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## **“The Desire of all Nations”**

*“The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:9)*

**A**ssuredly our text has never yet had fulfilment, but just as surely it shall be fulfilled, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; yea, more, hath declared that ultimately “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess” Messiah, to the glory of God the Father.

The Lord permits his people to have sunshine, cloud, and showers for their refreshment, for their development. Nevertheless, the showers of refreshing never seem to come with sufficient frequency, and we continually rejoice in the hope that “still there’s more to follow.” What a contrast, therefore, is suggested by the words of our text—a downpour of truth and grace which will produce a flood of righteousness and knowledge of the Lord worldwide and ocean-deep!

When will this be, and how will it come to pass, are the incredulous inquiries. It seems too good to be true that, after a reign of sin and death lasting for six thousand years, so wonderful a change is to be brought about! It seems too great a miracle to be expected that, after the struggle of Truth with Error, of Righteousness with Sin for long centuries, the time should ever come when Righteousness and the knowledge of God should obtain so complete a victory, so thorough a mastery of the world!

### **“THY KINGDOM COME”**

The Scriptures answer our query and explain the entire situation. They tell us that the world’s conversion comes not by might nor by power of man, but “by my spirit, saith the Lord.” The Bible tells us that during this Gospel Age God has poured out his holy spirit upon his servants and upon his handmaids and upon these alone; but they tell us also that with the end of this Age and the dawning of the new dispensation the Lord will pour out his spirit upon all flesh. “After those days, saith the Lord, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.”

But what will be the cause of this change in the Divine program, which the Almighty has foreknown from of old and foretold through the prophets?

Evidently it is not a change of the Divine purpose or intent, but merely a change in the Divine operation, for “known unto the Lord are all his works, from the foundation of the world.” A lesson we all need to learn is that as, in human operations, time and order are observed, so likewise these are elements in the Divine arrangement.

### **THE FORMATIVE STAGES**

In any construction a foundation is the first requisite, and the roof or capstone and the finishing touches mark the completion of the edifice. So in the Divine arrangement various ages mark various degrees of development in the Divine purpose and not until the finishing touches shall have been given will the glories of the architect and builder of creation’s wonderful temple be manifested. We are at present in the formative period. God has begun the great work which he prophesied of old. Messiah has come, has died for the sins of men, has risen from the dead and been highly exalted: the Church, spiritual Israel, gathered from natural Israel and from all the families of the earth, a “little flock”, has been in process of selection for well over nineteen centuries.

Soon it will be completed—the predestined number possessing the foreordained quality of character, “copies of God’s dear Son,” will have been found and tested and developed and polished and fitted and prepared for the glorious position to which they have been called as Messiah’s Bride and joint-heir in his Kingdom. Then the King and Queen of the Millennial Kingdom, being in readiness for their work, a great change in the Divine

program of earth will take place.

### **SATAN SHALL BE BOUND**

The Scriptures most distinctly teach that we are under the reign of the “Prince of this world,” Satan, and that our Lord at his Second Coming in power and great glory will bind or restrain this strong one and overthrow his empire, which is not of Divine authorization, but built upon human weakness, ignorance, and superstition. We are distinctly told that Satan shall be bound for that thousand years (the Millennium) that he may deceive the people no more until the thousand years shall be finished.

The question naturally arises, Why did God with all power at his command so long permit Satan to deceive humanity and through their superstitions and ignorance rule them as their Prince? Why was he ever given liberty or power at all over humanity? In the light of the Scriptures we may see that as God at times has used the wrath of man to praise him, so during this period of Satan’s liberty he has not been permitted to frustrate the Divine Plan or intention but, unconsciously, has served it. Without his blinding influence the Jewish rulers would not have crucified our Lord, as Peter distinctly shows, “I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers” (Acts 3:17).

Likewise had it not been for the delusions of Satan the Church would not have been persecuted; the way to glory and honor and immortality and joint-heirship with Christ would not have been made the “narrow way;” the saints, the “jewels” whom the Lord is now selecting, would not have been polished and fitted and prepared for the glorious places to which the Lord has called them. Surely, then, the Lord has used the great Adversary in the accomplishing of the Divine purposes. Satan may have supposed that he was frustrating God’s plans, but just as surely he was mistaken. The Divine Word is sure which declares, “My Word that goeth forth out of my mouth shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in that whereunto I sent it.”

### **“THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”**

Attempting to give us glimpses of the glory that is to come the Scriptures use various figures of speech, telling us, for instance, that the present is a dark night as compared to the future, which will be a morning of joy. They declare, “Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning”—the Millennial morning.

Following the same figure we read, “The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams.” From this standpoint the entire six thousand years of the reign of sin from the time of Adam’s disobedience in the Garden of Eden to the time of establishment of the reign of Christ has been a night time in which darkness has covered the earth and gross darkness the people” (Isa. 60:2). The night will give place to the glorious day of his presence, the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness.

The spirit of sleep and stupor came over the Church during the dark ages. The Lord permitted it to be so. We lost sight of the glorious things of the Restitution morning and the blessings then to come to the Church and to the world in general. These things were little preached and little believed, although most conspicuous in the Word of God. Instead we gave heed to the heathen theories and more or less mixed and combined them with the Scriptural teaching, much to our confusion.

We needed to turn back, to retrace our steps, to inquire for the old paths (Jer. 6:16), for the doctrines older than Wesley and Calvin, older than Roman Catholicism—the doctrines of Jesus and the apostles and prophets. From this standpoint, thank God, we can see light in his light and glorify his name and appreciate his Word as containing the very essence of wisdom, justice, love and power.

### **THE LIVING AND THE DEAD**

The proposition of the Scriptures of a Millennial Age of blessing, coming through the establishing of God’s Kingdom, for which we pray, “Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven,” strikes people in three different ways:

**First**—Some, ungenerously, will be disposed to resent the thought under the supposition that it would imply a more favourable opportunity for the world in general in the next Age to come into harmony with God than the Church of the present age enjoys. To these we answer that their argument is at fault because they fail to recognize the fact that the reward to be given to the overcomers of this Gospel Age, the Church, will be a much higher one than will go to the obedient of the world in the next Age.

The reward of the Church will be a spirit nature and a share in the heavenly Kingdom with the Lord Jesus. The reward of the earthly class of faithful ones will be Restitution to the perfection of human nature lost by Adam and redeemed by our Lord Jesus. Surely those who appreciate the “high calling” to the Divine nature and joint-heirship with the Lord in his Kingdom will see that it is well worth the additional sacrifices, self denials, etc., which it will cost.

**Second**—Another class, generous and appreciative, offer the criticism that it seems unfair on God’s part to give such a glorious Millennial opportunity to those who will be living at the time of the Second Advent and to deny it to the remainder of the race who lived previously. This also is a mistake, we answer. God’s proposition is that all of the world of mankind who do not enter into the trial of this present time—the judgment or trial of the Church, the spirit-begotten ones—will have an opportunity of entering into the judgment or trial of the world for the prize of Restitution and human perfection on the earthly plane.

This blessing, this privilege, will begin with the living nations at the time of the beginning of the establishment of the Lord’s Kingdom, but it will not end with them. The Scriptures declare, “All nations which thou hast made shall come and worship before thee.” And again, “In thy Seed **all** the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Some of those nations and families have perished from the earth, but the Divine provision of redemption and Restitution is meant for all eventually. The Scriptures assure us of an awakening of all the sleeping millions of earth’s population. “The hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth.” The Apostle tells us that they will come forth, “every man in his own order,” or class; thus intimating that from the Divine standpoint there are different classes of the dead.

Thus the Scriptures assure us that the first class, the blessed and holy ones, the saintly, will alone share in the First Resurrection, and that these shall be priests unto God and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4). The remainder of mankind will come from the tomb in order—not all at once.

They will not come forth to be condemned. They were “condemned already” as children of Adam because of his sin. It is on that account that they were “born in sin and shapen in iniquity.” It was from that sin and its sentence or condemnation that Christ died to set them free. They will come forth free from that condemnation in a judicial sense, but, nevertheless, with the weaknesses of the fall still upon them, and they will be required to cooperate with the Lord in their uplifting during that thousand years.

Note that the great King of Glory, with all power in heaven and earth, could not, if he chose, lift them at once from their degradation and all that was lost, because the gradual uplifting and their own cooperation in the Divine program, so arranged, will be the most helpful way—because the learning of righteousness by the process of climbing up out of conditions of imperfection will impress upon them its principles the more thoroughly.

**Third**—A third class, and they are not a few, discern at once that “true and righteous” are the Lord’s ways and arrangements—that those now on trial have more advantage every way in that to them was granted so high an honor and blessing and so great a stimulus to righteousness. They recognize also that the Lord’s arrangements for the world, the living and the dead, will be glorious to all, when all shall have been brought fully to an appreciation of the facts.

## **KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD**

To some it may appear strange that it is the knowledge of the Lord that is to fill the whole earth ocean deep—not the knowledge of mankind, not the knowledge of sin, not human philosophy—none of these are to fill the earth and to bring blessings to the world of mankind, but “the knowledge of the Lord.” Well did our dear Redeemer say, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Life eternal is not to be gained by a knowledge of astronomy or geology or mathematics or chemistry, etc., but by the knowledge of God. How is this? What is there so wonderful, so magnetic in the knowledge of God that it should be said that men might gain eternal life thereby? We answer that God himself is the very personification of those glorious elements of character which he demands we shall emulate, copy, seek after.

Thus our Lord Jesus said, “Be ye like unto your Father which is in heaven.” Not that we can ever be exactly like him in these respects, while we have our present imperfect bodies, but his is the pattern which we must copy as best we can now and be the exact copy of by and by.

The thought is that as we *copy* our Heavenly Father’s character each additional step of progress means a clearer knowledge of the Father, and only those who attain to the very perfection of love in their hearts will be able rightly, truly to know the Father or the Son. Hence to know him in the full, proper sense of the word would imply that we had attained his likeness in our hearts, and this would imply preparation for life eternal on the Divine terms.

From this standpoint our text implies that all mankind will ultimately be in that condition of the knowledge of God which will imply the perfection of their hearts, imply their acceptance to eternal life, imply that all unwilling to come to this glorious condition under the Divine opportunities will have been destroyed from amongst the people in the Second Death (Acts 3:23). How wonderful is the Divine arrangement! Blessed are our eyes, for they see and our ears that they hear and our hearts that they now respond!

*“For thus saith the Lord of hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.” Haggai 2:6,7.*

## **“Little in Thine Own Sight”**

**(Lessons from the life of King Saul)**

*“Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay and I will tell you what the Lord has said to me this night; and he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When you were little in your own sight, were you not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed you king of Israel?” (1 Samuel 15:16, 17)*

The history of Saul, the son of Kish, who was selected to be king over Israel, is one of the extremely sad stories of the Bible. He is introduced to us as a noble young man, choice and goodly and tall, a head above all his fellows. He was honourable, upright, and possessed of noble qualities, and was of humble disposition. When Samuel announced to him that the Lord had indicated that he should be the king of Israel, he seemed unable to believe it. He said, “Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin, wherefore then speakest thou to me?” Then when Samuel came to present Saul as king, Saul had hidden himself in modesty.

### **THE FIRST FALSE STEP**

How strange that such a character could so soon lose his virtue and become a despot and a gruesome murderer of innocent men! This was not all at once, however, for sin generally has its small beginnings. His first mistake was to presume to offer the sacrifice to God instead of waiting in trust and patience for the coming of Samuel to do so. For this he had his own excuse, “Because I saw that the people were scattered from me and that thou (Samuel) came not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered at Michmash, therefore, I said the Philistines will come down upon me and I have not made supplication to the Lord. I forced myself therefore and offered a burnt offering.”

What a change had already taken place; where was the modesty that would hide from being made king? Now he assumes an office for which he had no authority. How plausible seemed the excuse, the emergency called for it, further it was an offering unto the Lord. He no doubt persuaded himself that as king he could officiate and that he was doing the right thing. How easy it is to err, to take a wrong course if we trust to our own judgment - “a man’s ways seem right in his own eyes” - but it is better to trust in the Lord and wait upon Him. He will never fail those who trust in Him. He will “not slumber or sleep” but will guard His people, even though sometimes He sees it good to test their patience and faithfulness to principle and truth. “Wait on the Lord and keep His way.”

King Saul had evidently lost some of the beauty of his character, and had become a sorrowful example of such as go before the Lord instead of, as the Psalmist puts it, “My soul, wait thou only upon God for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, He is my defence, I shall not be greatly moved.” (Psalm 62:5,2)

### **FURTHER DISOBEDIENCE**

Then a little later and a more serious fault occurs, a further disobedience to clear definite instructions. Samuel giving the message said, “Now hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord....go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox, sheep, camel and ass.” Samuel seemed to know that it was necessary to emphasise, “Hearken thou to the voice of the message.” It was very plain and there could be no misunderstanding and no excuse. Nevertheless, Saul leaned again to his own understanding and spared King Agag, and the best of the sheep and oxen, etc.

He evidently persuaded himself that he had done better, perhaps more mercifully than the Lord had commanded. He met Samuel with the words, “Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” And Samuel said, “What meaneth then the bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen which I hear?” Saul had satisfied his own mind by the thought of sacrificing these animals to the Lord. Again, he erred concerning worship, as though something he could do would be pleasing to God and Samuel had to rebuke him in the name of the Lord.

*“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams!” (1 Samuel 15:22)*

### **GOD’S REQUIREMENTS**

Saul’s condition is a sad condition to get into, and yet probably many who ought to know the truth have, like

Saul, taken their own way, trusted to their own understanding instead of seeking to know the divine will and way. Such will, as Saul did, if they continue in that way, lose God's favour and lose the spirit of the truth. How serious is this lesson for us, His people - God can do without our aid; it is but a privilege. He may grant to us that we may serve Him, but anything that we do must be done rightly, must be done in His way and in His spirit.

Let us never think that we can improve on divine instructions; let us be careful of the Word of God as it stands, and not think to add to or take away from it. What God requires of us is simple, earnest faith, implicit obedience, and then such sacrifice as a grateful heart may offer. Surely it was a great privilege that God had granted Saul when he was "little in his own eyes" to make him king of Israel, and it is a greater privilege that He has granted us, to anoint us as kings and priests unto our God, joint-heirs with Christ in His kingdom. Let us keep small in our own sight!

### **SAUL'S DOWNFALL**

So the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him, and he went from bad to worse until all honour was lost, and he became a jealous murderer and enquired of evil spirits. His action in slaying Ahimelek and eighty priests, because Ahimelek had given David bread (although the priest did so under the impression that David was on the king's errand), showed that he had no sense of honour or justice, and to what degradation he had fallen. So it is with those who have known the truth, if they fall away after having tasted of the good things of the age to come, and having been partakers of the Holy Spirit.

Samuel's words give the reason for Saul's downfall. It was the same reason that brought about the fall of the great Adversary - he was no longer "Little in thine own sight" instead "pride was found in thee". In Satan we have exemplified the truth that "he that exalteth himself shall be abased", but in Christ, the contrast - "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

### **THE HUMBLE AND CONTRITE HEART**

Saul seemed so beautiful as a young man, and some have been inclined to sympathise with him in the penalty he incurred for his failures, and to wonder how it was that David did not receive similar punishment for his misdeeds. We may however rest assured that "the Judge of all the earth will do right." Saul's errors were different from those of David. David was ever loyal to the Lord in his heart; his sin was terrible, but it was not deliberate disobedience. He was deceived by the sinfulness of sin, his mind had evidently become befogged by his lust and he did not realise the awfulness of his crime. Later there was no attempt to justify himself, but a contrite heart sought forgiveness. So he was punished and restored to divine favour.

With Saul there was the high mind which presumed to know better than the divine commands and deliberate disobedience. These lost him the continuation of the crown for his family. Further, instead of a broken and contrite heart seeking pardon, he took on a terrible, jealous, murderous spirit, and sought to kill David whom he knew the Lord intended should be king after him. He stands as a terrible example of how it is possible for a noble character to fall, and to fall so low. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Knowing, as Saul did, that God had appointed David to succeed him as king, his action in seeking to slay David was deliberate rebellion against God, and an attempt to frustrate His purpose. How clearly Saul's course illustrates the course of Satan, and shows from what heights and to what depths one may fall who once loses the spirit of humble, loyal faithfulness to God. The way in which God dealt with David shows that He looks upon the heart, and, while the heart is true, He is ready to restore to His favour even though serious mistakes may have been made through misjudgment, or because of the frailty of human nature and present environments.

The important lesson for us all is to preserve the earnest desire to do God's will, to thus keep ourselves in God's love. The power to enable us to do so is our love for God. This will be preserved and strengthened by considering His love for us - "what great things He has done" - and what wonderful purposes He has revealed in His word, not only for the Church, but for all the willing and obedient in due time. When we consider His mighty works and His acts of wisdom, justice and love in dealing with Israel of old, we shall find our love for God is a reverential love. We recognise how little we are, how great He is, and our wonder is that He is mindful of us.

### **THE DIVINE CRITERIA**

If we thus keep ourselves in such an attitude of humble faithfulness to God, there will not be much danger of "thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think." One may have a little more intellect than another, one may occupy a little better social position, another may have had better advantages of home or education, etc., but what is the shade of difference in the Divine sight? Also, though we may be a little better in some respects, we may be some degrees worse in others. What is it, then, that the Lord requires of us; is it education, money, social influence, intellect or any such things? Is it clever people that our Lord is selecting

today? No, the answer is quite to the contrary.

*“Behold your invitation brethren that not many wise ones according to the flesh, not many strong ones, not many well-born, but God selected the foolish things of the world, that He may shame the wise, and God selected the weak things of the world, that He may shame the powerful, and the ignoble things of the world, and the things that are despised God selected, and things not existing that He may bring to nought the existing things, so no flesh may boast in His presence.” (1 Cor 1:26-28 Diaglott)*

The Lord uses the weak things that His strength may be the more apparent. When He would deliver Israel under Gideon, He chose only three hundred men and sent the thousands to their homes so that the nation might know that it was not by their own power that the Midianites were discomfited. The Lord will not use the proud to do His work. Moses, the meekest man on earth, was most wonderfully used to deliver Israel, to lead them for forty years and to mediate the Law Covenant. Saul was chosen to be king “when he was little in his own sight”; but was rejected when he lost that disposition.

Our lord’s invitation comes down to us - *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take me yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. 11;28,29)* The apostle, speaking of Jesus, says - *“Let this disposition be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though being in God’s form, yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God, but divested Himself taking a bondsman’s form, having been made in the likeness of men. And being in condition as a man, He humbled Himself becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God supremely exalted Him, and freely granted to Him that name which is above every name, in order that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Phil. 2:5-11 Diaglott)*

### **“SMALL IN OUR OWN EYES”**

If we wish to know the riches of Divine grace, we must learn to be humble, to keep little in our own sight. Selfishness and pride are twins, and they are at the root of all sin and wickedness and troubles, and how often these seeds of evil are seen, even among God’s people. We are all born in sin and inherit some taint of these abominable things, but we have received the mind of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit which can overcome the natural disposition. This is not done without a struggle; the flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. We could of ourselves not win the fight, but it is God who will give us strength to do so, and will also work in us to will and to do His good pleasure, even our sanctification.

What dangers we shall avoid, what errors we shall escape, if we keep “little in our own sight”. It will keep us from selfishly wanting our own ways. It will keep us from being self opinionated. It will help us to rely on God’s Word, and not trust to our own understanding. It will help us to tread the way appointed instead of wandering in search of “new light”, or something by way of a change. It will help us to give a patient hearing to the earnest expressions of others’ thoughts, even though feebly expressed. It will prevent us from being critical of others, from judging, from being censorious or interfering, trying to arrange others’ concerns. It will help us to put the best constructions on the actions of others and to be sympathetic with the weak.

It will help us to be more like the Master, ready to wash one another’s feet, willing to serve in any possible way, so long as it is the Lord’s way. How much, then, depends upon keeping “small in our own eyes”! It means success or failure in our Christian course. Only if we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God will we be exalted in due time, to reign with Christ. (P.P. 8/31)

### **“Unto You is Born....”**

*“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.*

*And so it was that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered and she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night, and, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.*

*And the angel said unto the, Fear not, for; behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger:*

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” Luke 24-14. ‘*

## **I Would Keep Little, Lord**

Oh, what am I that Thou should think  
To offer me a throne,  
So graciously to make me drink  
Of truth and love, Thine own.  
Oh, may I ever feel  
The favour Thou dost grant,  
In lifting me from miry clay  
And on the Rock to plant.  
Tis only if I still remain  
In my own eyes so small,  
That I Thy favour may retain  
And thus make sure my call.  
By grace I would keep little, Lord  
Faithful and meek and true,  
Ever love Thy will and work  
Do humbly what I do.

## **“Are Ye Able?”**

### **JESUS' FINAL HOURS**

Some little while prior to the hour of his death, Jesus left the scenes of his usual activities in Galilee, and took his disciples along into the region of Caesarea Philippi – a town in the Northern district of Palestine, near the foot of Mount Hermon. In the quietness of this countryside retreat, Jesus, for the first time, began to tell his followers of his approaching death (Matt. 16. 21. Mark 9. 31). During this period of retirement Jesus passed through his wonderful transfiguration experience in the Holy Mount, during which the chosen three disciples saw his glory and heard the other two participants in that glory scene talk with Jesus of the “*decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem*” (Luke 9. 31). Descending from the mountain to the other waiting disciples, Jesus charged the favoured witnesses to tell no man about what they had seen “*till the Son of Man be risen again from the dead*” (Matt. 17. 9).

From that time on, as Jesus returned to Galilee, and then left for the last time those cities wherein his mightiest works had been done to go up to Jerusalem, reference to his approaching death and resurrection fell much more frequently from his lips (Mark 9. 30-32). In spite, however, of these repeated assertions, though at times they questioned among themselves what they might portend, the disciples failed entirely to comprehend what He meant. These frequent references by Jesus, however, show us that the purpose for which He had come into the world was beginning to lie heavily upon his own heart and mind. The hour of his life’s mission was fast approaching, but, for all the sorrow it might entail, it was in no fearful mood that He set out to meet it (Luke 9. 51).

### **SHADOW OF THE CROSS**

A very graphic pen-picture is given by Mark (10. 32) of the bearing and reaction, both of Jesus and his followers, as they set out on the last stage of that fateful journey to the mighty events that were to befall during the next few eventful days. “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and *Jesus went before them....* and as they followed they were afraid”. Fear made them hesitant, so that they lagged behind their Master—But He, for whom these moments were so fraught with destiny, “set his face to go up” without hesitation to that ungrateful City which realised not that its own fateful hour also was fast approaching.

The shadow of the Cross lay over the life of the Man of Sorrows, from that moment of glory on Hermon’s slopes till He hung between heaven and earth outside the gate and gave, meantime, solemn depth to all his words and eager expectation to his consecrated thoughts. Evidently the disciples could feel the force of this deeper solemnity and eager expectation, for Mark says “they were amazed” as Jesus led them in the way.

### **COST OF DISCIPLESHIP**

While in this exalted mood, there came one—a rich young ruler—to ask Jesus by what means he could attain to eternal life. “Cross-bearing” and self-renunciation had been Jesus’ constant theme during all this southward journey from Hermon to Judea. Hence, when this young man, so apparently in earnest, asked so direct a

question, Jesus gave him no less direct an answer. “Sell all”— and “surrender all”, said Jesus, who was now on the threshold of giving his “all” in death, that others might live.

The young man turned sorrowfully away, unable to esteem “treasure in heaven” as riches preferable to his great wealth. Inwardly sighing as the young man went his way, Jesus said *“How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God”*—in other words, How difficult it is for anyone to make the best of both worlds!

Hearing this remark, Peter says, in effect, “Lord, how does this statement affect our position? We have not hesitated to leave all, and follow thee—What shall we have therefore, when the Kingdom, which we preach, is established?” To Peter and his brethren, Jesus then makes reply “No man who has left all—father, mother, wife, children, houses and lands—for my sake, shall lose by his sacrifice; he shall get a hundred-fold in return, and shall most certainly inherit eternal life! Moreover ye which have followed me, in that day of regeneration, when I, as the Son of Man, sit on the Throne of my Glory, shall also each sit upon his throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Then, they, who like the young ruler, have been “first” in this present order, if, entering at all, shall be “last” in the honours of my kingdom, and they that have been “last” (and least) shall then be “first”.

This word of assurance must have been encouraging and comforting to his little band of followers. Here was something they could readily grasp and understand. It was not enigmatic and baffling, like the references to his death and resurrection had been. And presumably they talked this matter over, both among themselves and also more privately. Most likely it was the topic of an earnest conversation beneath Zebedee’s roof, and as James and John told the story of Jesus and the ruler, a fond and doting mother resolved to ask for her sons a place and position they would scarcely have dared to ask for themselves.

### **ARE YE ABLE?**

Threading her way, one day, through the little group of disciples, accompanied by her two sons, and with some show of respect and deference, she desired the privilege of speaking with Jesus perhaps more privately. “What is your request?” asks Jesus. *“Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom.”* (Matt. 20. 21).

Taking the question as the agreed utterance of sons as well as mother, Jesus looks them straight in the face, and through that to the heart, and says, “You know not what you ask! You do not know or realise what is implied or involved in this request! You may have followed me about in Galilee, and in Judea; and you may have left your boats and employment for my sake, but following me means more than all this! As I have of recent days been telling you of my death, and that I have come not merely to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, but to die—to suffer at the hands of cruel men: I ask you now, are you prepared to follow me in all this? Are you able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of? Are you able to be baptised with the baptism that I have already been baptised with? Will you follow me through death and humiliation and rejection, and be cut off from your people and kindred?”

“We will follow you even there—we are able!” they replied, thus expressing a deep fidelity to him, and his mission in life. “You shall drink indeed of my Cup—you shall be baptised with my baptism, but even then, I cannot grant your request to sit one on either side of me—that is not my gift. It is my Father’s prerogative to give those positions to those for whom they have been prepared by him” replied Jesus.

“Will you follow me, not knowing what place or position you will get? Will you drink of my Cup, and leave all else to the Father? Can you step out, not minding what your reward will be, only that as you share my Cup of suffering you will also share my Cup of Joy?”

No more penetrating or illuminating words, prior to the moment of this conversation, had anywhere fallen from the lips of Jesus. Up in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi, some short time before, after Peter had made his memorable, God-given confession ‘Thou art the Christ’ Jesus had gone on to say “If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me” implying that every faithful follower should be accorded the privilege of ‘cross-bearing’, but never before had He linked his followers with himself in quite the same close, intimate way. “Are YOU able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of?” Can you drink, as I am about to drink, of a Cup which my Father shall pour?”

### **DRINKING OF THE CUP**

There is no mistaking the implication here. Jesus was reaching the crucial hour, and the accomplishment of the specific purpose for which He had come into this world. At a later time as the weight of tragedy and sorrow pressed more heavily on his sensitive heart, we hear him say, in the very shadows of Gethsemane... *“...the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?”* There is no mistaking what He meant in these decisive words (John 18. 11). Not Peter’s sword, nor resistance, nor flight was the way out for him in this hour of darkness. He had come into the world for this hour. He had lived his spotless life, He had faithfully

taught the Truth of God and raised the hostility of demons and men—and this was their hour and the power of darkness. But not from them did Jesus accept the issues of that dark hour.

*“The Cup which my Father has given me”—that was Jesus’ view. There were no secondary causes in his life, either in his ingress or egress from this world. And yet again, when the fuller extent of the shame and humiliation that awaited him was opening up before him, in the hour of his anguish, we hear the same truth, and the same whole-hearted submission to the over-ruling hand of a Fatherly providence. “O Father, if it be possible, let this Cup....pass....from me, nevertheless not as I will”. Here the bitter cup was at his lips—and He was drinking it to its dregs. This was “the cup that I shall drink”. Jesus had lived in the shadow of this hour more particularly from his transfiguration onward, and under its solemnising power he had come by stages to Jerusalem and Gethsemane.*

Knowing then, in his own mind, the ordeal which awaited him, when his hour should be fully come, we must not fail to note what his question to James and John implies. He had a Cup to drink, which was to be given him by his Father; and with the deepening sense of all this experience weighing heavier upon him, He asks, *“Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink?”* (B.S.M.)