convenience. Thus Jesus loved us all and redeemed us with his precious blood, and to whatever extent we grow in grace, knowledge, and love of him, in that same proportion we are Christ-like and have a Christ-like love. This love is the fulfilling of the law, and whoever has such a love for the brethren will have undoubtedly a full, sympathetic love for the whole groaning creation, and will be glad to do now the little that is possible to be done on their behalf, and doubly glad that the Lord in his

own good time and pleasure has a great and wonderful blessing for every member of Adam's race.

Someone has said, "Do not imagine that you have gotten these things because you know how to get them." There is a good and an important thought here: it is very important that we should know these things and understand the Lord's plan and appreciate the principles laid down in his Word, but though we had all knowledge it would not benefit us unless we used it. Let us not think of getting the benefit of the Lord's gracious provisions by merely learning how to get them, but let us take the necessary steps—see that we are fully his, see that we live close to him, see that we are fruit bearers, see that we abide in his love, in the Father's love, in the love for one another, which he has enjoined.

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