The Spiritual Seed

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
—Galatians 3:28,29

PAUL IS WRITING TO THE true believers, to those who are Christ's, who have put on Christ by immersion into his death through consecration, and the begetting of the Holy Spirit. They have put on the spirit or disposition of the Master and desire to be more and more conformed to his likeness. The selection of the church is along the lines of severe testing: for God has determined as to the qualifications of character, that all who will constitute members of the seed must "be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. . . . Them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. 8:29,30) To reach this condition of glory requires that we be brought into full accord with the Father.

A SPECIAL CLASS

In the Abrahamic Covenant, as recorded in Genesis 12:3, God declared his purpose to have the seed of Abraham bring blessings to all of the earth. Part of this seed would be a special class that was foreknown from before the foundation of the world. "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Eph. 1:4) This also points to the strict qualifications necessary to be part of this class, which we shall elaborate on later in our lesson. So we see that, according to the original Divine plan, a multitudinous 'seed' was contemplated from the beginning—the fullness, power, and authority of which should always reside in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Redeemer.

The next step in the Divine arrangement has been the selection from among men of this special class, called the "church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23), of which Jesus is the Lord and "head." (Eph. 1:22,23) They are also called his "brethren" (Heb. 2:12), "a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." (I Pet. 2:9) Under him as the High Priest, or chief priest, they are sharers of glory, honor, and immortality. As joint-heirs in his kingdom they share in his inheritance in the Abrahamic Covenant as the seed to whom belongs the heavenly promise. They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4) The millennial reign of Messiah will be a time of blessing and for uplifting mankind. The time when the church will be reigning with Christ in his kingdom glory will be the time of the world's regeneration, the thousand

years in which Satan will be bound. It will be a time when knowledge shall fill the whole earth, and in which the earth shall be brought to a paradise condition.

OUR PREPARATION

The present mission of the church is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service, and to prepare to be priests and kings in the next age. Those who would be prepared to teach the world lessons of meekness, patience, brotherly kindness, long-suffering, and love must first develop these qualities of character in themselves. (Gal. 5:22,23) To develop these fruits of the Spirit requires much from the footstep followers of the Lord. The selection of the church is along the lines of severe testing, and these, who are "called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28), must be conformed to the image of his Son. Only then can they share in the glory which will follow. None will receive this high honor except the justified, and none will be justified except "by faith."—Rom. 5:1

The vast majority of the world has been blinded by the prince "of this world," and they cannot believe and serve the living God at this time. (II Cor. 4:4) This elect church, when completed, perfected, and glorified at the end of the narrow way (Matt. 7:14), will indeed be a little flock containing not many "wise men," "mighty," or "noble" after the flesh according to the estimate of the world. (I Cor. 1:26,28) For he "hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." (vs. 27) The reason for

this is given, "that no flesh should glory in his presence." (vs. 29) The true child of God desires then to do, as it says, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (vs. 31) "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"—James 2:5

The reward that is in store for these called, chosen, and faithful shall be as priests, kings, rulers, and instructors. We recall that in typical Israel the priestly office was kept distinctly separate from the kingly office. But in Christ, the two offices combine, as illustrated in the double office of Melchisedec. They are both a royal priesthood after the order of Melchisedec, and as kings they shall reign and judge the world in conjunction with their Lord. (Rev. 5:10) He is their head, and the church his body are the royal priests of the future. We must strive to be among the priests now, during the time of consecration and we must not fail. It is our desire to then, if faithful as priests, have the title of king added, and then rule with him and bless the nations. "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you." (I John 2:27) The oil began to reach the body on the Day of Pentecost, and flowed on down through the Gospel Age. When the elect number has been selected, and glorified with their head, Christ Jesus, this Gospel Age will end. Then will the Messianic Age begin, and the church will reign as associates and joint-heirs with Christ in his millennial kingdom.

NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK

Going back to the words from our text, 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor

free, there is neither male nor female.' What does the apostle mean? He states in Romans 10:12, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." We realize that there was misunderstanding amongst many who were Jews and who had now accepted Christ, and what they expected of others, especially Gentiles. As Romans 9:4 points out, the Jews were a people who had received the oracles of God, and had been given the Law Covenant. One of the main points of contention was circumcision, but Paul pointed out to them that literal circumcision was not a requirement of one who was pleasing to God. "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision." (Gal. 5:6) It was more of a benefit to have a circumcision of the heart, to have the Law written "in fleshy tables of the heart." (II Cor. 3:3) This is an important requirement to make all one as the body of Christ. It was a hard lesson for them to overcome and it really involved more.

The teaching is that God accepts all those who come to him through Christ without distinctions as to race, wealth, servitude, or honor amongst men, or distinctions of gender. All of these things have been used by the world to gain advantage over others but, in Christ, we are all one from God's standpoint. He treats all of us as one, and in turn he has blessings for each in the Divine arrangement. Consider the remainder of the apostle's statement, 'there is neither bond nor free' in Christ Jesus. The apostle says, "Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you." (I Cor. 7:21, *New International Version*) That is to say, do not consider that freedom

is necessary to your spiritual welfare. The Lord is able to bless you and to bring you off as an overcomer as though you were the master and wealthy. These qualities are not to be considered as making them inferior in God's sight. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."—Rom. 10:13

FREE TO ALL

It points out another important aspect of our lesson, that the Gospel is free. (Rom. 5:15; Col. 1:23) We are told that it will continue to be so in the future. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17) We realize that under the Law there were distinctions made between bond and free, male and female. No matter how much preference was shown to the Jew under the Law there is no difference under the Gospel, for all are appointed to preach. "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." (Isa. 61:1) This scripture is not pointing out only public preaching, but is looking at every effort that is made by the Christ in sending out a message of hope and encouragement. It involves a commission to each member to use their talents in service to the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren. "Let every man abide in the same calling [vocation] wherein he was called." (I Cor. 7:20) All service, in whatever capacity, is pleasing to the Father, and should be rendered unto the Lord with the single desire and effort to please him.

WITH ONE ACCORD

The importance of this is further illustrated by Paul when he tells us, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." (Acts 1:14) The apostle shows his high regard for women and this is seen in his mention of several faithful colaborers and helpers among them. They were ready to search the Scriptures, proving their readiness to begin their mission to show their living and growing faith. They met to join in public assembly to offer prayer for the benefit of all the body as a whole.

Prayer is absolutely necessary and indispensable to the Christian life as it compels us to further service. By our words and by our actions we can convey the good news of the kingdom, and its important features of restitution and resurrection. Those in the household of faith share the joy of running for the prize of the High Calling in Christ Jesus. These are the meek, those willing and able to hear, for they can see present Truth through the Holy Spirit of understanding. They are lovers of righteousness, not satisfied with the things of this world, and are teachable—workmen "that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15) "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." (Ps. 25:9) The message from the Lord at the present time is an invitation to rest. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. 11:28

A YOKE

There are two classes of laborers, the world laboring for things of the present life, and the followers

of the Lord who "labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." (John 6:27) There are also those who feel the yoke of the Law Covenant as believing Jews, or those who are heavy laden from the yoke of Satan as believing Gentiles. The Jews were under the yoke of the nation of Rome during Paul's time, but the yoke referred to here is a religious yoke, the yoke of the Law. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."—Rom. 3:20

Through God's grace he will give a special blessing of justification by faith to those whom he calls. This is to prepare them to take the yoke and become a colaborer with the Lord in the Father's service. In his service, there is no rest for the weary at heart except in their union with Christ. We have been promised that the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart—a sincere sorrow for sin. The people of God have a peace and rest of mind through a knowledge of his plan and character. It involves the full assurance that Jesus has 'paid it all' for both the Jew and the Gentile. The present rest of faith will one day be superseded by the actual rest of the kingdom. Then the body members will have been thoroughly prepared to enter into the heavenly rest as joint-heirs with Christ. Jesus invited as many as would, first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles, those who were in the proper attitude of heart to consecrate their time, influence, means, and opportunities in the Lord's service. It is an invitation, not a command, but it does involve obedience to the Divine will. He invites us to come, make a full consecration of ourselves to him, and take Christ's yoke

instead of the yoke of the Law Covenant or the yoke of Satan with which all previously had been bound. "Know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—John 8:32

We are made free from the errors of the past, free to love God, to believe his Word, to trust in and understand how Jesus tasted death for every man. He grants us freedom from the bondage of fear concerning the future. By daily submitting ourselves to Christ, we are more and more released from the bondage of sin. Our Lord invites us to be his partner, a true yokefellow together with him to learn the lessons that will help us to grow and develop in a way pleasing to the Father. We must be teachable as he was, for even in his perfection there were things to be learned. Because our Lord was meek and lowly in heart, he could ignore his own will, cease to do it and take upon him the yoke of his Father's will.

ONE BODY

Our Lord Jesus was, and still is, the great teacher of men by the appointment of the Heavenly Father, the great master teacher above all. We have bound ourselves unto the Lord by a covenant of sacrifice, even a sacrifice unto death. It is then our heart's desire to learn the good lessons that we may be prepared for future glory. Each of us should rejoice in the wonderful privilege of proclaiming the good tidings of what God has in store for those who truly love him and are called according to his purpose. We are all one in Christ Jesus. "He is our peace, who hath made both one [Jew and Gentile], and hath broken down the middle wall of partition

[enclosure]" which separated Jew and Gentile.—Eph. 2:14

For eighteen centuries, God's exclusive favor was to the Jew only. There were two classes of people, namely Israelites who were God's covenanted people, and all others who were not in covenant relationship with him. "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." (Eph. 2:15) The time had come when the message of Divine favor would go to the Gentiles, not as an individual believer but as the body of Christ. (Eph. 1:22) We know these as spiritual Israel, a new nation, and a people who were before not a people, but now having obtained peace. "[Jesus] came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."—Eph. 2:17

FELLOW CITIZENS

Jesus made it possible for us to no longer be strangers or foreigners but fellow citizens, having begotten us with the Holy Spirit. Now, being in Christ, we can eventually have our citizenship in heaven as the bride of Christ, as a complete body. "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." (II Cor. 6:1) Our vital union with our Lord as members of his body is explained here by Paul. We are invited to become coworkers with God in carrying out his plan. In so doing, we are counted with Christ Jesus as filling up the measure of the sufferings necessary to its accomplishment. It is the great transforming work, "Be not conformed to this world:

but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2) This is all possible by the grace of God through consecration and justification. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you."—Col. 1:24

This can be accomplished through self-sacrifice, self-denial, and cross-bearing. We know that if "we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:17) The great High Priest then accepts us as members of his body. He counts our sufferings, which includes the sacrifice of earthly interests and rights for righteousness sake, as part of his own sufferings. The true believer, being accepted of the Father, then has the opportunity to finish his share in the sacrifice of Christ through faithfulness to his covenant. We also are to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer some of the reproaches of Christ. If you have been baptized into Christ, put on Christ, you have become members of his body.

JOINT-HEIRS

We are then thought of as joint-heirs which brings us to the 29th verse of our lesson, 'and heirs according to the promise.' We are inheritors with Christ of this high honor which includes glory and immortality. We are not like our Lord, who was 'holy, harmless, undefiled,' and as a Jew a natural heir of the covenant blessings, but only by our union with him do we have a standing before our Father. "Know ye not that . . . ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price."—I Cor. 6:19,20

This was done in order to fulfill the promise made to Abraham, and according to the highest feature of that promise—the spiritual feature. As a whole, the glorious Christ, head and body, will be the promised seed of Abraham. "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, . . . might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 1:7) The literal seed of Abraham, Isaac, did not fulfill the promise but he did picture the Christ who is God's selection as the spiritual seed. Jesus is the Head, and the church are his members. Together, Jesus and his bride constitute the spiritual seed of Abraham. We are reminded how the Abrahamic Covenant applies to the church "as the stars of the heaven," and to the earthly seed as "the sand which is upon the sea shore." (Gen. 22:17) Two seeds are referred to, one developed under faith, the other under the Law and works. Both require obedience and a sincere love for the Father and his Son.

It will be necessary for the people of all nations to become as Israelites, children of Abraham and thus children of God. The faith class must first be completed and perfected in the first resurrection. They will be glorified in kingdom power before the Ancient Worthies can receive their blessing on the earthly plane, and before natural Israel can be gathered to them as the nucleus of the kingdom of God on earth. Ultimately all nations, and peoples, shall share in Israel's New Covenant blessings. "To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." (Rom. 2:10) The promise to bless all the families of the earth made in Genesis 22:17,18 will be fulfilled not only to Christ and the church but to Abraham personally,

and his natural seed who come in harmony with the Divine plan. The spiritual seed is developed during the Gospel Age according to grace and favor.

We also know that this spiritual seed was hidden until God's due time, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear [reverence] him; and he will shew them his covenant." (Ps. 25:14) Remember the words, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 13:11) To all outsiders, these things were spoken in parables and dark sayings, that "hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." (vs. 13) Truly blessed are your eyes if they can see this mystery, and blessed is your heart if you appreciate this privilege that only the consecrated can enjoy.

GEMS OF GOD

During this present time, we share in the sufferings of Christ by 'drinking' of his cup and being immersed into his sacrificial death. These more than overcomers—the 'church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven'—are to be God's jewels on the spirit plane, as the faithful Ancient Worthies of the past are to be the jewels on the earthly plane, marked for distinguished honor in connection with Messiah's kingdom. The lesson of a future reward is brought forward by the words: "They that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."—Mal. 3:16,17

The first of these jewels was our Lord Jesus, and the other jewels of different sizes are being cut and polished during this Gospel Age. These gems must first be called by God, but he appointed our Lord to be the master workman in their preparation. Being patterned after the Master, and walking in his footsteps, these jewels will be mounted. "Gather my saints together unto me" (Ps. 50:5)—my covenant-keeping sacrificers who endured—and as diamonds, when tried, were found to be firm in character. Through patient endurance they have developed the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit—the qualities of character necessary to be set in gold as the true Israel, the saints of God.

Only those who suffer with the Lord sacrificially as members of his body will be granted a share with him in glory as his joint-heirs, as members of the great prophet, priest, king, mediator, and judge of the world. The members of his body will soon be raised up, and become sharers in his resurrection following their Advocate who, when he ascended on high, appeared for the church, the household of faith, as their High Priest. He brings them to himself to become partakers in his glories. Having been faithful unto death they will be heirs to the heavenly inheritance, and will help to fulfill the petition of our Lord's prayer—"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. . . . Amen."—Matt. 6:10-13 ■

"Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."—Hebrews 13:14