



## *The Bible Teachings from the Parables of Jesus*

IN considering the parables of Jesus, it is interesting to find that there are at least 40 parables recorded in three Gospels. Thirty of these are recorded in one Gospel, three are recorded in two Gospels and seven are recorded in three Gospels. The three Gospels in which all the parables are recorded are Matthew, Mark and Luke. John's Gospel does not contain any of the Lord's parables. John's Gospel was written after the other three, and apparently John was not guided to include any more.

First of all, in considering the definition of a parable, we read from Webster's dictionary the following—"A comparison; a similitude; specifically, a short fictitious narrative of something which might really occur in life or nature, by means of which a moral is drawn; as the parables of Christ."

From Matthew 13:34-36 we read—"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 prophet"—that is by the Psalmist in Psa. 78:2, 3. "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."

Before reviewing the parable of the wheat and tares, we shall note the verses in Matt. 13:10, 11. These verses are quite meaningful. The disciples apparently had noticed that without a parable our Lord spoke not to the multitude, so they said—"Why speakest thou unto them (the multitude) in parables? He said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." The following verses 13-15 show why the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven were not given to the multitude, but verse 16, referring to the disciples, reads—"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." The disciples could see a distinction, then, between the multitude and themselves—they really wanted to know what Jesus' parables meant. On the other hand, the

multitude on hearing a parable would think, That was a nice little story, but it meant nothing further to them. So we have the explanation of why Jesus used parables so freely in His ministry, so that true-hearted people only would benefit from His teachings. It is the same today. The multitude of people do not understand Jesus' teachings today, but only those worthy to have eyes to see and ears to hear, as in the days of our Lord. A multitude of people hear some message of the Lord today, but it does not prompt them to obtain further information. The odd ones here and there do enquire further, just as in the days of the Master.

For a review of the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, please read Matt. 13:24-30. When we read, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto", it does not mean that all the illustrations Jesus gave in His parables were like the kingdom of heaven above, but rather the selection of the kingdom of heaven class is likened to the illustrations given. There is such a variety of parables that we get every conceivable likeness of the pilgrimage of the kingdom of heaven class here on earth. Verse 30 is important—"Let both (wheat and tares) grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the 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." This is very interesting, showing that the Lord's people all down the Gospel Age have been more or less in a tare field. When the harvest time came, the tares were gathered in bundles, the various denominations throughout the world. Down the Gospel Age none were harvested, so to speak, but God has known His true people and they have developed their spiritual lives in readiness for a spiritual resurrection, even while they were growing together with the tares throughout the age.

In the next two parables, in Matt. 13:31-33, "the grain of mustard seed" and "the leaven" we have the explanation of what has happened during the Gospel Age, while the "wheat" and the "tares" were growing together. Both these

parables of the "Mustard Seed" and "Leaven" picture the nominal church and the corrupting influence of error permeating the church systems down the centuries of the Gospel Age. The mustard seed became a great tree, so that the birds of the air could lodge therein, and the leaven leavened the whole lump. Helpful texts are found in 2 Thes. 2:1-4, 7. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work." We can understand why the Apostle wrote as he did, because there was a misunderstanding that the day of Christ had already come, even in Paul's day. The Apostle could see by the perception of the holy spirit that there was already an evil spirit working which brought about a "falling away" and the development of "that man of sin, the son of perdition."

In connection with the "mustard seed" and the "birds of the air", we have an explanatory text in Rev. 18:2-5, which please read. The tree had grown from the mustard seed, and the birds had come to lodge there—in Babylon the Great—developed during the Gospel Age. "For all nations have drunk of the wine of her fornication . . . And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." This is a description of nominal Christendom today, and has been for some considerable time, over the past 100 years particularly. The exhortation to God's people to "come out of her, my people", has been heard and acted upon by the Lord's "wheat" class.

With reference to the leaven in the parable of the woman and the three measures of meal, we have the Lord's words—"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" in Luke 12:1. How apt also are the words in 1 Cor. 5:6-8 with reference to the Lord's parable of the leaven. Here we see that leaven is a picture of sin, the permeating influence of evil during this Gospel Age in the nominal church systems—"Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" These texts help us to understand the meaning of the two parables Jesus gave, as recorded in Matt. 13:31-33.

When the disciples asked Jesus to "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field", He outlined the meaning in Matt. 13:37-43, which please read. We see in this explanation the harvest in the end of the age is particularly described. In support of the harvest of the age being the time for the gathering of the "wheat", also called "His elect", we have our Lord's words in Matt. 24:31—"And he shall send his angels (messengers) with a great trumpet (of truth) and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"—from the ecclesiastical heavens or systems of religion. The Lord's truth has been proclaimed, detected by one here and there only, and when

these respond the Lord gives them more of His truth and they feast upon it and become His disciples indeed, just as it was at His first advent. The multitude at large are not touched by the truth, and so there is a separation of those who are worthy and those not worthy.

Following on in Matt. 13:44, we have a parable relating to the purchase of the whole world. "The treasure hid in a field", would seem to picture the Church and restored humanity—mankind and the earth itself—"the field is the world." "Selling all that he hath, and buying that field", represented our Lord paying man's ransom price. He had nothing left when He "poured out his soul unto death" to purchase humanity, including the Church and all mankind.

Then the selection of the Church is beautifully shown in Matt. 13:47, 48, which reads—"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." Here we have a clear illustration of the net of truth, so to speak, gathering "fish" of every kind. The sea represents the masses of humanity, from which selection is made for the Lord's Church. In connection with this selection we have the words of Jesus in Matt. 4:18, 19. Jesus met Peter and Andrew, and said to them—"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Also in Luke 5:10, Jesus said to Simon Peter—"Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

It is obvious that the multitude of mankind must wait for the earthly kingdom before the truths of the kingdom appeal to them. Then, when the kingdom is operating, the "fish" not suitable for the heavenly calling will be saved for the earthly inheritance, as revealed in the prophecy of Isa. 60:1-5. This passage is most helpful in regard to Israel coming into God's favour. Then the Gentile nations shall also come into the favour of God, and be blessed as they obey the laws of the kingdom. In this prophecy of Isa. 60, we have the picture of all the "fish" which were cast back into the sea during this Gospel Age, being converted to the Lord through Israel—"the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee."

Further, on the subject of the Lord selecting disciples during the Gospel Age, we have the parable of the talents, which is helpful and instructive, as found in Matt. 25 from verse 14. It will be seen that this parable describes the kingdom of heaven class being selected for the heavenly kingdom according to faithfulness in the use of talents during the present lifetime. The servants who received the five talents and the two talents used them diligently and were rewarded at the end of their pilgrimage, while the one-talented servant not using that which he had was unfaithful. The lesson is obvious. Some people may feel they have so little ability or op-

portunity that they can so easily "bury their talent". Most of us have one talent only to use for the Lord, but this parable teaches that we must use that talent, of whatever nature it is, in the Lord's service, to whom we owe our best powers. A Scripture which helps us to see the privilege as well as the necessity of using all our talents in the Lord's service, is found in Luke 16:9-13. This follows another parable, and the lesson from it is very clear and instructive. "Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations"—R.S.V. Our Lord was saying, Make for yourselves friends with the talents you have in your hands. These are called the "mammon of unrighteousness" because they belong to the present evil world. We make friends with it by using it in the service of the Lord, so that when all the treasures of earth fail, those with whom we have made friends—God and the Lord Jesus—will receive us into their eternal habitations. The Lord gives us things to do on earth, little things, and when we do them well, faithfully, He will see we are worthy of greater things. So, "he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" is very meaningful. It will be seen that the one-talented servant did not waste it; but he handed it back whole. That, however, was not good enough. It had to be used for the Master. If we have something in our hands, ever so small, it is our responsibility and privilege to use it for the Lord's service; the Lord desires us to use that which is least.

Next we have the parable of the "Lost Sheep" in Luke 15:3-7. "What man of you"—representing the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, as the representative of the Father, the Great Shepherd. "Having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them"—representing Adam and the human family—"All we like sheep have gone astray." "There is none righteous, no, not one." "Doth not leave the ninety and nine"—representing the angels and other spirit beings who never wandered into sin and away from God's care. "And go after that which is lost"—representing the Lord's first advent. "And when he hath found it, he lay it on his shoulders, rejoicing"—representing the restoration of the human family, because "God in Christ will reconcile the world unto himself." Thus we have pictured, God so loving the world, that He sent Jesus, and in the words of Isa. 53:11, our Lord "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied", when all the obedient of mankind are restored to the likeness of God, as represented in the perfection of Adam. Confirming this parable, we have the words of our Lord—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life"—John 3:14, 15. Our Lord was first raised up on the cross, then His resurrection to the Father's right hand, in bringing redemption to all the lost sheep.

In Luke 13:6-9 we have a parable of our Lord's which obviously describes the period of Jesus' earthly ministry of 3½ years. At the end of that time Jesus certainly had good reason to expect some good fruitage from the Jewish nation—"the fig tree"—of this particular parable, but apart from His few disciples there was no fruit. Using the figure of a "vineyard", the prophet Isaiah presents a similar picture of the Jewish nation in chapter 5:1-7. Those wonderful prophets were given the pictures by inspiration, and these were recorded for our benefit, and so often are quoted in the New Testament by our Lord and the Apostles.

We turn now to a parable which is probably one of the most misunderstood in the New Testament, that is the parable of the "Rich Man and Lazarus", found in Luke 16:19-31. (+) Even today some Christians protest that this account of the rich man and Lazarus is not a parable, because Jesus did not say it was in so many words. To take the words of Jesus in this parable literally does not make sense. Briefly, this parable describes the time, shortly after Christ's sacrifice, when God's favour for the heavenly calling passed from Israel exclusively, to individuals of all nations, to—"as many as the Lord our God shall call"—as the Apostle Peter declared in Acts 2:39.

The opportunity for the heavenly calling to go to sincere followers of the Lord in all nations is also clearly revealed in Acts 13:44-46. As Paul stated—"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you (Jews): but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." In Ephesians 2:11-22 we have the same truth beautifully presented by the Apostle Paul. In part, we read—"That at that time ye (Gentiles) were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Another important parable is that of the Sheep and the Goats recorded in Matt. 25, from verse 31. The opening verse—"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", reveals the time for its fulfilment. That is, when the Church is with Christ, in the Millennial Age, with the kingdom in operation, with all nations of mankind brought up out of the death condition, and during the thousand years of that

(+) An explanation of the Rich Man and Lazarus is contained in the booklet—"Parables of the Kingdom"—which is gladly supplied to our readers.

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PEOPLES PAPER  
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## *Our Lord's Memorial*

IN reviewing the institution of the Memorial of our Lord's death, when our Saviour met with His little band of apostles in the "upper room" on the evening preceding His sacrifice on Calvary's cross, the careful student of the Bible is at once impressed with the connection between this sacred service and the Jewish Passover ceremony which God had instructed Israel to keep in order to effect their release from Egyptian bondage, and then to observe, year by year, as an annual remembrance of that great deliverance by the Lord on their behalf.

The importance of Israel keeping their Passover service each year on the anniversary of their deliverance from Egypt is clearly indicated by the Lord's directions, as we read—"And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service, that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and thy sons for ever"—Exod. 12:26, 27, 24.

God had also clearly impressed upon the minds of all Israel that only by observing all His instructions, principal of which was the slaying of the Passover lamb and sprinkling its blood upon their homes, would their first-born be spared by the destroying angel in Egypt, and they as a nation be guided out of the slavery from which they longed to be free. No doubt the Lord intended to impress that the Passover lamb was a type of the Messiah whom He would send, and by whose blood, sprinkled upon their hearts, so to speak, the "first-borns" of God are "passed over" during this Gospel Age as they yield their lives in sacrifice.

Following the commencement of our Lord's ministry at thirty years of age, we have no record of His observing the Passover ceremony with His disciples on the three anniversaries prior to His sacrifice. These would not be of special interest, but on the anniversary of the Jewish Passover when He was to be the anti-typical Passover Lamb, we read His words—"With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer"—Luke 22:15. Yes, the Lord was about to

explain the deep significance of the Memorial of His death, which, from that time onward, would take the place of the Jewish ceremony in the lives of His true followers. No wonder that the last Jewish Passover that God could acknowledge is the only one recorded in the Gospels, for at that time our Saviour became "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

In addition to the accounts of the Lord's Supper given in the Gospels, we have a most remarkable presentation of the same recorded by the Apostle Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians. While this Apostle was not a follower of the Master while He was on earth, following his conversion and complete surrender to the service of the Lord he was given some of the most amazing revelations regarding God's plan of the ages, not the least of which was the detailed record of the procedure when Jesus met with His other apostles to institute this important memorial of His death.

It seems very clear that the Apostle Paul had cause to rebuke and exhort the Corinthian church to observe the Lord's Supper with proper dignity and sacred reverence, and not to make it a common feast, as apparently they were wont to do, and this called for the explanation of the subject of the Supper in some detail. We read Paul's words in 1 Cor. 11:23—"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread", etc. How influential should the Apostle's words have been when we realise that the risen Lord gave him this special communication from heaven by the spirit. The words—"I have received of the Lord"—should surely provoke the most profound attention on the part of all who are seeking to walk in the steps of the Master.

The fact that Paul records—"I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you"—is worthy of note. Apparently the previous sacred information about the memorial of Christ's death had not the desired effect, so the Apostle felt it essential to impress that partaking of the Lord's Supper in a careless or any unworthy manner would bring condemnation upon the recipients, as well as shame upon the Lord's cause as a whole.

The Apostle continues—"The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread". Yes, it was while Judas was on his final act of betrayal after receiving the sop from Jesus, that our Lord proceeded with the institution of the memorial of His death. It was quite out of place that the betrayer should be present at the Lord's Supper, as we read—"And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. He then having received the sop went immediately out; and it was night". John 13:27, 30. Yes, "it was night", and the darkest act of betrayal by Satan, was then under

way. What a warning to all who would be disciples of the Master, to think that within the space of about three years, one, who at first set out with a true heart to serve the Lord, could be overcome by the spirit of avarice and become the betrayer of the Lord he professed to love, because he allowed the Adversary to take possession of his heart. Speaking prophetically for the Lord the psalmist declared—"Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me"—Psa. 41:9.

Most of the Lord's people have similar experiences to those of their Master, whether it be through envy, malice, or tongues "lifted up against them", and what a lesson we have in the life of Judas, revealing to what depths one can fall from the grace of God, as Paul again warns us—"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" Heb. 12:15.

"He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me." This bread was unleavened, fitting symbol of our Lord's perfect humanity—"For such an high priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"—Heb. 7:26. "Take, eat"—appropriate the merit of My perfect offering for your sins; that you may gain justification by faith in the sight of God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"—Rom. 5:1.

"After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped (after the Jewish Passover supper), saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, this do as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." Again we see that the Lord was showing how to gain justification—by appropriating His merit, partaking of the value of His perfect life, pictured by the fruit of the vine. We note also that Christ's blood shall make the new covenant operative, and to offer His disciples a participation in His blood that will seal that covenant in the Kingdom Age is a very great privilege indeed. This is the secondary or deeper meaning of our Lord's memorial and implies all true Christians participate in the cup of suffering with Christ, which they gladly covenant to do when they "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, their reasonable service."

Likewise, with the unleavened bread which pictures our Lord's body, there is the deeper meaning implied, in addition to that of justification. The breaking of the bread symbolized the broken body of Christ, and His members are also broken in His service to become one loaf, so to speak. So, coupling the two symbols together, Paul declared—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (common participation) of, the blood of Christ? The bread which

we break, is it not the communion (common participation) of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread"—1 Cor. 10:16, 17.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." These words are sometimes misunderstood to imply that the apostle is advising the Corinthians to observe the Lord's Supper "often" and it is well known that some denominations celebrate weekly, others monthly, and still others quarterly. Those celebrating weekly misunderstand the references to "breaking bread" on the first day of the week in the Acts to refer to the Lord's Supper, but that is not so. (\*) Weymouth's translation of 1 Cor. 11:26 reads—"For every time that you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death—until he come."

As the Jewish Passover was observed annually, and the Lord's Memorial took the place of that typical Passover, so every time, or each time that the anniversary of Christ's death comes around, and the celebration is observed in spirit and in truth, it is "showing the Lord's death till he come"; firstly, as demonstrating faith in the death of Christ as our Passover Lamb, and also confirming that the breaking and sacrificing of the members of Christ still continues "till he come" in the full sense, when the Christ, Head and Body, shall be fully sacrificed and ready to "drink anew in the Father's kingdom"—Matt. 26:29.

The faithful Apostle Paul continues in 1 Cor. 11 to give helpful exhortation when he states—"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup", verses 27, 28. As one has said, "Each should examine his heart, not his life; the examination of the life can only show that it is imperfect and is greatly discouraging to many." That is very true, and Paul was not seeking to discourage any sincere ones, but rather sought to encourage all the Lord's called ones to celebrate the Lord's Supper in spirit and in truth—"discerning the Lord's body", being willing to be broken with Christ, and having their lives poured out in sacrifice, day by day, in the service of the Lord—Phil. 2:17.

It is surely a very great privilege to have been invited into the fellowship of saints, and to be counted worthy to endure something for Christ's sake, as stated by the apostle—"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my

(\*) The booklet, entitled—"Why We Observe the Lord's Supper Annually"—contains an explanation of texts relating to "Breaking of bread" in Acts, and is supplied at 20¢ per copy, post paid.

flesh for his body's sake, which is the church"—Col. 1:24. The celebration of the Memorial of Christ's death is a means of much encouragement and blessing to all the truly consecrated who approach the Lord's table with clean hands and a pure heart. "Christ our passover (Lamb) is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

### Prayer Brings Peace

"Being in agony, He prayed," is the record of our Saviour's Gethsemane experience. The lesson stands for all time. Like a bright lamp, the little sentence shines amid the olive trees in the garden. It shows us the path to comfort in our time of sorrow. Never before nor since was there such grief as the Redeemer's that night, but in His prayer He found comfort. As we watch Him the hour through, we see the agony changing as He prayed, until at last its bitterness was all gone, and sweet, blessed peace took its place. The gate of prayer is always the gate to comfort. There is no other place to go. We may learn also from our Lord's Gethsemane how to pray in our Gethsemanes. God will never blame us for asking to have the cup removed nor for the intensity of our supplication; but we must pray with submission. It is when we say in our deepest intensity, "Not my will, but Thine," that comfort comes, that peace comes.

Perfect loyalty to Christ brings perfect peace into the heart. The secret of Christ's own peace was His absolute devotion to His Father's will. Any resistance to God's will, and disobedience of His law, any wrenching of our lives out of His hand must break the peace of our hearts. No lesson that He gives ever mars our peace, if we receive it with willing, teachable spirit, and strive to learn it just as He has written it out for us. If we take the lessons just as they are given to us, we shall make our life music, and we shall find peace.—T. R. Miller, D.D.

### Passover Memorial 1976

The anniversary of the Memorial of Christ's death falls this year on the evening of Tuesday, 13th April. It is the privilege of the Lord's people to observe this memorial at this season "In remembrance of Christ."

#### Memorial Services

**Melbourne**—Sunday, 11th April, at 6.30 p.m., at Masonic Hall, 254 Swan Street, Richmond.

**Adelaide**—Sunday, 11th April, at 6.15 p.m., at the M.U. Hall (2nd Floor), 16 Franklin Street, Adelaide.

**Sydney**—Tuesday, 13th April, at 7 p.m., at 81 James Street, Leichhardt.

**Perth**—Tuesday, 13th April, at 7 p.m. Phone Class Secretary—93-1973 for address of service.

### Nambour Convention

Word is to hand that the Convention at Nambour this year is to be held (D.V.) on 24th and 25th July. Location and other information in our next issue.

## Christ's Message to Ephesus

"Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"—Rev. 2:1.

**T**HE Church at Ephesus was the first of the seven to be addressed by the Master. In His message to this Church the Saviour is announced as the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, and who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands; and then, addressing the Church and its messenger, He describes their condition in the words: "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love"—Rev. 2:2-4.

Let the fact be borne in mind that these words are addressed to the angel or pastor, and to the Church of Ephesus through its pastor or minister, who serves in spiritual things. We inquire, Who alone of all its members will hear—give heed? The Saviour Himself, seven times repeated, answers this question in the words: "Let him who has an ear, hear what the spirit says to the congregation"—verse 7. It is important that we give earnest heed to this fact, that the only one who hears, in the sense of giving heed, be he messenger, bishop, or one who holds no position of responsibility or trust, is the "overcomer"; he alone is the only one who truly hears and finally is chosen to inherit the promises, and to at last become of the little flock of joint-heirs in the heavenly Kingdom. This thought has been well expressed by another: "How hard is it to understand that while we may obey in much that in fact costs us little, the true test of obedience is just in that in which we are called to renounce our wills, and our wisdom, perhaps to forfeit the esteem and companionship of others, by doing what has only the Word of God to justify it, and must wait for eternity to find right appreciation!"

The one specially important point in this message to Ephesus is plain, and it is left to stand in solemn contrast with all the other matters that receive unmingled commendation. What were the seemingly commendable characteristics possessed by this Church and its angel or minister? Briefly summing these up we discover that He who holds the seven stars and walks in the midst of the candlesticks, found in Ephesus, works, labor, endurance, steadfast opposition to evil, faithfulness and firmness in discipline, cheerfulness in bearing any burden, and a just hatred of deeds and practices which Christ also hates.

One who fails to look closely at these qualities and contrast them with the one solemn charge, "Thou hast left thy first love", will most naturally inquire, Can it be possible to possess all these qualities and yet be lacking in this one all-important thing? The words of Him who walked among the lampstands plainly answers that it is. The words also imply that the loss of first love must be the immediate cause of departure from true Christian life. Let us then examine more closely this message to Ephesus.

### "Left Thy First Love"

Ephesus was the first Church, and as its name (first, desirable) indicates, it possessed advantages that were indeed desirable. Ephesus it was that labored and was patient and could not bear evil, to whom these words were addressed by the Saviour, so expressive of disappointment. We inquire then, What is this "first love"? Was it love for the Truth alone? Was it love for the work, or service of proclaiming—of giving out the Truth? Ah, no; Ephesus did not fail here. Wherein then was her failure? What was her "first love"? Was it not that for which the Truth was made known to her? Was not the Truth given to the Christians at Ephesus for the purpose of begetting in them a true, a deep love for the Lord, to enable them to become acquainted with Christ Himself, as an ever present Saviour, Friend, Counsellor and Guide? There can be but one answer: It was.

"First love" then is something beyond the love of the Truth, and something beyond the desire for and service in connection with the Truth. It is love for the Lord Himself—love for what He has done for us, and love for His own glorious personality which reflects the Divine attributes. This, the supreme and highest form of love, finds in Him, its full and complete satisfaction. It finds expression in our desires and aims to please Him who first loved us, and "whom having not seen we love". All other forms and degrees of love are incidental to this, our "first love."

A comparison of St. Paul's words of commendation to the Thessalonian believers will, we believe, enable us to discover the deep significance of these reproving words of Christ to the believers at Ephesus. The Apostle when writing to the Thessalonian believers thus commended them: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work **of faith**, and labor **of love**, and patience **of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father; knowing brethren beloved your election of God"—1 Thes. 1:2, 3. The fact that in the Saviour's words to Ephesus, "works", "labor", and "patience" are mentioned, but "faith", "love", and "hope", are not coupled with them is remarkable, and seems to explain the situation and condition of those in Ephesus. In the Thessalonian Church, faith, love, and hope were active, and it was these character-

istics that produced the work, labor and patience. These three most important of all graces, faith, hope, and love, clearly indicate that the Thessalonian believers were in the sweet enjoyment of the person of Christ as Head, and that their hope of His second coming was clear and bright.

"Works" were in Ephesus, but Christ does not say "works of **faith**"; "labor" was there, but He does not say "labor of **love**"; "patience" was there, but He does not say "patience of **hope**." These were evidently dimmed. Let all three of the others be active, but if the freshness of what called them into action be lacking, they could become a creed, a mere belief, without the power. To assist to a better realization of the matter, we inquire, What is the first love in the natural, human relation, in one who is espoused as a chaste virgin to one husband? Who belongs to him? Who looks upon him as the one ideal man of the whole world? We answer, The espoused. It is she who is absorbed in him; who is guarding his honour and reputation; who is watching his countenance, living as in his presence, and forsaking all others for him alone. This it is for which the Church of God is called out of the world. She is called out because she is to be with Him, because she is to reign with Him; she will wait for His coming because He is hers. As has been truly said: "To leave this first love is to lose all. For whom are all the varied excellencies and beauties (of character) named but for Him? The assembly, Church, is not adorned for the world; it is not to improve the world; it is not a companion and caterer to the world; it is not responsible to it; owes no allegiance to it. If it is not absorbed with Christ, living in and for Him, only for His admiration and smile and comfort, it has nothing distinctive from the nominal believer."—From "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

### "Future Probation in Christian Belief"

A helpful and interesting booklet bearing the above title has been produced by the Bible Fellowship Union in England, with the object of reaching as many people as possible with the truth respecting future probation for the human family. Comprising 88 pages, copies of this booklet have been supplied free by the brethren in England, and these will be gladly passed on to our readers for the cost of postage which is 30c per single copy in Australia. Postage less per copy for two or three.

### Adelaide Easter Convention

The brethren of the Adelaide Class extend a cordial invitation to all friends able to attend the Easter Convention for three days to be held (D.V.) on April 16th, 17th and 18th in the M.U. Hall (2nd Floor), 16 Franklin Street, Adelaide. Further information from the Class Secretary—Mr. F. M. Grinstead, 1 Wendy Avenue, Valley View, South Australia, 5093.

### Tracts Available

The article, "Glad Tidings of Great Joy Shall be to All People", which appeared in the "Peoples Paper" is now available in tract form. Supplies of these tracts, also "The Glad Resurrection Day", "When Christ is King" and "Why Jesus Came Down from Heaven"—are available for wise distribution, provided free through the Tract Fund.

(Continued from page 3.)

judgment day they will be before the Lord, for His supervision and training. "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." We see in this parable how apt are the figures used to describe the two classes of people "sheep" who are meek and teachable, and "goats" who are stubborn and wilful. "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 hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"—verses 34-40. There we have described the testing of all humanity in the kingdom age. The Lord will not be there in person, but the "neighbours" will be there. Inasmuch as kindness is shown to the human beings alongside them, the Lord will count it as done unto Himself. That will be a test as to whether they are "sheep" or whether they are "goats".

The same illustration fits the life of all Christians today. We have not the Lord with us in person, but we have His people. Inasmuch as we do it to the Lord's people today we do it to the Lord. The illustration is perfect. Even though this parable is set to be fulfilled in the next age, the principle of it is the same for us now. That is a lovely thought to keep in mind—inasmuch. Whatever we have done for or against another of the human family the Lord will count it as done to Himself. In our homes, in our work day by day, in our meetings, wherever we are, all of our lives, we should remember this thought of "inasmuch". The Lord wants us to keep that in mind. "Come ye blessed of my Father"—inasmuch.

Then the same principle applies to the goats—"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"—verses 45, 46. The everlasting punishment is punishment that will last forever; not eternal torment, but lasting punishment of the second death, because the "goats" will have proved themselves 100% wilful. The "sheep" will be proved worthy to inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. So the same disposition that gains for the "sheep" the earthly inheritance in the next age, will also gain for the "sheep" of the Gospel Age the heavenly inheritance.

From John 10:14-16 we see that the sheep of the present time know the Lord's voice and follow Him. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." That is what the con-

secrated followers of Christ have also covenanted to do, to lay down their lives with their Leader for the sheep. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold"—not of the Jewish fold. "Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock (not fold), and one shepherd"—one spiritual flock. The Lord was not referring to the sheep of the Millennial Age in this passage, but to the sheep of the Gospel Age. They belong to the Gentile fold, but there will be one flock of both Jews and Gentiles, one Bride class, one Church. See also John 10:27-29.

May we have the spirit of the "sheep" shown so beautifully in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats—inasmuch as it is done to one of the Lord's little ones, it is done to Him. May we keep this in our minds, and particularly so in our homes. It is more evident in our homes than anywhere else. We can show the Lord how much we love Him by the way we act. We cannot be over-comers except we deal righteously with those we have in our families, at our work, in our meetings, as to the Lord Himself. The Lord knows whether we are His sheep. His sheep follow Him, because they hear and know His voice.

### Books Available

In view of increased postal charges, literature prices are now as follows:—

- "God's Promises Come True"—\$2.00 (postage from 86c to \$2.15, according to distance in Australia).
- "The Divine Plan of the Ages", Cloth—75c (postage 60c). Paper bound—50c, postage 60c).
- "The Creator's Grand Design"—\$1.00 (postage 60c).
- "The Book of Books"—\$1.00 (postage 60c).
- "Daily Heavenly Manna"—\$1.00 (postage 60c).
- "Songs in the Night"—\$1.00 (postage 40c).
- "Poems of Dawn"—\$2.20 (postage 40c).
- "Emphatic Diaglott", N. Testament—\$2.00 (postage 60c).
- "Tabernacle Shadows"—50c (postage 40c).
- "God and Reason"—10c (postage 20c).
- "God's Plan"—10c (postage 20c).
- "Hope Beyond the Grave"—10c (postage 20c).
- "Israel in History and Prophecy"—10c (postage 20c).
- "Our Lord's Great Prophecy"—10c (postage 20c).
- "Manner of Christ's Return"—10c (postage 20c).
- "Christ's Return"—10c (postage 20c).
- "Some of the Parables"—10c (postage 20c).
- "Where Are the Dead"—10c (postage 20c).
- "Lights and Shadows in Christian Experience"—10c (postage 20c).
- "Our Bible Translated"—10c (postage 20c).

Numerous other smaller booklets.

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