Seeking High Office

"From Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."
—Revelation 1:5,6

THE GREAT HOPE OF THE fully consecrated child of God means a personal deliverance from sin and death. It also includes sharing with our Lord Jesus in the uplifting of the human family, who will be blessed during Christ's future kingdom over all the earth. We are inspired with the scriptural assurance that, because of our faith in the merit of our Lord's precious blood, we have been delivered from the present kingdom of darkness and death, and into the kingdom of God's dear Son. In the First Resurrection, the overcomers of this age of sacrifice are thus granted the wonderful promise spoken of by the Apostle Paul, when he wrote, "To them who by patient continuance in

well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life."—Rom. 2:7

THE FUTURE WORK

Among the terms used to describe the future office and work of the faithful saints, are 'kings' and 'priests.' The psalmist speaks of God as a "king," "The LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods." (Ps. 95:3) In accordance with this thought, the Apostle Paul states, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."—I Cor. 15:24-28

The Divine commission for the kingdom of Christ is recorded by the psalmist, "Yet have I set [anointed, *Marginal Translation*] my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Ps. 2:6-8) Here is presented to us the only one who has ever been appointed to rule the world as God's representative in such a high office, and the only king who can be said to reign by Divine

authority. During the present Gospel Age preliminary steps are in preparation for the establishment of that blessed kingdom of truth and righteousness and, as the Prophet Isaiah points out, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."—Isa. 9:7

ASSOCIATE RULERS

The Lord Jesus is to have associate rulers with him when his kingdom is established, and these are also now being chosen and tested from among the fallen human family. Jesus said to his disciples, when he was about to experience the final test of his earthly ministry, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:28-30) The revelator writes in much the same terms saying, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—Rev. 3:21

SPECIAL QUALITIES OF OFFICE

Among the special qualities that are necessary to be an associate ruler is being able to carry out the will of God equitably in respect to the uplifting process that will take place during the time of Christ's kingdom. In the Apostle Paul's letter to Timothy, he says, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified,

and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." (II Tim. 2:20,21) It is necessary that those who have been called for this position should have experiences that will prepare them for this important office. As associate rulers, they will have the privilege of sharing with our glorified Jesus in the great work of ruling, blessing, and bringing mankind up to perfection, those that are willing and obedient in that day.

In connection with this great work, Jesus, when he was in the upper room where he had instituted the memorial of his approaching death, instructed his disciples and pointed out to them that their association with one another was not to be used as an opportunity for one to dominate another. His words strongly indicate this, "He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."—Luke 22:25-27

During the final hours of our Lord's earthly ministry, he here brings to our attention two quite different attitudes which he says were common during his day, and which are also still common today. Both attitudes are improper among the Lord's people, and cannot be the disposition of those who are to share the Lord's throne in his future kingdom.

We note the first of these is the disposition to dominate other brethren. Among the Lord's people there would be a class of men who naturally desire

and are able to dominate and rule over others. There is also a much larger class who are willing to be dominated and who, as stated by the Lord in this passage, would call their rulers 'benefactors.' Jesus points out that both of these attitudes have no place in the relationship of brethren in the church, or to one another. He cautioned that it should not be so that a brother desire, or attempt, to dominate other brethren. Likewise, it should not be so that the brethren shall submit to such domination.

LEARNING SELF-CONTROL

Opportunity for exercising ourselves along the lines of learning to rule was spoken by Solomon who wrote, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." (Prov. 16:32) This may be accomplished by ruling one's own spirit or disposition in daily taking up his cross and following in our Lord's steps. This means complete consecration to the doing of the Heavenly Father's will, and in humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God. The humble and teachable follower of our dear Lord will find constant opportunity to exercise and develop true and proper ways to please and learn of him.

Paul gives testimony to this Divine arrangement saying, "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be

a castaway." (I Cor. 9:25-27) How searching is this admonition of the great apostle, that even though he himself had been so greatly blessed and used in the preaching of the Lord's message to others, yet unless he practiced self-control in his own consecrated walk and kept his body under, he would fail to find a place in the body of Christ.

Jesus again defines the proper attitude that we should develop toward one another. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matt. 23:11,12) What a wonderful company of kings and priests that will be gathered together with our glorified Lord Jesus to rule and bless mankind.

PROVISIONS FOR RULING

One of the most important features in connection with God's provision for the blessing of the fallen human race is the provision for a priesthood. In connection with this arrangement, we note the democratic features and organization of our own government, under which we presently live. In the United States, there are three divisions of government that have been established to rule the people of this great nation. The first division is the legislative branch, which enacts the laws. The second is the judicial branch that interprets these laws, and the third division is the executive branch that enforces or executes the laws.

These provisions for governing the people were established by very well-meaning men during the institution of the governing body. In a comparative sense, they have their corresponding features in

God's ultimate plan for the government of earth under the administration of our Lord Jesus and his faithful church during the time of his future kingdom. The laws have already been established under the hand of our loving Heavenly Father, and are to be carried out and enacted in the affairs of mankind under righteous rule. No new statutes will be required, which differs from the present system under which legislatures and councils are constantly enacting new laws and modifying old ones.

The judicial phase of government is suggested in the provision that God has made for judging the people in the kingdom. This function will be accomplished by our Lord Jesus and his body members as the Prophet Isaiah writes, "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." (Isa. 49:8) The Apostle Paul, in reference to the righteous provision of the future kingdom, compares it with the former conditions under the old Law Covenant through which no one could obtain life rights. He writes, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament [New Covenant]; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."—II Cor. 3:6

Under the arrangements of the ruling church, there will also be earthly representatives. These will consist of the faithful worthies of old who were tested during a previous age for their part in the righteous administration of God's laws to the human family. The psalmist speaks of these faithful men of God and says, "Instead of thy fathers

shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." (Ps. 45:16) Paul includes a brief account of many of these in his letter to the Hebrews. Concerning this faithful group he writes, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report."—Heb. 11:1,2

The executive branch of the world's new government will be represented in the arrangement for the kingly and priestly authority with which Jesus and the church will rule mankind. Some of these functions are addressed by the Apostle Paul. "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." (Heb. 5:1,2) These arrangements are for the blessing of the human creation, and are in connection with things pertaining to God. The benefit to man will be realized by instructing him in the knowledge of God, the ways of righteousness, and in bringing him into harmony with his laws and regulations.

COMPASSION TOWARD ALL

This great and much needed service for mankind could only be undertaken and effectively carried out by those that can appreciate and understand the weaknesses of those to whom they are to minister. They must exercise much patience and compassion upon all, and assist them in obtaining life. The testimony of the apostle in his letter to the Hebrews gives a true picture of the Lord Jesus and his church in his great office of *(Continued on page 35)*

(Continued from page 31) chief priest. He says, "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."—Heb. 2:17,18

The apostle stresses the spiritual calling and says, "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him." (Heb. 3:1,2) Paul further explains, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."—Heb. 4:15

ASSOCIATE PRIESTS

Jesus' followers are also called to be priests in Christ's kingdom, and as such they have a service to perform both in the present life and in the future. In the Divine arrangement for the priesthood, every priest must offer a sacrifice. Of Jesus, the apostle again wrote, "When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."—Heb. 10:5-7

Of his disciples who are also being called during this present Gospel Age to share in the wonderful privilege of assisting mankind in the ways of holiness in Christ's future kingdom, it is written, "You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house

for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."—I Pet. 2:5, *New American Standard Bible*

The present work of the Lord's followers is to suffer and die with him. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."—Rom. 6:3,4

The Lord's people respond to the present calling from our Heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul addresses this by writing, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) We thus accept the Father's invitation that is an essential feature concerning his preparation for the priesthood in the kingdom.

What a glorious arrangement has been made for us that we can offer an acceptable sacrifice by faith in Jesus Christ through the imputation of his righteousness to us. This is our justification, and we will have the necessary experiences that will prepare us to share with the Master in the future work of the great Royal Priesthood in glory.

The function of the priesthood is recorded in the Old Testament, and contains spiritual significance and instruction for the Lord's people of this Gospel Age. The priests were the judges in the court of appeal for the settlement of difficult matters between the children of Israel. We read for example, "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment,

between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then thou shalt arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment."—Deut. 17:8,9

The final decision was made by God's representatives—the priests—that stood to minister there before the Lord. This represents the greater work to be done during Christ's kingdom, when the final judgment of mankind will be in the hands of the Royal Priesthood.

Of utmost significance for those who have responded to the heavenly calling and hope to be with the Lord in the kingdom, is to take full advantage of the opportunities we are given for learning the lessons and exercising ourselves in the qualities which we must possess if we are to be among those who are faithful. Let us, by the grace of God, ever keep in mind the importance of exercising ourselves unto faithfulness. As we read, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained."—I Tim.4:6 ■

"Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."—Philippians 1:29