

“I Will Meet You in the Morning”

*“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.”
—Matthew 25:21*

AS CHILDREN OF GOD, the true church is ever thankful to the Heavenly Father for his providential care and overruling in all aspects of their lives. Indeed, we rejoice that he has kept us from falling during the past year, and we begin the New Year with the assurance that he will continue to guide and

direct us. We likewise enter 2019 continuing to claim the promise of our Lord: “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

Our title, “I Will Meet You in the Morning,” is taken from the opening words of a well-known hymn, “The Eastern Gate.” The writer and composer of this hymn was Isaiah Martin, who authored it in 1905. It is thought that he was deeply moved by the death of a close friend and fellow-member of his church, and by his desire to join him in heaven.

The sentiments expressed in the words of this hymn continue to deeply move the Christian today.

They read as in the form of a promise that comes from our head, Christ Jesus, and illustrate to us his great, loving desire that we faithfully complete our earthly sojourn. Ours is a walk which began with the invitation from the Heavenly Father to be part of his divine family, and which will culminate, if we are “faithful unto death,” in seeing our Lord face to face in the heavenly kingdom. (Rev. 2:10) As John wrote in his first epistle, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—I John 3:2

Recalling again the hymn’s opening words, “I will meet you in the morning, Just inside the Eastern Gate,” they then stipulate our being a “faithful pilgrim.” As followers of the Master, we must be “strangers and pilgrims” in this present world of sin, selfishness and pride if we would win the prize. We journey through this land, having our sights and affections set upon things above. (I Pet.2:11,12; Col. 3:2) The Apostle Paul instructs us: “Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” Rather, he further admonishes, “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”—Eph. 4:22-24, *New King James Bible*

THE JOYS OF THE LORD

“Oh, the joys of that glad meeting With the saints who for us wait!” These words from the hymn call to our minds the precious memories of our faithful brethren who have finished their earthly sojourn. Although we miss them, we have assurance in

knowing that their lives of trial and testing are over, and, if faithful, they have entered the heavenly joys of the Lord. We, too, have that blessed hope of being part of the “bride, the Lamb’s wife,” and of joining those who have already been “changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” (Rev. 21:9; I Cor. 15:51,52) What a “glad meeting” is the prospect of seeing the “saints who for us wait!”

From Jesus’ parable of the talents where our opening text is found, we glean the lesson that the talents and abilities that we each possess as the Lord’s servants, may be many or few. (Matt. 25:14-23) However, irrespective of the number of talents we have, it is the daily effort we put forth in their use in the service of truth and righteousness which is the critical component of our faithfulness. Jesus teaches us by this parable that those who enter the “joy of thy lord” are faithful over, at most, just a “few things.” Yet, these few things require much perseverance and diligence in the way of self-denial and sacrifice. To hear that “well done,” we must strive to be the most earnest, the most zealous and the most devoted child of God we can be, and endeavor daily to carry out his will to the best of our ability.

One of the chief ways in which we carry out the responsibilities and privileges associated with the use of our talents is by serving our brethren. While on this side of the veil, it is our great joy to help, comfort and encourage one another to mutual faithfulness, that we might attain that “glad meeting” in the heavenly kingdom. Therefore, Paul says, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”—Gal. 6:10

The apostle's words to the brethren at Ephesus should likewise ring true to us. He says, "I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."—Eph. 1:15-18

"THE EASTERN GATE"

The rising of the sun in the east is used in Scripture to symbolically denote the glorified Christ—Jesus the Head, and the church, his body members. (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18) Together, they will constitute the "Sun of righteousness," which will "arise with healing in his wings." This glorified, righteous class will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," as they then begin the work of restoring mankind back into harmony with God, making "all things new."—Mal. 4:2; Matt. 13:43; Rev. 21:5

At the present time, a further appreciation we have as Jesus' footstep followers is that the east is the earliest source of light each day, with the sun's rays visible even before it rises above the horizon. Hence, we are to look in that direction, symbolically speaking, for daily spiritual enlightenment through the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.—Eph. 1:17-19

Smith's Bible Dictionary provides this comment concerning the use of "east" in Bible times. "The Hebrew term, *kedem*, properly means that which is before or in front of a person, and was applied to

the east, from the custom of turning in that direction, when describing the points of the compass: before, behind, the right and the left representing respectively east, west, south and north. (see Job 23:8,9)” Combining the thoughts of Christ arising in the east, looking to him as the light of truth, and viewing the east as the forward direction, we are reminded of the scripture, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind [westward], and reaching forth unto those things which are before [toward the east], I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:13,14) We travel eastward, spiritually speaking, toward our Lord, toward the light, and toward our goal.

The gates of cities were regarded as areas of great importance in Bible times. They were set up for a wide variety of purposes. Most significantly, they provided defense to the city, being heavily guarded and closed at nightfall. Gates also served as marketplaces and as areas for public gatherings. So important were the gates that they often represented the cities themselves. The city of Jerusalem had many gates, and the one given the most special prominence was the Eastern Gate, also called the Golden Gate. It was this gate that provided access to the temple mount, and the entrance to the Temple faced toward the Eastern Gate. When the Israelites returned to Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity and set to work to rebuild the walls of the city, we are told that Shemaiah was made “keeper of the east gate.”—Neh. 3:29

In New Testament times, the eastern gate of Jerusalem led to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. It was here that Jesus prayed for

assurance that he had thus far fulfilled everything according to his Heavenly Father's will. (Matt. 26:36-44) It was here also that Jesus was then betrayed and arrested, though having committed no crime. (vss. 47-50) The next day he was crucified, also outside the gates of Jerusalem. Thus, he suffered and died as an outcast from the social and religious systems of his time. In corroboration of this, Paul later states, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."—Heb. 13:12

The apostle continues, saying, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (vss. 13,14) This class of believers, who willingly follow in Jesus' footsteps and share in his sufferings, similarly bear reproach "without the camp" and "without the gate" of the world's approval. Though our sacrifice may be, as Jesus' was, an unpleasant odor to the world, "we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ," as we "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ."—II Cor. 2:15; Col. 1:24

The Eastern Gate toward which we are journeying is not that of literal Jerusalem, nor of any other earthly city. "We seek one to come," Paul says. We seek to enter the heavenly, new Jerusalem, which, when complete, will bring blessings to all mankind under the Messianic kingdom arrangement.—Rev. 21:1-4

JERUSALEM WHICH IS ABOVE

In Galatians 4:22-26, the Apostle Paul refers to those who strive to enter heavenly Jerusalem as being developed under a special covenant relationship with God. This covenant, Paul says, is represented by

Sarah, the wife of faithful Abraham, and is for the purpose of developing spiritual Israel. Each individual footstep follower of Christ is being developed as a “new creature” for the purpose of entering the gates of the New Jerusalem. Literal Jerusalem and its people, the nation of Israel, fell into bondage to the old Mosaic Law Covenant by not coming into Christ. By contrast, “Jerusalem which is above is free,” Paul says, and is the “mother,” or covenant, under which spiritual Israel is presently being developed.—Gal. 4:26

Sarah was the mother of Isaac, the natural seed promised to her and Abraham. Isaac, in turn, represents the greater seed of promise, Christ. (Gal. 3:16) God’s plan, however, calls for the spiritual seed to be made up of many members. (I Cor. 12:12) In harmony with this, Paul further states, “If ye be Christ’s,”—that is, if you fully belong to him and walk in his steps of sacrifice—“then ye are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:29) Thus, as the apostle concludes, “We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.”—Gal. 4:28

The term “Zion” is also used in the Scriptures with reference to literal Jerusalem, as well as to the new, or heavenly, Jerusalem. Paul speaks of Christ as “the Deliverer,” who will come out of Zion to deliver Israel and mankind from their bondage to sin and death, and to “turn away ungodliness” from the people. (Rom. 11:26) In the Psalms we read, “The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” (Ps. 87:2) It is heavenly Zion, the New Jerusalem, that God loves more than the dwellings and cities of natural Israel, because it will be through this spiritual “city” that righteousness and blessings will flow to all mankind.

Therefore, as we contemplate the words, “I will meet you in the morning, Just inside the Eastern Gate,” we realize what a great privilege is ours of walking the pathway which leads to the heavenly Jerusalem. We realize, too, that the calling to enter into this special relationship with God is only for a limited time. It will cease when the entrance, or door, to this arrangement is closed. Jesus said, “Strive to enter in at the strait [narrow] gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Then, Jesus continues, the “master of the house” will shut the door to the privilege of this special calling, and it will not open again. (Luke 13:24,25) The time will have then come to bring the promised blessings of God to the world of mankind.

OUR PREPARATION

In his promise to Abraham, recorded in Genesis 12:3 and again in Genesis 22:18, God declared his purpose that through Abraham’s seed, blessings would eventually come to “all families of the earth.” As previously noted from Galatians 3:16,29, Christ and his faithful footstep followers of the present age are to constitute this seed. The development of this special class was planned and foreknown of God. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”—Eph. 1:4

These words of Paul point to the strict requirements which God pre-determined to be necessary for any who would be part of this class—to be “holy and without blame” in love. The next step in the divine arrangement after the sacrifice of Jesus as “a ransom for all” has been the calling out from

among mankind a class of faithful believers to be developed as members of this “seed.” The Scriptures give various names to this group. They are the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” They are the “body” of Christ, of which Jesus is the “head.” They are also called Jesus’ “brethren,” and are further identified as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.” (Heb. 12:23; Eph. 1:22,23; Heb. 2:11; I Pet. 2:9) Finally, in conjunction with being part of a royal priesthood, they will reign with Christ over the earth as kings. “They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6

The present mission of this called out class is the development and preparation of their characters for their future work of service as priests and kings in God’s kingdom, for the blessing and teaching of mankind. It stands to reason that those who would be prepared to teach the world the virtues of meekness, patience, brotherly kindness, long-suffering, love, and other godlike qualities must first develop these principles of character in themselves. (Gal. 5:22,23; II Pet. 1:5-7) The development of these fruits of the spirit requires many varied experiences for the footstep followers of the Lord.

The “church of the firstborn,” when completed, will constitute only a “little flock,” as stated by Jesus. (Luke 12:32) The Apostle Paul also spoke of the uniqueness of this called out group: “Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things

which are mighty,” in order that “no flesh should glory in his presence,” but only “glory in the Lord.” (I Cor. 1:26-31) To this, James adds, “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”—James 2:5

A YOKE

The Apostle Paul admonished some of the Jews of his day who believed in Jesus as the Messiah, but who erroneously felt that the many rules of the Mosaic Law still must be kept. “We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Gal. 2:16) To those who would continue to insist that Christians stay in “bondage” to a law from which Jesus had set them free, Paul further instructed, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage,” else “Christ shall profit you nothing.”—Gal. 5:1,2

The yoke of bondage of which Paul spoke has a still larger meaning. All mankind, since the fall of our first parents in Eden, have been slaves of sin and death. “Jews and Gentiles, ... they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.” (Rom. 3:9,10) Through God’s grace, however, and by faith in the blood of Jesus’ sacrifice, those who have accepted the invitation to be part of the “little flock” have been made “free from the law of sin and death.” (Rom. 8:2) These are also made free from the errors and traditions of the past, as they come to understand the truth of God’s Word,

that Jesus tasted death for every man. (Heb. 2:9) “Ye shall know the truth,” Jesus promised, “and the truth shall make you free.”—John 8:32

If we are of those who have been blessed by being freed from the bondage of error and are reckoned by God to have been set at liberty from the law of sin and death, we are then prepared to take on a different yoke. It is the yoke of being a co-laborer with the Lord in the Heavenly Father’s service. God has invited us to bind all our time, influence, means, and abilities for the purpose of being used in his service.

The invitation given to us is to make a full consecration of ourselves to God, and to his service. (Rom. 12:1) By our acceptance of God’s call, we then take on a new yoke, replacing the former ones to which we were bound, whether they be the yoke of the old Mosaic law, the yoke of the law of sin and death, or the yokes of error and superstition. We have been invited to be partners—yokefellows—with Jesus and with one another.—Phil. 4:3

Jesus personally provided this invitation to us in these words which he spoke to his disciples: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30) How important it is to note in these words that the yoke we share with Jesus is one which he has already borne alone. Thus, having previously been “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” his yoke in which we share is made much easier and lighter.—Heb. 4:15

Although we are yoked together with Jesus, and we have the promise that because of this our yoke is made easy, we, nevertheless, must diligently work.

Paul states: “Working together also we call upon you that ye receive not in vain the grace of God—for He saith, In an acceptable time I did hear thee, and in a day of salvation I did help thee, lo, now is a well-accepted time; lo, now, a day of salvation.” (II Cor. 6:1,2, *Young’s Literal Translation*) We are invited to become co-workers with Jesus in carrying out God’s plan of salvation. Let us not in any way receive “in vain” the grace of God which has provided us this great privilege. Rather, let us have our work fulfill this admonition: “Be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:2

JOINT-HEIRS

If yoked together with Christ, we are counted as being children, or “sons, of God.” “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (I John 3:1,2; Rom. 8:17) Our relationship as children of God is not because we are like our Lord, who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” (Heb. 7:26) Rather it is only because of our union with him—our Redeemer—that we have a standing before the Father. As Paul states, “Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price.”—I Cor. 6:19,20

Being “joint-heirs” with Christ denotes becoming part of the spiritual seed of Abraham. Isaac was the promised fleshly seed of Abraham, but it was not through him that the promise was fulfilled to bless all the families of the earth. (Gen. 12:3) Instead, he pictured Christ, who Paul said was the seed who

would be the heir of that promise and who would carry it out for the blessing of mankind. (Gal. 3:16) In addition, Paul says that all those who are “one in Christ Jesus” have the opportunity, as joint-heirs, to be part of the “seed” class. “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—vss. 28,29

It was the faith and obedience of Abraham and his son Isaac to God’s direction in their lives which made them worthy to receive the promises given to them by God, though they did not see the fulfillment of them at that time. At the present time, another faith class, the church, is being called, developed, and completed. Once the church is glorified in kingdom power with Jesus their head, the faithful, ancient worthies will be rewarded with perfect life on the earthly plane, to serve in God’s kingdom as “princes in all the earth.” (Heb. 11:39,40; Ps. 45:16) Then the promise to bless all the families of the earth will begin its fulfillment among men, Jew and Gentile alike. All will be given the opportunity to learn the ways of God and come into harmony with him.

The two aspects of God’s kingdom of which we have spoken, the spiritual, heavenly phase, and the human, earthly phase, have been mostly hidden from man’s understanding. However, this too, was predicted in God’s Word. The psalmist said, “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear [reverence] him; and he will shew them his covenant.” To his disciples, Jesus stated, “It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” The Master said he spoke oftentimes in parables because most “seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.” (Ps. 25:14; Matt. 13:11-13) To his footstep followers,

however, Jesus spoke the words, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”—vs. 16

GEMS OF GOD

Those who by faithfulness, even unto death, make up the “church of the firstborn,” are spoken of as having great value in God’s sight. “They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” (Mal. 3:17) The first of these symbolic jewels was our Lord Jesus, a perfectly formed gem of the highest quality—in character, service and obedience to his Father’s will.

Other jewels of varying sizes, shapes and types are being cut and polished during the Gospel Age. These “gems,” as first selected by God, are roughly formed, and often still encased in the soil of sin. God, however, has appointed his son, a perfect gem himself, to be the master workman in their preparation. Being refined through the fiery trials and testings of the narrow way of sacrifice, those who properly reflect the Master’s gem-like qualities will be mounted as gems. Together with their head, Christ Jesus, they will “be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.”—Isa. 62:3

Quoting again from the words of the hymn: “Oh, the joys of that glad meeting With the saints who for us wait! What a blessed, happy meeting Just inside the Eastern Gate!” Let us be faithful, that we might meet our Lord, and meet one another, inside the eastern gate beyond the veil, and share in the glories of the New Jerusalem, which will bring blessings to all people. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”—Rev. 3:21 ■