



Volume XL.VII No. 2 MELBOURNE, APRIL -- MAY 1964 Price—Sixpence

Was the Apostle Peter the First Pope?

(This article is published by request).

THIS subject has been prompted by the many Press reports early this year referring to the Pope's visit to Israel as being the first undertaken by a Pope since Peter, the first Pope, left Jerusalem about the year A.D. 42. We feel it is important to investigate the New Testament record of the life of the Apostle Peter, and seek to determine if there is any truth in this claim that this Apostle was the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. In so doing, we believe it will be profitable to note some of the admirable qualities in this much-used Apostle of the Lord, at the same time keeping in mind the fact that he was one of twelve selected male servants especially chosen by Christ under the guidance of the Heavenly Father, that these may carry on our Lord's ministry in a special way following Christ's death and resurrection to the Father above.

Speaking to the eleven Apostles, our Lord declared in John 15:16—"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you—that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." We realise at this time these Apostles were authorised to serve as special messengers of Christ; this commission was not given especially to Peter or James or John or any other single Apostle. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

Examining the records of Jesus' early acquaintance with Peter, we have a most informative account given in John 1:35-42. It is interesting to note the circumstances that brought about Peter's meeting with Jesus, as shown in these verses. Andrew, Peter's brother and another disciple of John the Baptist had apparently spent the most part of one day with Jesus (verse 39), and then found Peter and brought him to Jesus, declaring "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Our Lord's words on meeting Peter are most enlightening—"thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."

Closely connected with this particular reference to Peter, we note the important passage in Matt. 16:13-18. After Jesus had asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" He put a more important question to them—"But whom say ye that I am?" Peter's response was spontaneous—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord was much pleased with this declaration by Peter, and after assuring him that his perception of Jesus being the Christ was revealed by the Heavenly Father, we find one of the most outstanding statements made to Peter by Jesus—"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." (verse 18). A footnote in Rotherham's translation on this verse is helpful—"Thou

art Peter”—i.e., “Thou art petros—and on this petra” = “Thou art a piece of rock ; and on this rock.” Note that our Lord does not say: “and on thee”.

This explanation by Rotherham is certainly most helpful and in full agreement with the concordance meaning of these two Greek words, the word “Peter,” being a translation of the Greek word petros, which means a piece of rock, whereas the word “rock” is a translation of the Greek word petra which means a mass of rock. It is very evident, then, our Lord did not say to Peter—”Thou art Peter and upon thee I will build my Church.” So there is no authority for the Roman Catholic Church to claim that this was so, from these words of Christ.

If Christ’s church was not built upon Peter, what is the meaning of the words—”Upon this rock I will build my church”? This is revealed in the words of Peter to Jesus—”Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This foundation truth, pictured by the mass of rock, “petra” in the Greek, reveals Christ as the Rock upon which the church has been built all the Gospel Age. How expressive are the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 3:11—”For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

This same great truth is emphasized again in Eph. 1:5, 6 where we see that every member of the church is acceptable only on this great foundation, as we read—”Having predestinated us unto sonship by Jesus Christ to himself . . . wherein he (God) hath made us accepted in the beloved.” Acceptance must be on this basic foundation rock, even Christ Himself.

We note further in Matt. 16:19, after referring to the building of His church on the true foundation, even Himself, our Lord went on to declare to Peter—”And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” This statement, in addition to the wrong idea of the church being built upon Peter, has led Roman Catholics to assume that Peter was the chief Apostle, and also that he became the first Pope. But what does this promise of Peter being given the keys of the kingdom of heaven imply?

In the first place, it is evident that our Lord Himself possessed the keys to open the kingdom of heaven to those worthy to enter. He tells us this in His message to the Church at Philadelphia—”These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth.” (Rev. 3:7). The only one possessing the power to open the door into His Church was and is Himself. But when Jesus spoke to Peter His earthly course was nearly finished, and He would need trusty ministers to open the doors of the kingdom, so to speak.

It is evident that to Peter it was granted, through his great sermon on the day of Pentecost, to open the door of the kingdom to the Jews—Acts 2:14-40. So effective was Peter’s preaching, that “the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (verse 41). This, of course, was the outcome of our Lord’s ministry for over three years, the Apostle Peter being given’ the privilege of proclaiming the opportunity for all in right heart condition amongst the Jews to enter into the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus”.

To Peter was also given the high privilege of opening the door of the kingdom to the Gentiles, in the case of Cornelius. This is revealed clearly in chapters 10 and 11 of the Acts, and in Acts 15:7-9 we have Peter’s account of the experience being conveyed to the other apostles and elders.—”Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men, brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the holy spirit, even as he did unto us ; and put no difference between us (Jews) and them (Gentiles), purifying their hearts by faith.”

In this service of opening the door to the heavenly calling to both Jews and Gentiles Peter was, indeed, greatly honored, but such a prominence, granted for this particular service, could not be passed on to a successor. It is of particular interest to note also that the power to bind and loose on earth and in heaven, mentioned in the closing words of Matt. 16:18, was granted to all the Apostles, as shown in Matt. 18:18.

One has written in this connection—'These phrases, 'whatsoever thou shalt bind,' and 'whatsoever thou shalt loose,' were common Hebrew expressions, having a definite and well-known meaning. 'To bind' meant 'to forbid,' or to declare forbidden.' 'To loose' meant to allow,' or to declare allowable.' Scholars tell us that there are thousands of examples from the writings of the Jews to prove that such was the meaning of the phrases in question. By our Lord's use of them here, then, we may understand His promise in John 16:12, 13. Meaning, that after He had been crucified, raised from the dead, and ascended to God's right hand, the holy spirit of truth would be sent to them, to guide and direct them in their ministry, so that in their presentation of the Gospel, and in all related matters, in connection with the unfolding of God's great plan of salvation, the true followers of the Master might have confidence that they were having revealed to them, not merely the thoughts of the Apostles, but the very mind and purposes of God."

While, then, Christians are not to worship the Apostles, they delight to honor those whom Jesus honored, namely, the twelve Apostles, not particularly Peter, or any other. Yes, we honor the twelve, the Apostle Paul being selected to take the place of Judas. All the twelve Apostles were surely important stones in the spiritual temple, built upon the great foundation, Christ Jesus, "the head of the corner". Of this spiritual temple the Apostle Paul wrote —"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." (Eph. 2:19, 20).

While thinking of the twelve Apostles being especially selected and used in the early church, not only for their personal ministry, but also in the recording of their Epistles for the benefit of the Lord's people all down the Gospel Age to our own day, we have the words of Paul in 2 Cor. 11:5, which are most significant—"For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles."

Further, the necessity of Paul helping Peter respecting his action showing a difference between Jewish and Gentile Christians is a clear indication that Peter was not given authority over the other Apostles. This is shown in Gal. 2:11-16—"When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James (at Jerusalem) he did eat with the Gentiles ; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him ; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews. . . . Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ . . .for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

The Apostle Peter's appreciation of Paul's ministry is also a good indication that he did not consider himself to have been installed above the other Apostles in authority. In 2 Pet. 3:15, 16, we read—"We account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation ; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you ; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood." The fact that Peter acknowledged and appreciated the depth of Paul's teachings under the inspiration of the Lord's spirit, speaks well for Peter's humility as one of the chosen twelve, and not in any sense as claiming to be the first Pope.

Further, one of the most revealing Scriptures, showing Peter's own disposition towards his service for the

Lord, is shown by his masterly words in 1 Pet. 5:1-3--"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind ; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." "Who am also an elder"—we see no claim here to be above other helpers or teachers, as elders in the church ; no claim to being a Pope, or Holy Father, in any degree. No doubt Peter had well remembered the words of Jesus "But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters ; for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased ; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matt. 23:8-12).

We find from the Scriptures, then, that the Apostle Peter certainly was not the founder of the Roman Catholic Church ; that he was not the first Pope, and had nothing to do with the formulating and celebrating of Masses which are an abomination in the sight of the Lord. As a matter of fact we are well informed by historians that Roman Catholicism was not established at the time of the Apostles, but became influential in the world only from about the 3rd century.

Well did the Apostle Peter leave us a lesson in humility, which he had no doubt well learned after being reinstated in the Lord's favor after his denial of his Master—"All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time ; casting all your care upon him ; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Pet. 5:5-8, 10, 4).

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Published by the Berean Bible Institute, 19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4, Melbourne, Victoria Australia

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Memorial of Christ's Death.

“Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh which is called the Passover. ”

SUCH is the sacred narrative announcing the last Passover Supper of which our Lord partook. It is in some respects the most hallowed occasion of the year, observed by disciples of Christ as a Memorial and celebration of their Master's sacrificial death, and of their participation with Him in that death in hope of the glory to follow.

When Jesus sent disciples to inquire of a friend, “Where is the guest chamber where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” we read further, “And they made ready the Passover.” As the Master sat down with the disciples to eat of the lamb, He said, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer ; for I say unto you, I will no more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

It is again the great question of atonement, redemption, and deliverance, that comes before us as we gather at the table of the Lord. The Passover lamb reveals primarily the Divine method of dealing with sin, of satisfying the claims of Justice against our race. Typically this was the great question for Israel in the land of Egypt on the evening of the 14th day of the first month, namely, how can God exempt from judgment, and receive into His favor, those whom His holiness condemns ? To this solemn question there was but one answer that would satisfy the demands of a God of holiness, and that was the blood of the lamb of His own providing. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” This settled the all-important question. It was one of life and death, of deliverance or judgment. The blood-sprinkled doorpost was a perfect answer to all the claims of holiness, and to all the need of the congregation.

Israel was now at peace with God, a sheltered, saved and happy people, though still in Egypt, the land of death and judgment. God was now pledged to deliver Israel—precious type of the perfect security of all who are trusting in the blood of Christ. They were securely and peacefully feeding on the roasted lamb, when “at midnight, the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on the throne, unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon and all the firstborn of cattle.” (Exod. 12:29). “But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast ; that ye may know how that the Lord hath put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” (Exod. 11:7).

Redemption being now accomplished, and Israel divinely prepared, they commence their journey. But observe, in passing, how they start. Before taking one step, every question between the conscience and God is divinely settled. They are forgiven, justified and accepted in His sight. Hence, it is written, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” (Hosea 11:1). Blessed type of the real condition in which every true believer begins his Christian course. He may not see this blessed truth, or he may have a very feeble appreciation of it, as Israel had, but that does not alter the fact. God acts according to His own knowledge of the relationship, and the affections which belong to it. We see this, in the glorious deliverance of His people at the Red Sea, in the Manna from heaven, the water from the rock, and in the pillar of His presence, which accompanied them in all their wanderings. He ever acts according to the purposes of His love, and the value of the blood of Jesus.

Observing in the type the slain lamb, its blood sprinkled upon the doorposts and lintels of the house, and the flesh eaten with bitter herbs, to apply this in the antitype and see Christ as the real Lamb—see that His blood sprinkled upon our hearts cleanses them from consciousness of evil and gives us an assurance of our being passed over, of our being spared our being granted life through His blood. This sprinkling represents our justification by faith; and the subsequent eating of the lamb with bitter herbs finds its place in the antitype in our consecration, in the experiences and trials which the Lord provides for us, and which

helps to wean our affections from earthly things and increases the appetite and encourages us to partake more and more abundantly of the Lamb.

From experience we realise that it is much more impressive and inspiring to celebrate an important matter on its anniversary—to recall the deeds and words and looks, and place ourselves with the chief actors of that greatest of all dramas which over 19 centuries ago ended at Calvary. It is always an inspiration to the devout follower of the Lord to bring before his vision the general picture of that first solemn Supper instituted by the Saviour. As 'one has written concerning that sacred evening:

“It was towards the evening, probably when the gathering dusk would prevent all needless -observation that Jesus and His disciples walked from Bethany, by that old familiar road over the Mount of Olives, which His sacred feet were never again destined to traverse until after death. How far they attracted attention, or how it was that He, whose person was known to so many—and who, as the great central figure of such great counter-agitations, had, four days before, been accompanied with shouts of triumph, as He would be, on the following day, with yells of insult—could now enter Jerusalem unnoticed with His followers, we cannot tell. We catch no glimpse of the little company till we find them assembled in that “large upper room”—perhaps the very room where three days afterwards the sorrow-stricken Apostles first saw their risen Saviour —perhaps the very room where, amid the sound of a rushing mighty wind, each received power from on high with Pentecostal blessing”.

Apparently it was just when the regular Jewish Passover Supper was ended that our Lord instituted the Memorial, as it is recorded —“When the hour was come they sat down to eat the Passover”. And Jesus said unto the disciples, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.” Doubtless He longed to have them understand how it would begin to be fulfilled a little later on in that very day by the slaying of the real Lamb.

Probably one reason why He specially desired to eat this Passover with them was that He there designed breaking the truth of its significance to them, to the extent that they could receive it; for, “As they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me.” “And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Drink ye all of it; This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you.”

We cannot doubt that the design of the Master was to call their minds from the typical lamb to Himself, the antitype, and to show them that it would be no longer proper to -observe a feature of the Law which He was about to fulfil.

And the bread and the wine were to be to them, thereafter, elements which, as a remembrancer of Him, would take the place of the typical lamb. Thus considered there is force in the words, “This do in remembrance of Me”—no longer kill a literal lamb in remembrance of a typical deliverance, but instead, use the bread and wine, representative of My flesh and life, the basis of the real deliverance, the real passing over. Hence, let as many as receive Me and My words henceforth—”Do this in remembrance of Me.”

How beautiful is the lesson from our Lord’s words. Unleavened (pure) bread henceforth would at this Memorial represent our Lord, the Bread from heaven, of which we may eat and have everlasting life. But this “Bread” must be “broken” in order to be appropriated. And so we see that it was necessary not only for our Lord to come from heaven as the “Bread,” but necessary also that He be broken in death — sacrificed for our sins—ere we could appropriate His merit and enjoy everlasting life.

The “fruit of the vine” was also introduced as an important part of this Memorial of our Lord’s loving

sacrifice. He explained that it represented His blood—"The Blood of the New Covenant (that will seal the New Covenant, in due time) shed for many for the remission of sins." What a reminder this is of the ransom-price necessary and secured on behalf of the sins of the world. The broken bread taught a part of the lesson, the "cup" taught the remainder of it.

The Lord's disciples must, by faith, partake of, "appropriate," both the "bread" and the "cup," or they cannot be one with Him. More than this, the Apostle shows that there is another subsequent view of this Memorial. We who thus eat and drink—who thus partake of our Saviour's merits—are reckoned in with Him as His "members," as His "Body," being broken and our lives sacrificed in His service, thus under His direction are counted as a part Of His sacrifice.

The Apostle's words are: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (common union) of the blood of Christ? The loaf which we break, is it not the common union of the Body of Christ? For we, being many are one loaf, and one Body, because we are all partakers of that one loaf (Christ)."

After the institution of the Memorial Jesus went out into the Mount of Olives in company with the eleven. It is believed that the passage was made at midnight across the Kedron and up the slopes of Olivet into the Garden of Gethsemane. It seems that the Saviour realised that He was entering this place for the purpose of fighting a great battle that was to win for Him the victory of Calvary; for out of this agony Jesus stepped calm and strong for the final hour, and therein is a great lesson for His followers. We must win our battles before we come to them, in secret prayer and gathered strength.

We observe that the Master realised that His hour of betrayal and fierce temptation was close at hand; He first comforted, counselled, and prayed for and with His disciples, and then His next strong impulse was to seek a solitary place for prayer and communion with God that He might find grace to help in this time of sore need. He wanted to see full and clear the light of His Father's face before He stepped into the final darkness.

Leaving all but Peter, James and John at the entrance of the Garden, as a sort of outer guard against the sudden intrusion of His betrayer upon His last hour of prayer, He advanced with the three—the three in whose ardent natures He seemed to find the most active and consoling sympathy—and with an earnest appeal to them to watch and pray, He left them and went about a stone's throw beyond.

All realise that sympathy has a wonderful power to lighten burdens. Solitary suffering is doubly hard to bear. It gives us a sense of unsupported and forsaken loneliness that kills all courage and fills us with despair. The presence of a friend rallies our energies and inspires us with new life. We may reasonably suppose that it was the simple presence of these chosen disciples that Jesus wanted, not their talk. There was nothing they could say to Him that would help Him. The best sympathy is not that which is most talkative and fussy. The silent presence, the sympathetic tear, the thoughtful, helpful act, these go deeper. There are chambers of sorrow in which voluble speech is an impertinence and silence is soothing to the soul.

Under the trees of Olivet, the Master had a good chance to think over the sequence of events that were to culminate on Calvary. And there, in that mighty temple of nature, Jesus had the final conflict of His earthly career. Knowing what was coming, He prayed, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me ; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matt. 26:39, 42). It was here that He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him from death—by a resurrection.

The necessary comfort was provided, for though the cup might not pass from Him, His prayer was heard and a special ministry from God strengthened Him. He had now passed beyond the need for His disciples'

help. His victory was won. The cross was already as good as behind Him. With calm courage that feared no evil, with masterful faith that scattered the darkness of Calvary, He said, "Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand."

Let the curtain go down on Calvary, on the darkness of the reeling crosses, on the death of God's dear Son, the great antitypical passover Lamb. Let it go down on the weeping women, on the disciples, on the Roman soldiers and on the cruel Pharisees and scribes. Then let it rise on the glorious morning of His resurrection when a mighty angel had rolled away the stone from the tomb, and said to those who came to embalm the body, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen."

How the Christian feeds on these events—the death and resurrection of Jesus! They are the very essence of life and power at the present time, just as they have been for nearly 2,000 years. The feast that God has provided through His Son is to be eaten with unleavened bread—the bread of pure truth—and with bitter herbs of persecution. This feast has continued throughout the Gospel Age to our own day.

WOULD ye be My disciples? Consider again:
Can ye follow My footsteps through trial and pain?
Can ye throw away pleasure, and glory, and fame,
And live but to honour My cause and My name?

Can ye turn from the glitter of fashion and mirth
And dwell like a pilgrim and stranger on earth,
Despising earth's riches, and living to bless?
Can you follow the feet of the shelterless?

Can ye ask from your heart the forgiveness of men?
Can ye list to reproaches, nor answer again?
Can ye pray that repentance to life may be theirs
Who've watched for your falling, who've set for you snares?

When ye hear I am come, then can ye arise,
The joy of your heart springing up in your eyes?
Can ye come out to meet Me, whate'er the cost be,
Though ye come on the waves of a storm-crested sea?

When I call, can ye turn and in gladness "come out"
From the home of your childhood, the friends of your heart?
With naught but my promise on which to rely,
Afar from their love—can ye lie down and die?

Yea, we'll take up the cross and in faith follow Thee,
And bear Thy reproach, Thy disciples to be.
Blest Saviour, for courage, to Thee we will fly;
Of grace Thou hast promised abundant supply.

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God's Inheritance in the Saints.

(Convention Address)

“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 (God's) inheritance in the saints.” (Eph. 1:18).

WHEN we read and think about the subject of inheritance as presented in the Bible, our minds generally dwell upon the reward that the followers of the Lord will receive upon their proving faithful unto death. This we have stated in the latter part of Revelation 2:10—“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

This is quite understandable, for the majority of New Testament passages referring to an inheritance do apply to the heavenly reward of the saints of this Gospel Age. We believe that our text in Ephesians 1:18 is one of the few in the New Testament which refers so directly to the thought, not of the saints' inheritance, but to God's inheritance in the saints. Some people may ask, Is there really any difference in the two thoughts? A careful examination will show that the Lord and the Apostles revealed quite a difference, even though it is not apparent on the surface.

To illustrate, let us examine two texts of Scripture applying to the next age. Firstly, in Psa. 2:6-8, we have the record of God saying to Christ—“Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Christ has purchased the whole human race, and He is going to ask for them to be His inheritance in God's due time. Secondly, in Matthew 25:34 we have the reward for the world of mankind at the end of the Millennial Age revealed. “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.” Here we have the Lord assuring those who are of the “sheep” class that they will inherit this wonderful kingdom on the restored earth, whereas in the Psalm we see mankind is to be given to Christ for an inheritance.

In another comparison of texts which apply to the saints of this Gospel Age we have Daniel 7:22 and Mal. 3:17.

In Daniel we read: “The Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High ; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” In other words, they are shown as entering into their inheritance, the wonderful heavenly reward; whereas in Malachi it is stated—“They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” Does this mean that the saints become the possession of God only when they are “made up” as the Bride of Christ? No, indeed, they are prospectively His inheritance, His possession, from the beginning of the Christian way, but as there is a possibility of coming short or falling away, they are not fully His until proved faithful unto death.

Let us note some texts which help us to see that we really become the possession or inheritance of our Heavenly Father right from the beginning of the first impulses of the Christian life. In John 6:44 our Lord says—“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” We see here the Father's drawing influence upon those in a right heart condition, those who are yearning for something better than the present life. The Father acts upon their hearts and minds, drawing them towards the One whom He has sent to be the Saviour of the world. So accepting Christ, they become justified by faith.

We read further in Romans 12:1, “I beseech ye therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” God has drawn these to Jesus. In presenting their bodies now, they are acceptable to God. He is the One who is vitally and overall interested in them because they have accepted the sacrifice of His Son, the means of

approach to Him and they really become God's possession when they present their lives to Him.

In 2 Cor. 1:21, 22 we read, "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts." When we grasp the meaning of the word "sealed" we begin to realise what a relationship is implied in being a member of God's inheritance. It means to stamp with a signet or private mark, for security or preservation. This of course implies a marking as of ownership, and the same Greek word is used with reference to our Lord Jesus, as is used for the saints. In John 6:27 we have a reference to our Lord's own sealing—"For him hath God the Father sealed." We may ask, But did not Jesus always belong to the Father, even as the Logos? If so, what is implied by the Father sealing Him?

This undoubtedly refers to the begetting of our Lord Jesus when He was 30 years of age for the highest inheritance of all, the divine nature. And in being begotten for that heavenly inheritance He also became God's inheritance or possession of the highest order ; and this is the same sealing for possession or inheritance upon every member of the saints, who are walking in the steps of Christ.

Let us note Eph. 1:13, 14 in this connection. "In whom (Christ) ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." This refers to a foretaste or prepayment of our inheritance "until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Of our Lord Jesus we read in Heb. 1:9, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Of course, our Lord Jesus was anointed above all others, but we notice that these "fellows" are also anointed with the same "oil of gladness." Just to realise that to the full! And we do well to ask ourselves, How is the "oil of gladness" working in our lives? Is it provoking us unto love and to good works amongst our "fellows" who are also members of God's inheritance? We know it is possible for the work of the "oil of gladness" to be somewhat hindered by our own will, by self getting in the way, restricting the lubrication, so to speak, of our hearts and minds. A blockage in the lubrication system of any machinery is serious, and especially is this so in the hearts and minds of those called to be members of God's inheritance.

The Apostle exhorts us along this line in Eph. 4:29-32. This helps us to co-operate with God in appreciation of the holy spirit dwelling in our hearts. Reading from verse 29—"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

2 Cor. 6:16, 18 helps us to see the favor of the Lord to those so blessed as to be invited into this wonderful inheritance of God, by the indwelling of the holy spirit. "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And I will be a Father unto them, and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

I want to be marked for Thine own;
Thy seal on my forehead to wear;
To receive that “new name” on the mystic white stone,
Which only Thyself canst declare.

I *want* Thine own hand to unbind
Each tie to terrestrial things,
Too tenderly cherished, too closely entwined,
Where my heart too tenaciously clings.

I want, by mine aspect serene,
Mine actions and words, to declare
That my treasure is placed in a country unseen,
That my heart and affections are there.

I want, as a traveller, to haste
Straight onward, nor pause on my way,
No forethought or anxious contrivance to waste
On my tent, only pitched for a day.

MOTTO FOR EACH DAY “THREE GATES OF GOLD”

“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”

“Let the words of my mouth be acceptable in thy sight.”

Let every thought thy lips would utter pass three gates of gold But, if through these it fails to pass, then let it not be told;

And o’er each gate in silver letters written thou wilt find,

Above the first one, “Is it true?” the second, “Is it kind?”

And “is it necessary?” o’er the third one and the last.

Then guard thy thoughts, let none escape, save those these gates have passed!

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