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## Gideon's Brave Three Hundred.

(Judges 7:1-8, 16-23)

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts.”—Zech. 4:6.

A STUDY of the above passage of Scripture shows an army of 32,000 from the various tribes of Israel with Gideon at the foot of Mount Gilboa, at Harod Spring—a little lake which drains off eastward to the Jordan. On the farther side of the lake were the Midianites, numbering about 135,000. An invading host, they had for some time been pillaging the Israelites unmolestedly; but now they learned that Gideon's army was gathering; and they assembled themselves to crush it.

While Gideon was feeling that his army was far too small for such a battle—one to four—the Lord directed him to the contrary—that the army was far too large, and that there would be danger that the victory which He purposed should come might not be appreciated as being from the Lord, but be thought to indicate the dexterity of Israel's warriors. Accordingly, by divine direction, Gideon gave word to his army of 32,000 that as many of them as were fearful and preferred to return home might do so. Many were fearful—22,000. The name of the spring, Harod, signifies coward; and it has been assumed that the name was given it because of the fear manifested by the 22,000 who went home.

Surely the faith of Gideon was tried as his little army melted to 10,000 men ! But the Lord said to him, There are yet too many. Cause the host to go down to the spring to drink; and discern between those who drink directly from the pool, kneeling down and putting their mouths into the water and sucking it up, and those who, bending over, lap from the hands as a dog laps with his tongue.

There were three hundred of this latter class left by this test; and the Lord declared these to be the proper ones to especially win the victory. The remaining 9,700, however, would later join in the pursuit of the enemy.

The custom of lapping water with the hand is still common with the people of Palestine—shepherds, etc. They become very expert at it. Symbolically, this act would seem to signify alertness and obedience. An ox drinks by putting his mouth into the water and sucking it and, when thirsty, gives his entire attention to the sucking of the water, refusing to pay any attention to the commands of his owner, and even resisting the use of the rod upon his flanks. The dog, on the contrary, while lapping the water with his tongue, is all alert, with his eyes watching in every direction, seeing everything about him, and ready to quit the water at any moment in pursuit of obedience to duty.

If water here, as elsewhere in the Bible, be understood to represent the truth, these two companies of Gideon's army would represent two classes who love and appreciate the truth. Both classes drink of the water of truth, but the one class more for their own satisfaction. The other class, watchful, attentive, drink according to their needs, and do not neglect alertness in the Master's service, keeping eyes and ears open for the guidance of divine providence at all times. This latter, wiser class are represented by the three hundred who were with Gideon, himself representing Jesus, the Captain of our salvation.

Armies in olden times evidently did not keep so strict a watch as do modern armies. At all events, Gideon and a trusted companion were able to penetrate in the darkness of the night amongst the tents of the Midianites. Listening, they heard one relate his dream of how a barley loaf rolled down a hill and did havoc. Another offered the interpretation that this was Gideon and his small army, which was likely to be their undoing. The incident shows that the Midianites were

fearful, apprehensive. Gideon was confident; his faith was strengthened by this little experience which the Lord permitted him to have.

After midnight, shortly after the hour of the changing of the guards amongst the Midianites, was the time appointed for Gideon's attack. The method of warfare was novel. The three hundred were divided into three companies, and spread out over a considerable space near the Midianites. In addition to their usual armor, sword, etc., Gideon and his three hundred had new weapons. Each in his left hand had a pitcher of earthenware, each pitcher had in it a lamp, and each soldier had in his other hand a ram's horn trumpet. The instructions to the three separated bands were that those

who were immediately with Gideon should do as he did; and that the other bands, hearing should imitate, breaking the front of their pitchers to let the light shine out ahead, shouting aloud, "Jehovah and Gideon," and blowing in the ram's horns.

The Midianites, waking out of sleep, beholding the flashing lights, hearing the clash of the pottery like the sound of armor, hearing the shouting of voices and the blowing of trumpets, imagined themselves surrounded by a great host; and half-dazed, they fled. They fought each other, mistaking each other for foes. Gideon and his three hundred pursued and were soon in the fight, assisted by the remaining 9,700. The victory was a great one. The Lord was recognized to be the deliverer; and Gideon, His servant, was honored accordingly.

Referring to the Old Testament matters the Apostle declares, "These things were written aforetime for our instruction." (Rom. 15:4.) In addition to the lessons learned at that time the Lord, through some of these experiences of the past, gives certain spiritual lessons to spiritual Israel. Gideon's call resembles the Gospel call for volunteers on the side of righteousness — of right against wrong, truth against error.

Many in the world hear the message, have sympathy with it and respond, purposing to become soldiers of Christ; but before they are fully accepted, the voice of Jesus calls to them, saying, Sit down and count the cost; it is better not to put your hand to the plow and become a servant of the Lord than afterwards to look back and wish that you had not become one.

The sight of the enemy, the "fear of death" (Heb. 2:15), causes them to walk not with the Master, because it is too much. When they first responded to the call, they thought of the glory and honor, but overlooked the fact that these could be obtained only at the cost of hardship and endurance. These cowards who turn back, and never really take the vow of consecration, are perhaps no worse off than if they had never responded. But they will not share in the great victory—the laurels will not be theirs; the crown of life will not be their portion.

Then comes the second test—that of obedience and loyalty. One class of the Lord's people, like the faithful dog, put obedience to the Master's voice first, alert to do His will. Another portion of the Lord's consecrated people heed less the Master's voice, and even the rod; and being less alert to the service of the Lord, they are less used of Him.

Compared to the world, the most alert ones are but as very few. It is those of the Lord's people who are alert that He chooses and grants the greatest opportunities for service. These are the ones most willing to break the earthen vessel—to use their present earthly lives in the service of the Lord—that the light of truth may shine out, and that the cause of truth may have a victory. These zealous ones are most faithful in blowing upon the trumpet, representing God's Word. These have the blessed opportunity for letting their light shine. Their zeal entitles them to special privileges and opportunities.

The victory of the Lord is attained by the antitypical Gideon and His little band of faithful followers, "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." The Lord's spirit is represented by the light of the lamp shining from the broken vessel. The broken vessels of Gideon's host represent how the Lord's people present their bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, in His service—in letting the light shine out—in fighting a good fight against the hosts of sin.

We are doubtless near the time when the great victory, the antitype of Gideon's, will be accomplished, when the hosts of sin, the powers of evil, will fall upon one another for their mutual destruction. The present distress of nations is the beginning of this, but not its end. According to the Bible, the climax will be a temporary reign of anarchy, which will fully prepare the world for Messiah's glorious reign of righteousness. (From Reprints.)

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But warm, sweet, tender even yet,  
A present help is He;  
And faith has still its Olivet,  
And love its Galilee.  
—Whittier.

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# The Mystery of the Kingdom

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 moment 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 wayside, and was devoured by the fowls; some fell on rocky ground where it had no depth of earth, and brought forth no fruitage; some amongst 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 that 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 hoar, 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 also 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." And again we read, "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him, and He will show them His Covenant."

In Mark 4:13, 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 (Matt. 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 Saviour 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 ! And how great is the privilege of becoming members of the Bride of Christ, to be associated with Him in His glorious Kingdom work! But the class represented by the stony ground have 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 these 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 ardour fades 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 appreciate it and rejoice 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 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 those 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 differences 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 to 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 baptised into His death, they should surely sit with Him in His Throne; but as to whether or not they would have the chief places of honour 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 the principles of justice, of merit.

Those will have the places of honour 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 torments because of their unfaithfulness in respect of 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 participating in the Kingdom, whatever they may obtain under the restitution blessings which that Kingdom will inaugurate for the blessing of mankind in general.

# Candle Light to Sun Light.

(Mat. 5:15, 16; 13:43.) (Convention Address)

A LIGHT of any kind in darkness is a wonderful boon. Most of us can recall times when some unexpected occurrence found us endeavouring to perform a task in darkness when we would have given much for a light. It was a wonderful step forward in the creative plan when God said, "Let there be light." The common blessings of God we accept without much thought, but what a really wonderful thing is light; in a sense we could say, Light is life, for mankind could not maintain life without it.

In our texts candle light and sunlight are used to illustrate something else. Christians are not actually candles, nor will they ever be an orb like the sun, but they are likened to these, in that they can create an influence upon society—similar in effect upon another kind of darkness, the darkness of this present evil world.

After man, as represented in Adam, fell, he walked on in his earthly course in darkness, but not entirely without hope, for God had given a promise that some day light would come to them, a means whereby they would be guided into the place of favor again. The promise was vague, but every true believer in God kept hope in it, for since God had promised it they knew it would come. In course of time the Law given to Moses shed some light upon man's pathway. The New Testament in later years refers to it as the "shadow" of better things to come, and that, perhaps, is how we can view the light of the Law, shaded and obscure. All who hailed it as light were compelled to acknowledge its lack in delivering from the darkness of sin and death.

However, to earnest and true souls who continued to walk in its shadowy light, a truly great light burst upon their sight. John the Baptist was ordained to introduce it. (See John 1:6-9.) We all know to whom reference is made—John 8:12 makes it plain. Luke 1:76-79 also gives a graphic description of this great light as it entered the world, which please note. The prophet Isaiah, long years before, had prophesied of it also. (See Isa. 9:2.)

Alas, so fallen was man that only a few hailed this great light graciously sent to them; the masses of men were not lifted out of the darkness and condemnation so heavy upon them, so accustomed had they become to the darkness in which they dwelt that they actually preferred it. (See John 3:19-21.) The only bright spot in this ungracious action of mankind was that a few "doers of truth" were glad to come to this light and they received great blessing. Their hopes continued high that this Light around which they rallied would soon quell the turbulent opposition of the hosts of darkness and compel them to accept it also. But no, the darkness seemingly won and they put the Light to death; how dark, indeed, then appeared the lot of the few dear lovers of God's righteousness. Shortly after, their sorrow was again turned to joy as their resurrected Lord and Light explained to them the meaning of these things, and that in a future day He would become the light of every man that cometh into the world.

Meantime, this wonderful light was to continue to shine through His followers, as Matt. 5:14 states—"Ye are the light of the world," but in comparison to the great light of Jesus we are as but candles. Maybe we should think more of the truths—God's truths—that we teach, as representing the light, more than any example of conduct, etc. In the flesh we are so imperfect that we often do and say things that do not reflect the perfection of Jesus, but the truths of God's Plan are beautiful, and to learn them, obey them and teach them, sends out light indeed.

Before a candle can give light it must be lighted. We could liken them to being fired or filled by the holy spirit.

We remember Jesus telling His apostles to wait until power from on high should be conferred upon them, and then when the day of Pentecost was fully come, we know what happened—they were lighted alright and began to shine immediately so that people took notice that they had surely been with Jesus. We are reminded of the hymn many of us learned in childhood—

"Jesus bids us shine."  
"First of all for Him  
Like a little candle burning in the night."

There is an interesting verse of a psalm in this connection also. (See Psa. 18:28.) Yes, it is very necessary for God to enlighten our own darkness before we can shine for Him, and this takes time, and we should be sure we are ready to shine before others. Even when we do, let us never forget that in this life we can never legitimately be more than "candles" shining out more or less from obscurity. In some measure early disciples were impatient, they could not wait—"We trusted that it was he who should have redeemed Israel." They wanted things done; they could not bide the shadows.

Modern disciples are often similar. The world is so dark, and it is difficult for anyone to see very much merely by the light of a candle; surely the world wants a clearer, brighter guide—so we may want to urge the work along, put it in the public eye, become a great, organised, sectarian body that can speak with some authority, and be “great and shining lights” now. All who have adopted this course eventually have ceased to let the light of Jesus shine out from them. Matt. 6:19-23—Hearts become set on other treasures, sects, organisations, etc. The eye is no longer single to the glory of God, and how great becomes the darkness.

We think of the saying, “Patience is a virtue, possess it if you can.” From time to time, in daily events of life, it is impressed how difficult it is to possess it. Especially today, humanity cannot wait a minute. Christians often forget the real work of this age which is inward preparation of each one to Christ-like character. We may have the urge “to reign before the time” and change the world about us. We seek something more tangible in our fellowships, and tend to impatience with our twos and threes and the “wilderness” experiences that are necessary to prepare us for a later work. Yes, it is difficult to abide as mere “candle” lights, for we are so anxious to have our Father’s name vindicated and His truth to go abroad in the earth that we may be apt to forget that there is a proper time for this.

We note in our text that when these Christian “candle” lights are lit, they are set up so as to give light to “all that are in the house.” We might think of this as referring to God’s house, to those who are in closer proximity to Him than others. At this end of the age, perhaps, there are fewer than ever in God’s house, so the “candles” do not attract, or give light and help to many. Another once referred to a Christian’s witness as a beacon light on the ocean. The ocean is so vast; not many see it, and of those who do, its true value is assessed only by the ones looking for it to guide them in their journey over the waters. However, the candles’ shining is not limited solely to God’s house, although that is where most good will be done during this age.

The 2nd verse of our text tells us that they are to let the light shine before men, and we might think of this in a more general way. It says, “So that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” The world may see our good works now, but few are moved by them to glorify God. That will not be till a later time—the time of “their visitation.” Then they will recall the good examples set them and will thank God for the help they received. But meantime, many will treat the candle lights as they did the great Light of the world; they will persecute them to death.

Our Christian witness may not impress many now, more likely you will be considered a fool in every respect. Even some who do appreciate, more than others, will still regard you in many respects as a “weak” character. They like a more aggressive spirit and cannot understand the philosophy of the Apostle that a Christian must not strive, but be gentle to all, and must not oppose the powers that be, but continue in subjection to all that God ordained, for in due time He will set everything right.

In depicting the condition of his people in his day the prophet Isaiah seems to show how true Christian witness will be observed by the world right down the age. See Isa. 59:14, and half verse 15; margin—“Is accounted mad”—which is what one said to Paul—“much learning hath made thee mad.”

Eph. 5:13 says that all things that are reprov’d (margin—discovered) are made manifest by the light. Yes, even candle light will uncover enough to make evil doers uncomfortable; therefore, they seek to snuff out the candles.

We note in Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer. 25:8-10), that because God’s professing people in his day did not live in obedience they were going to meet the punishment and be scattered. In verse 10 we see some of the things they were going to lose, amongst them “the light of the candle.” (See verse 10.)

Turning to Rev. 18:23 we see how God’s punishments affect professing Christendom at the end of this age. So we see all the true “candles” are to be separated from Babylon. This separation is important, too, in keeping our candle light clear and bright. To stop in Babylon and try and let our light shine would be like putting a bushel over it. (A bushel being an empty, wooden or metal box used in the olden days for measuring purposes). No light can emanate from Babylon, for the Lord has spued it out. (Rev. 3:16.) Particularly at this time the light must be set on a hill—elevated to a place or position where it can be seen. The very fact that God’s true people stand separated from all sects and denominations in these last days draws attention to the message they have, the light they let shine.

There is a verse in Zeph. 1:12 that is interesting. Yes, the Lord still searches Jerusalem—His professing people—with “candles.” He does not do great things, highly spectacular. No, He works through humble, devoted servants, and humility is required by any who would hear the voice of the Lord.

Our second text portion in Matt. 13:43 tells us that when the kingdom comes it will be different. Christians then will shine forth as the “sun” in the glory of the kingdom. In fact, we notice these words were spoken immediately following the explanation of the wheat and tares parable, which pictured the separation of God’s true people from Babylon during

the harvest of the end of this Gospel Age. From this point of time the light that the saints emanate seems to increase until it becomes as bright as the sun when the kingdom is fully ushered in.

The Apostle Paul also tells us that in the resurrection to this glory some will shine brighter than others—“as star differeth from star”—and *we* can be sure that those who will shine the brightest then, will be those who never sought to be more than “candles” in this life. To those who were faithful in that which was least the Lord will richly reward.

## Question Box

Question.—Do you think it possible that I Thes. 4:16, 17 may be fulfilled by the remaining saints being instantly all together caught up bodily in the air to meet the Lord?

Answer.—Such seemed to be the general thought of Bible exponents of the past, but along with many other advent truths, this matter would seem to have become clearer, and is viewed today in what seems to us a more reasonable Scriptural way, more in accord with the usual developments of the Divine Plan.

It is in accord with Scriptural usage that prophecy respecting our Lord’s return, or future events connected with the Church, is stated in figurative or symbolic language. This appears to be so whether Paul, Peter or John be the writer, or whether the speaker be the Lord Himself. We will probably all agree that Revelations is practically all symbolic, and that 2 Pet. 3 is the same, as also is our Lord’s great prophecy of Matt. 24, etc.

The passage in question would also seem to be in highly symbolic terms. It does not seem that it can reasonably be taken in a literal way. Paul declares that what he said was “by the word of the Lord,” and it does not appear that the Lord ever described His second advent but in figurative language. He says, “Those who will be alive and remain unto the Parousia of the Lord shall not precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then those who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (in the heavens).”

The Diaglott translation of this verse is misleading in stating that they “shall at the same time” with them be caught away. While the Greek word “hama,” according to Dr. Strong, properly means “at the same time,” he points out that it is freely used as a preposition or adverb “denoting close association.” It is in this sense that it is here used, and the Diaglott translates the same word correctly in the next chapter (1 Thes. 5:10). A careful study of the subject of our Lord’s second advent will, we believe, reveal the fact that He is to be present for some time before the world, and also before even many Christians will be aware of it. May be we should first quote Matt. 24:30-31:— “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, in power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with the sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.”

If the Son of Man were to come visibly and literally riding on the literal clouds and with the sound of a literal trumpet, there would be no need for a sign of His presence—a sign is only necessary when the one signified is unseen.

Then note that the saints or the elect have not been instantly all caught away to be with the Lord, for after His arrival He will give command to His messengers to sound a trumpet and gather His elect who are still in the religious systems in all directions.

Again, the tribes of the earth are to see His coming in the clouds of trouble. If He were to come like a flash of lightning, they would not have time to see His coming. The Greek word “erchomai” signifies the act of arriving, and men can today discern that the strange happenings in the world portend a change of dispensation—they see that some great change is working and some will even say that the second coming of Christ must be at hand.

Next we may refer to Luke 17:26, “As in the days of Noah so it will be in the days of the Son of Man.” If we compare this with Matt. 24:37-39, “As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming (Parousia, i.e., presence) of the Son of Man be.” Luke shows us that the word “parousia” has the meaning, not of the act of arriving, but of having arrived, and being present. The world will be ignorant of the fact, eating, drinking, buying, selling, marrying, building, etc., unaware of the great storm of trouble in which all will be involved. Just as they ignored the preaching of Noah for 120 years the world generally ignore the preaching of the second presence of Christ, and so they will be taken unawares by the great time of trouble which will close down the present age, just as the destruction of Jerusalem was the final scene of the Jewish Dispensation.

The Lord follows the prophecy of Matt. 24 with three parables, which appear to be significantly in order.

- (1) The parable of the Virgins indicates two classes who would be waiting and watching at the time of Christ's arrival.
- (2) The parable of the Talents again shows very distinctly that the saints are still here after He has come, and that His first work appears to be the calling of His people to account for the use of the talents entrusted. When this is all accomplished and the elect have all been gradually changed from mortal to immortality, then the Kingdom will be set up.
- (3) The parable of the sheep and the goats then shows the work of Christ and the Church judging the world of mankind. "Know ye not the saints shall judge the world."

The Lord gradually accomplishes the closing down of the Gospel Age and prepares for the Kingdom Age, and then takes up His great power and reigns with His saints for the blessing of all families of the earth.

By referring to Phil. 2:12; 2 Cor. 10:10, and Phil. 1:26, it will be seen that the word "parousia" should be generally translated "Presence." That is the thought contained in the word.

With these thoughts in mind we come back again to the question: How do we understand 1 Thes. 4:16, 17? As we have seen, it cannot be that the Lord's waiting people are all to be literally caught away in one instant, at the moment of our Lord's arrival, for they are indicated as being still on earth. Then one cannot see any reason why the Lord would snatch the saints away and carry their bodies and clothes up in the air, when we know that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven." Such translation would not be, being "planted in the likeness of Christ's death," and only "if we be dead with Him," be planted in the likeness of His death can we share in the "likeness of His resurrection." Such an experience as some read into this passage would be neither in the likeness of His death nor of His resurrection. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

This interpretation of this passage, which has been given of recent years, would seem to us both Scriptural and reasonable. The dead in Christ rise first in His presence, then those who are still left over in the flesh will be gradually caught away. As they close their eyes in death they shall be instantly awakened on the spiritual plane "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," at the last (7th) trump, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. We must all die, but we will not all need to sleep, awaiting the resurrection morning, for that time will have arrived, and so no need to sleep, but just to pass under the veil, not over it, and be forever with the Lord, and when all the elect are gathered, or the first resurrection complete, the marriage of the Lamb will be accomplished and the blessings of Christ's Kingdom will soon begin to flow to all mankind.

"Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee."—Luke 8:39.

Are you seeking to be your best to those nearest to you? If not, you may be quite sure you are missing some of life's purest joy and highest service. How often the teaching of the Christian home is discounted by the want of earnest effort to please and gladden and serve in the family circle! To those nearest to us God has given a stronger claim upon us than any others in the world.—Selected.

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Assemblies for undenominational Bible Study are to be found in the various States, and all earnest truth seekers will be very welcome.

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