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Is There a Connection Between Present World Troubles and Christ's Return?

"THIS subject is surely most timely, for no person can deny that present world troubles are most momentous, and are causing grave concern to most people, especially to the world's leading statesmen, reigning monarchs, and heads of church systems alike.

We refer to the concern of reigning monarchs in particular, because it is now just a few weeks since the assassination of the young King of Irak and members of his family that precipitated the present spasm of turmoil in the Middle East, and brought the great powers of the world facing each other in more definite opposition than had been the case in recent months.

While all decently thinking people deplore the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of the young King of Irak and his household, and the taking over of the government of that country by the revolutionists in such a ruthless manner, a news report from London on 27th July throws some light on the situation. Under the heading —"Slain King's Gold Thrones"—the report states—"Two golden thrones, each valued at £10,000, which King Faisal of Irak had ordered for his wedding to Princess Fazilet, are to stay locked up in a London strongroom—perhaps for years. They were ordered shortly before the King was murdered in the 14th July coup."

Commenting on this news report the next day, a columnist in one Melbourne newspaper stated—"I cannot sentimentalise over the two gold thrones, now reported to be gathering dust in London, which King Faisal ordered for his wedding not long before his death. Since each throne is valued at £10,000, and most of Irak's 4,800,000 people are miserably poor, the rugged style of King Faisal's removal from the scene becomes understandable, if not praiseworthy."

From this news report and comment, we gather that some of the remaining kings in the world today are living in the past, when their subjects, lacking in education and initiative, were prepared to submit to almost any treatment in their ignorance. But times have changed, especially during and since the Second World War, and particularly amongst those who were previously the uneducated and under-privileged of the human race. This was well demonstrated in the overthrow of the King of Egypt in recent years (at least his life was spared), and in the taking over of the Suez Canal from the Suez Canal Company. This forward march on the part of the backward races of mankind is in evidence in a number of countries in the world, and that which creates the greatest difficulty is the excesses to which some will go in the exercise of their newly found power.

It may be asked, What is the reason for the change of outlook on the part of the more backward and darker races of mankind in the last 25 years or more? What is it that seems to be stirring these people to strive for their rights, real and fancied, and which has altered the world situation so considerably?

There is one well-known, Scripture which explains the position to a considerable extent, and that is Daniel 12:4—"Seal up the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." We call to mind the quotation—"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing"— and increased knowledge in the hands of imperfect and selfish men can stir up sufficient strife to ultimately bring about revolutions.

This is what has happened in the country of Irak in recent weeks. Certain army leaders in that country have probably reasoned—What right has our young king to live in luxury, and order golden thrones at thousands of pounds, while many of our people are living in misery?—Our people who should be receiving a share of the wealth from our oil

fields. Not that these army leaders may share the wealth to all, but at least that may be their claim, and we must admit there is a great amount of justice in their claims.

Who can doubt that we are living in the days which Daniel described as “the time of the end,” when “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased”? The increase of knowledge on all subjects during this century can be described as miraculous, and all classes of mankind have shared in this knowledge, because we have reached the period in God’s Plan of the Ages designated by Daniel —”the time of the end”—in human history.

Coupled with the prophetic statement of Daniel 12:4 is the equally revealing words of verse 1 of this same chapter—”And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation.” The term “Michael” signifies—”who as God”—and Bible students are generally agreed that this refers to our Lord Jesus who is “the express image of the Father’s person,” and the representative of His authority and power.

In this connection, the Apostle Paul’s reference to our Lord’s return, in 1 Thes. 4:16, is most significant.—”For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.” A reliable commentator has this to say on this part of the verse—”With a shout”—as follows—”The Greek word here translated ‘shout’ signifies ‘a shout of encouragement.’ A shout implies a public message designed for the ears, not of a few, but of a mixed multitude. It is generally designed either to alarm and terrify or to assist and encourage. Or it may have the one effect upon one class, and the reverse effect upon another, according to circumstances and conditions.

“The aspect of affairs in the world for a number of years very strikingly corresponds with this symbol, in the outbursts of worldwide encouragement for all men to wake up to a sense of their rights and privileges as men, and to consider their mutual relationships, the principles upon which they are based and the ends which they should accomplish. Where on the face of the earth is the civilized nation that has not heard the shout, and is not influenced by it! The entire civilized world has, in the years just past, been studying political economy, civil rights and social liberties as never before in the annals of history; and men are encouraging each other, and being encouraged, as never before, to probe these subjects to the very foundation. The shout of encouragement started by the increase of knowledge among men has encircled the earth, and under its influence men are banding themselves together, encouraged and assisted by men of brain and genius, to contend and, strive for both real and fancied rights and liberties; and as their organizations increase and multiply, the shout grows louder and longer, and will by and by result as foretold, in the great time of trouble and tumult of angry nations. This result is graphically described by the Prophet Isaiah—The noise of a multitude in the mountains (kingdoms) like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together; the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of battle.’ (Isa. 13:4.)”

The following part of 1 Thes. 4:16 reads—”With the voice of the archangel.” The name “archangel” signifies chief messenger, and our Lord Himself is Jehovah’s Chief Messenger. The voice of the Archangel represents Christ’s authority and command. This symbol, then, represents Christ as taking control, issuing His commands, His official orders. This is the same thought given by Daniel where we saw that Michael, the great Prince, would in this “time of the end” “Stand up.” To stand up signifies to assume authority, to give commands. Note the use of the word “ariseth” in Isa. 2:19-21.—”When he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.”

Some people may reason—Why is it, that when the Lord, the great Prince, assumes command “in the time, of the end,” it is necessary “to shake terribly the earth”? They may ask, Isn’t our Lord the “Prince of Peace”? We answer,

Yes, and He will speak peace to all the world later; but first of all, mankind must learn the lesson of complete submission to the Lord, and their man-made institutions must be shaken down. These include the financial, political, social and religious institutions.

We find also from various Scriptures that the symbol of “clouds” is used to describe the world-wide encircling troubles in connection with our Lord’s second advent. Notable amongst these is Revelation 1:7—”Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see (discern) him.” All mankind will recognise that the Lord has taken charge of earth’s affairs mainly by His deliverance from the “clouds” of trouble, after the humiliating experiences have done their work. “And they also which pierced him.” Yes, those who brought about our Lord’s death at His first advent will acknowledge the Lord when they are raised from the dead—not by natural sight, but by discerning His kingdom blessing for their good. (See Zech. 12:10.). “And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” Instead of being converted when Christ is discerned in the “clouds”, first of all mankind will wail, but later will learn to love the righteous laws of the kingdom.

We read further in Psa. 97:2—”Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.” The Prophet Joel adds his testimony concerning world conditions at the time of Christ’s

return, as follows—”Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand. A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness . . . there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it.” (Joel 2:1,2.) From Zephaniah we also read—”The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord; the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness . . . Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath.” (See Zeph. 1:14-18.)

It is of interest to note also how the symbol of “clouds” was used by God following the Flood in Noah’s day, and how He encouraged Noah and his sons by the “bow; in the clouds.” (See Gen. 9:8-16.) Again, when God delivered Israel out of Egypt, He used a cloud in a very special way, as recorded in Exod. 14:19, 20—”It was a cloud and darkness to them (Egyptians), but it gave light by night to these (Israelites).”

While to Noah and his sons the “bow was in the clouds”, giving them hope for the future; and the cloud which was darkness to the Egyptians had a silver lining to the Israelites, so the dark clouds of this “time of the end” have also a wonderful silver lining to God’s people today, as our Lord indicated in Luke 21:25-28. —”Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity . . . Men’s hearts failing them for fear . . . Then shall they see ‘the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

We remember also that when our Lord ascended to heaven, after His resurrection, it is recorded—”And a cloud received him out of their- sight,”— out of the sight of the disciples. Then the disciples were informed by the “two men in white apparel” (angels), that the Lord “shall so come in like manner as ye have seen h,.m go into heaven.” (See Acts 1:9-11.) Quite often we have heard this Scripture used to imply that the Lord would return on a literal cloud in the sky, but that is not what the angels indicated. As we have seen, the cloud symbol portrays encircling troubles, through which our Lord will be revealed to all mankind. But to His own people these clouds have their silver lining, because they know of the glorious outcome to follow. From this standpoint the Lord’s people understand Jesus’ words in Matt. 24:30, 31,—”He shall send His angels 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 lengths and breadths of the ecclesiastical heavens. This is a wonderful “gathering” to be sure, during this harvest of the Gospel Age.

We have this harvest work clearly revealed as being conducted by our Lord Himself in Rev. 14:13-16.—”And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man.” We note a special point here—”behold a white cloud.” This does not indicate dark judgments upon the world; the “white cloud” is not discerned by the world of mankind, for it indicates the light of truth, the joys of the harvest message which the Chief Reaper has brought to His people throughout this “time of the end,” “the days of the Son of man,” the harvest of the Gospel Age. “The harvest is the end of the age.” —Matt. 13:39.

So, while we hear today various preachers predicting the near return of Christ, because of present world troubles, we find from the Scriptures that present world troubles are the direct outcome of our having reached “the time of the end,”—the days of the presence of the Son of man. God, in His wisdom,, withheld the increase of knowledge until these days of “the time of the end,” knowing that the natural outcome would mean “a time of trouble such as never was,” and the Lord is graciously using the world troubles to usher in the Kingdom of His dear Son, by first of all removing the world governments which would not fit into His new order of things.

Thus it is, that we find the kings of earth becoming fewer and fewer, and ultimately all will be overthrown, as well as all other forms of governments, to make way for the new kingdom of Christ. How vividly did the Psalmist predict the very conditions which we have in the world today in his 2nd Psalm.—”The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed. Let us (Jehovah and His anointed) break their bands (the combinations of those who have banded themselves together to preserve the present order of things) and cast away their cords from us (by which they endeavour to retain control of their kingdoms). He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh . . . Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion . . . Be wise now therefore, 0 ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth . . . Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

We see again, from the Apostle Paul, that while “the whole creation groaneth and trayaileth in pain,” yet “the earnest expectation of the creature (creation of mankind) waiteth for the manifestation (uncovering, revealment) of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:22, 19.) So, while first of all the Lord “cometh with clouds,” yet ultimately “all the families of the earth shall be blessed,” for the Lord will then be as “the Sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings.” (Mal. 4:2. See also Psa. 72:1-8, 17.)

"Clouds have silver linings"
Is a proverb old;
If we trust in Jesus,
Ours are lined with gold.

CLARIFICATION.

In last month's "Peoples Paper" in the "Correspondence", page 4, second column, 6th line from the top, the following appears—"as they do not acknowledge our Lord." In case there could be a misunderstanding, these words are to be taken as applying only in the sense of the Jewish Christian Group not appearing to acknowledge to the full our Lord's request to His servants—"This do in remembrance of me"—regarding the substitution by our Lord of the Memorial of His death instead of the former passover observance. No personal reflection was intended by the writer when on his visit to Israel, and this explanation is gladly presented, at his request.

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PEOPLES PAPER AND HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM. (Monthly) 5/- (60 cants) per annum, post paid.

The Lord's Guidance.

"I will guide thee with Mine eye."—Psa. 32:8.

THE eye is one of the most important organs of the body with which to give(expression to the feelings. Either anger or pleasure are usually expressed by this means. One thought which we may take from the text is that one may be so desirous of doing the divine will that he will be continually on the alert to please, just as a dutiful child, being on the alert to do the will of the parent, would look at the parent's eye, not waiting for the rod. So all of God's dear children of the Church should be looking unto Jesus for the expression of the Father's will concerning them. They look to Jesus as the Author of their faith and the One who shall be the Finisher of it. They look to Him as the great Counsellor and Guide of life. As we sometimes sing:

"Oh, let no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes!"

Another thought is that as the eye is the symbol of wisdom, so God guides all things in wisdom. He sees to it that His children receive the necessary counsel, the necessary aid. Since He is the All-Wise One, nothing can escape His attention. Still another thought is that as we recognise the Divine purpose, the Divine will, the Divine outworking of that will, we see that in the present time God is not trying to save the world, but only "the called," "the elect," who are obedient in sacrifice. All who are of the First-born should seek to follow the same course as God, to be coworkers with Him. They should have no will of their own, but do the Father's will.

One of the most important lessons for the spiritual Israelite to learn is to look to the Lord for leading in all of life's affairs—never to attempt any undertaking, either temporal or spiritual, without seeking to note the will of the Lord concerning it. We are marching toward the antitypical Canaan and know that other experiences are due us and must be undergone ere we can inherit the promises. The lesson for us is prompt and thorough obedience to the Lord's leadings without murmurings—with joyfulness; and this can be expected only on the part of those who have learned the lessons previously given them, and above all, the lesson of faith—confidence it the Lord's power and goodness and faithful-
ness.

The Unjust Steward.

(Luke 16:1-13.) “Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.”

WHILE the previous parables of this dinner- table talk were addressed specially to the Pharisees, this parable, and the one following it, concerning a rich man and a poor man (Dives and Lazarus), were addressed not so exclusively to the Pharisees, but, as the first verse of our lesson declares, to the disciples also, as well as to the Pharisees at the same table. The reason why the first three parables were addressed to the Pharisees only, and not to the disciples, is evident—the disciples needed no such instruction, having no prejudice against the poorer classes, recognizing themselves as amongst the “lost” who were glad to be found by the Good Shepherd.

The steward of this parable corresponds to the elder son of the preceding parable, and to the rich man of the succeeding parable; it applies specially to the scribes and Pharisees, -who, as our Lord declared on another occasion, “sat in Moses’ seat”—represented Moses, and the Law Covenant of which Moses was the mediator, and the blessing obtained through that covenant, of which Moses was the original steward, and they now the steward, as his representatives. In what did this steward, ship consist? The Apostle Paul asks this question, and answers it, saying, “What advantage then hath a Jew? Much every way; chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God,” the knowledge of God, with typical justification and at-one-ment with Him, and an interest in the promises made to the fathers.

The Jews, as represented in Moses and his successors, failed of the stewardship—failed to use in a manner satisfactory to God the favors committed to their care. Nor, indeed, were they wholly to blame for this, as the Apostle Paul points out; they were weak through the fall, incompetent to be administrators of so great a trust; and God knew this when He gave them the stewardship—He knew that they would fail to keep the law perfectly. He had fully intended that in due time He would depose them from the stewardship and give it to the one whom He had foreknown—to Messiah.

Now the time had come when this change of administration was about to be effected, and God was calling upon the representatives of Israel to give an account of their stewardship, and informing them that a new dispensation was about to be ushered in. Our Lord Jesus in this parable wished to point out to them what would be the wisest course for them to pursue under the circumstances. He shows them what an earthly steward would do under such circumstances, and tells them there is wisdom in such a course, saying, “The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children -of light ;” you, as God’s people, more favoured than any others with light on the divine character and plan, are not acting wisely as you would do if you were earthly stewards.

Here we are met with, the difficulty that the majority of people do not clearly comprehend — the scope of a steward’s privileges in olden times. We have no such office today amongst civilized people. A steward’s office was a confidential one; he had the liberty and full authority to do anything and everything that the owner himself could do with his goods. He could make presents, or cancel debts, or use in any manner he chose the goods under his care, and could not be held responsible as a culprit before the law, because the nature of his office as a steward was such that he fully represented and acted for his employer. The latter could discharge him from the stewardship as a penalty for unfaithfulness, but this would be his only punishment, because in making him steward he fully authorized him to use his judgment.

In the parable the unjust steward—unjust in his previous use of his master’s affairs; that is, unrighteous, unsatisfactory, imperfect —as soon as he realised the situation, made no attempt to defend himself, nor to claim that he had done perfectly; but before rendering up his accounts he dealt leniently with some of his lord’s creditors, remitting parts of their indebtedness. (This may have been a wise course, as, for instance, today bankruptcy laws similarly release debtors from obligations which they could not pay; and similarly creditors frequently, in their own interest, agree to accept sixty per cent, fifty per cent, forty per cent, or some other proportion of the original sum as for the whole of a debt, seeing that the debtor is unable to pay the account in full, and with a view to his encouragement to do the best he can. The Jewish Jubilee year of full release from all debts was along the same line of leniency and wise business policy represented in the “Bankruptcy Law” of today.) It is not because of this last conduct of the steward that he is called unjust (unrighteous) in the parable, but because of his previous stewardship, not having come up to the full, perfect demands of his master.

Now, applying the parable to all of the Jewish nation, especially to those who sat in Moses’ seat and had the control of matters, and who decided what was and what was not the proper interpretation of the law, our Lord intimated that if they were as wise as earthly stewards they would make use of their opportunities in a somewhat similar manner. Now how could they have done this—supposing that they recognised the fact that they had not fulfilled the requirements of God under the law and supposing also that they realised that the time had come for a change of dispensation, and that God was demanding an account of them and informing them that a new steward would take possession of matters—under such circumstances how should these in Moses’ seat have acted? We answer, that in harmony with the lesson of the parable, they should have said to themselves: We realise that we ourselves have not kept the law of God perfectly;

indeed that it is not within our power to do so. We realise that a change of dispensation is impending, and that we are called upon to make an accounting, and that we can only admit before God that we made a failure as respects the carrying out of the demands of His Law and the gaining of eternal life under it,—and as respects the use of the many advantages every way which God has given us. We have used our advantages in some respects well, but we failed on the whole to accomplish anything in the world, or to gain eternal life, either for ourselves or for any,—and we cannot dispute, therefore, that "By the deeds of the law no flesh should be justified in God's sight."

Since, therefore, it must soon be evidenced to all that our stewardship has resulted in failure and that we are dispossessed, the wise thing for us to do, is to turn about at once, and deal kindly and generously with these sinners (the prodigal son class) and, instead of denouncing them as sinners more than ourselves, we should say to them frankly, We cannot keep this perfect law of God, and we know also that you cannot do so, but now, instead of being hopelessly discouraged and cast down, do the best you can; we will remit part of the exaction of the law, admitting that you are unable to keep it perfectly, and will merely require of you that you keep it to the best of your ability—fifty per cent., or eighty per cent., according to your circumstances and conditions—according as you are able, keep the law.

Had the scribes and Pharisees taken this position they would have healed the breach as between themselves and the people, and their honesty in admitting that they themselves could not keep the law would have been a distinct advantage to them, subsequently, in connection with the new dispensation. And this very conduct of candid admission and of sympathy for others, and assistance in lifting their burdens would have brought them into such a. condition of heart that they would have been ready for the Gospel; and the lower classes, from which they had hitherto held aloof as sinners, would have had a kindly feeling toward them, and as a result they would have retained a measure of their sympathy,. at least, in the time of trouble which came upon them when their polity was overthrown.

But did the scribes and Pharisees follow any such course? By no means. On the other hand. they put on a brassy front, made broad their phylacteries, made still louder claims respecting their own perfection of heart and life, deceiving their own selves probably as much as^ or more than they deceived others. They boasted that they should ever continue to be stewards of the manifold grace of God; and, as our Lord declares, so far from lifting the burdens and condemnations of the law from the shoulders of the people, who were honest enough to confess inability to keep the perfect law, these scribes and Pharisees, on the contrary, bound upon the people heavy burdens. which they would not assist to lift with their little finger.—Matt. 23:1-4.

Thus doing they became more and more hypocritical and case-hardened, until, in His later descriptions of them, our Lord declared them to be whited sepulchres, outwardly fair and beautiful, inwardly full of corruption, dishonesty, hypocrisy; knowing themselves to be infractors of the law they were outwardly claiming and boasting perfection. This not being said to the Pharisees alone, but to the disciples "also," implies that they were to notice how the parable fitted and how unwisely this steward class was acting. Even at the table the Pharisees, perceiving to some extent at least the trend of the parable, "derided"—being covetous. But our Lord pressed the lesson home to them saying, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts." You are the unjust steward and soon all will witness your rejection. "The law and the prophets (of which you are the representatives) was (recognised of God) until John (the Baptist); since that time the kingdom of God is preached (the new, the Gospel dispensation), and every one (should) press toward it." (Verses 14-16.) You, leaders of the people, however, not only will not enter yourselves, but those desiring to enter, you hinder. (Matt. 23:13.) You should see that your institution is bound to Moses and the law as a wife to her husband— so long as it liveth. It is needful, therefore, that the law which you represent should die, that Israel may be liberated and thus be prepared to be united (married) to Messiah by a new covenant.—Verses 17,18; Rom. 7:1-4.

We are not informed that this parable had special application in the end of this Gospel Age, but since we know from other Scriptures that natural Israel and its harvest time were a pattern or illustration of spiritual Israel and this age and the present harvest time, therefore we are justified in looking for some parallel as between the condition of the unjust steward in our Lord's day and a similar class in this present time. And looking about us today for a class corresponding to those who sat in Moses' seat, we find a class today sitting in Christ's seat, as respects the Gospel church. This class is composed of elders, Sunday School teachers and superintendents, ministers, bishops, archbishops, etc. These as a whole are representing a great stewardship of divine favor as respects the Lord's people today. They perceive that a change of dispensation is upon us, that their creeds and traditions from the past are being called in question, and that they are being required to render up an account. They perceive that the account will not be a very flattering one, and that if the whole truth were known to the people as it is known to God, they would be found derelict, unfaithful to their stewardship in many respects. They fear the crisis; they put off the clay of reckoning as far as possible; they hush the murmurs of the people and the questions respecting creeds, and as the Lord said of the steward of His day, so it will be true of these: "That which is highly esteemed amongst men is an abomination in the sight of God."— Verse 15.

These representatives of the nominal church, who hold a position of stewardship as respects the masses of the Lord's

people, are disposed, as were the Pharisees, their prototypes, to put a bold face upon matters, to brave it out rather than to confess the truth. As for instance, in the matter of creeds that are being called in question: Many, even of those who were at first disposed to demand the revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith, have concluded that this would be showing the white feather, and admitting that they had been in error in the past, and imperfect in their interpretation of the divine Word, and hence calculated to discredit them with the people; and now the tide is rapidly turning and the same ones who were demanding a revision are now voting to the contrary, that the creed is good, thoroughly satisfactory to them, that they would not change it for anything. They are so anxious to be highly esteemed of men that they seem to forget altogether the one from whom they received their stewardship, and who is about to take it from them.

What would be the proper course for this steward class of the Gospel Age? We answer, that the proper course would be to do what our Lord recommended to the Jewish stewards; namely, they should candidly confess to the people the errors of the creeds and their own imperfection in attempted exposition of the divine Word, and their own failures in the past in respect of a proper use of the oracles of God and a proper application of the exceeding great and precious promises, and while acknowledging their own errors and shortcomings, they should modify the demands made of the people and bring them into conformity with their ability. For instance, they should say to the people, how much did we say that you owed to God, and what penalty did we say would be imposed upon you ? If we said that you were to receive a penalty of eternal torment, count that now as being an error, and write down instead, “A just recompense of reward.” If we taught you that your obligations to God are according to the Jewish Law, and as are represented in the Ten Commandments, and that unless these were kept perfectly in letter and in spirit you would have no hope of eternal life, alter and amend that feature of your faith, and write instead that God will accept the most imperfect works of those who have consecrated themselves to Him, providing those imperfect works are the best that they are able to offer; and providing they are offered in the name and merit of Him who loved us and who bought us with His own precious blood.

If the present stewards would follow such a course they would undoubtedly be respected through the future, but following their present course, the time is surely coming when they will be despised as hypocrites and blind guides, who mislead their confiding flocks into the ditch of skepticism and the great time of trouble.

This parable may be considered as ending with the 8th verse, the instructions which follow being separate and distinct, and along a somewhat different line, and addressed specially to those who accepted the Lord’s teachings, His disciples.

“Ye Cannot Serve God and Mammon”

This after-lesson is on the subject of the impossibility of having two masters, God and Mammon. Mammon represents earthly riches, not only financial wealth, but honor amongst men, etc.—the thing which was particularly hindering the Pharisees from taking the proper course and acknowledging their error and seeking for and obtaining mercy. Mammon still is a great hindrance to all who desire to be the Lord’s disciples. Whoever worships Mammon — and it may be self or wealth or fame or position and honor amongst men, one or all of these — whoever worships Mammon cannot at the same time be a true worshipper of God, a true follower of Christ, because God and Mammon are rivals before our hearts. If we attempt to divide our love ‘and attention, and to give part of it to God and to His service, and part of it to Mammon, the results will be unsatisfactory to God, unsatisfactory to Mammon and unsatisfactory to ourselves.

We must, therefore, decide either to live for self and earthly things, or to renounce and sacrifice these in the interest of God and of heavenly things. The worshippers of Mammon may have certain advantages as respects the present life, in the way of earthly prosperity, but Mammon cannot give eternal life. It is the gift of God, and those who would have God’s gift must be God’s friends, God’s children; and He demands of such that they shall manifest their love and devotion to Him by renouncing Mammon, by joyfully sacrificing earthly name and fame and favor and interest, thus showing their higher appreciation of His love and favor, the riches of His grace, and the exceeding great and precious things which He has promised to give them in the life to come.

These are to “make to themselves friends ;” in other words, to lay up treasures in heaven, by the sacrifice of the Mammon of unrighteousness ;—that is to say, the sacrifice of the various interests of this present time of un-righteousness, “this present evil world.”

Some may have very little of Mammon at their disposal to sacrifice; but the Lord encourages us all by saying that he that is faithful in that which is least, thereby gives evidence of how faithful he would be if he had much; and the Lord accepts the little sacrifices which we are able to make as though they were greater ones. “She hath done what she could” is the best of testimony as respects the use of present opportunities in the Lord’s service, whether it refer to a mite or a million, a little influence or a great one. It is not the amount that God is seeking, but the character, the dispositon of heart; and whoever has the right disposition of heart and is careful in the small affairs of life, to serve the

Lord with all that he possesses and-to the extent of his ability, such an one will have committed to him the true riches—the heavenly riches. Not merely may he expect to enter into the glories of the heavenly kingdom, but even in the present life he will begin to get a first-fruits of those riches in his own heart, in his own experiences; for it is unquestionably a fact that the heirs of glory, those who are in the right relationship with God and running faithfully in the race, not only will get the prize at the end of the race, but already get blessings which the world can neither give nor take away ;—the joys of the Lord, the peace of God which passeth all understanding ruling in their hearts; so that they can sing for joy, even in the house of their pilgrimage—even in the present unsatisfactory tabernacle condition, in which we groan also, being burdened with its weaknesses.

But if we are not faithful in the little things which confessedly are not our own, and merely given to us as a stewardship—the things, the opportunities, the talents, which are merely put within our grasp as stewards of the Lord, —if we are not faithful in using these with an eye single to the Lord's glory, how can we expect that He will ever give us true riches of grace, to be our own forever, either in the future or in the present life. •

The sum of this lesson to the disciples, then, is that as no man is able to serve two masters and satisfy both, and do justice to both, their interests conflicting, no more can we serve God and righteousness, and at the same time be pleasing and acceptable to the adversary and those who are in harmony with him who now rules in this present dispensation, the "prince of this world." All of the Lord's consecrated people, those who would lay up treasures in heaven and be rich toward God must be willing to become of no reputation, amongst those wile are not consecrated, and who, whatever their possessions, are really serving Mammon, selfishness, the present life, and not sacrificing these interests to the attainment of the heavenly kingdom. (From "Reprints")

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