

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their consideration and appreciation of the boundless reaches of Gods Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all who request it. Address all correspondence to: Beauties of the Truth, 10034 S.W. 52nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97219. Editorial board: Brs. Jerry Leslie (Editor-in-Ch ef), David Doran, Carl Hagensick, Michael Nekora, David Rice, David Stein.

A House in a Waited City

“And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold,- within a fully or may he redeem it. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be established forever to him that bought it throughout his generations- it shall not go out in the j bile. But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the Jubile.” - Leviticus 25:29-31

The jubilee system was God's way of protecting inheritance rights in ancient Israel. The principle upon which it is based is that all property rights did not belong to the occupants of the land, but to God himself.

The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. - Leviticus 25:23

Just and equitable as the jubilee was, however, it was not a device for total economic equality. It related only to real estate and issues of servitude and not to a redivision of wealth. The exception to the jubilee law noted in our opening text illustrates this principle.

JUBILEE RELATES ONLY TO LAND

Although we consider houses in cities as real estate, they were exempted from the law of jubilee. There were several reasons for this exclusion:

1. Ancient Israel was an agricultural society. Few people lived in walled cities. Those who did were either laborers for others, traders, those who commuted to nearby fields, or retired persons. jubilee law related only to farmland, whether for crops or pasturage.
2. Property value in the city resided in the house, while in the country it rested in the land itself. Even today if we buy a farm we pay by the acre (for the land) with the buildings being considered only as improvements; while in the city we buy a house (the land being considered the appendage).
3. Property in the country related directly to the ability to earn a living. Income was directly realized from the utilization of the land. In the city the home was merely a place to live and seldom provided the means to an income.
4. When God set up jubilee law he gave the legal basis: “for the land is mine.” The land was God's. The improvements on the land could rightfully be considered those of the one who built them. God does not say your house is mine, but the land is mine.

What we see demonstrated, then, is that the jubilee law only related to property that was involved in the making of a living, and not in full economic equality.

ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION OF THIS PRINCIPLE

Another way this same principle is exemplified can be seen by looking at a typical case. Let us imagine two Jewish farmers, Levi and Joel, each seeking to obey jubilee law. Being a poor farmer, Levi eventually sells his land to Joel for the balance of the fifty years of the cycle. Joel, on the contrary, is a good farmer and makes a sizable profit from the land before the next jubilee comes due.

When the fiftieth year comes around Joel obediently returns the land to Levi. But he does not return a share of the profits. They are his to keep. So, as the new cycle begins, Levi has his land but is cash poor, while Levi has sufficient funds not only to improve his own property but to repurchase the property of Levi when he needs to sell again. The jubilee did not give equality, but only the equal footing, the equal opportunity to earn a living.

THE ANTITYPE

There are two basic lines of thought as to when the antitype of the jubilee applies -the ages to come and the Millennial age. Because the ages to come begin with the 50th millennium from the

beginning of the creative process (premised on 7000 year creative days), there is a natural tendency to apply the jubilee, the 50th year in the type, to this 50th thousand year period of earth's continuing history.

Others contend that the work of jubilee, restoring Israelites to their former possessions, uniquely fits the "Times of Restitution," the seventh thousand year period of the seventh creative day (1874-2874).

If we look at the condition of mankind in each of these two periods, the answer to our question becomes obvious.

When man enters the "ages to come," there will be true equality on the earth. The same is not true of the Millennium. The Kingdom is not a period of equality, but of the struggle for equality. All that man is promised in the times of restitution is an equal footing -life, with the opportunity to maintain that life forever.

SUMMARY

It thus seems evident that the jubilee picture does indeed represent the Millennial age, rather than the ages to come.

Man comes back from the grave in the same mental and moral condition he was in before he died. "*Where the tree falleth, there it shall be*" (Eccl. 11:3) is the Scriptural principle.

As the jubilee restored the original land upon which the Israelite earned his living, so restitution restores life as a basis to build to a new future.

As the houses in a walled city represented man's own accomplishments and were not returned in the jubilee, so in the kingdom man will have just entitlement to what he accomplishes with his life.

"And they shall build houses, and inhabit them: and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit: they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree art, the days of my people, a d mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." - Isaiah 65:21, 22.

As it was only the land that was returned to the owner in the type, with the purchaser retaining his profits from it, so man will only have life as an equal footing, with the profitability or unprofitableness of the use of the present life evident in the progress of the individual up the highway of holiness.

It becomes evident, then, that the exception to the jubilee law-the house that was in the walled city-is an important feature of the type to precisely illustrate just what will be restored to man in the antitype.

- *Carl Hagensick*

"Proclaim liberty throughout all the land." Leviticus 25:10

Cain and Abel

Cain was Eve's first child. "I have gotten a man from the Lord" said Eve reverently, according to the A.V. of Genesis 4: 1. God had already promised Eve that her seed would become the means of undoing the damage that had been done in Eden, that he would "bruise the serpent's head," which could only mean the overthrow of sin and the restoration of primitive sinlessness, and without any doubt at all she saw in the birth of this child the first step to the fulfillment of that promise.

Hopes must have run high, therefore, as the lad grew to manhood's estate, joined later on by his younger brother Abel, and, of course, sisters. With the elder devoting his energies to cultivation of the soil and the younger to the raising of sheep and goats the family must have been reasonably happy, waiting for the next move in the Divine purpose, and with no indication of the tragedy soon to come.



Cain and Abel offering their sacrifices.

There is very little guidance as to the time scale of these events. The genealogical tables in Genesis state that Seth, the third son, was born when his father was one hundred and thirty years old according to the Masoretic. Ignoring this for a moment, there is evidence from sources outside the Bible that the life span of early man was inordinately long compared with modern experience, and it is probable that both Cain and Abel were grown men, perhaps married - to their sisters - at the time of the tragedy. The one chronological fact which stands is that Seth was the third son and Abel was already dead when he was born.

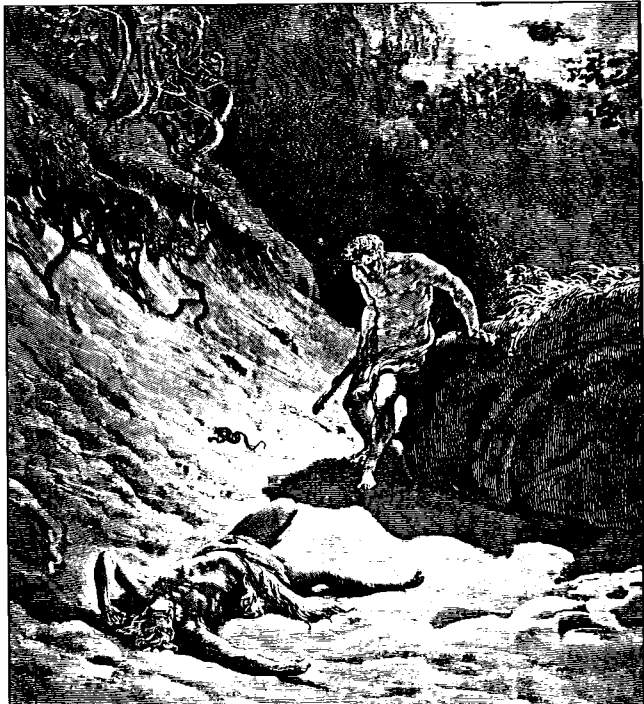
"In process of time" therefore - perhaps anything up to a century after the Fall - "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground a offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstfruits of his flocks and of the fat thereof And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering. But to Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell." (Genesis 4:3-5)

Dr. Young's translation says that Abel brought *"the female firstlings of his flock, even from their fat ones"* In other words, rightly surmising that God should have the first and the best of his flock, he chose the fattest and best of the firstborns as his contribution. Why he chose female instead of male, thousands of years before the Mosaic Law provided for female offerings, is a point of interest. For some reason Abel must have considered female the more appropriate, as, in some sense, better than the male. Perhaps, in the rudimentary state of knowledge of that first family, the female was considered the channel of life, life that came from God. That would explain Eve's crediting the coming of Cain to God rather than to her husband. It is significant that it was Eve and not Adam who named Seth, and perhaps the other sons too. But Cain did not bring the best of his produce. This is shown by the words used. The "firstfruits," in the sense of the earliest to ripen, is *bikkar*. The firstfruits in the sense of the best of the produce is *reshith*. Both these terms are used in the Old Testament to refer to the offerings of firstfruits in Israel. The term for fruit in general is *peri*,

and this is the word used in Genesis 4:3. Cain did not bring firstfruits as did Abel; he brought of the fruit of his labors, but it was not of the best or choicest or earliest, and that was why his offering was rejected. That was why *“Abel offered to God a ore excellent sacrifice than Cain.”* (Hebrews 11:4). The Almighty can only accept of our best, and Cain did not give of his best.

ANGER, THEN MURDER

So *“Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell”* and the Almighty spoke to him. *“If you do well”* He said *“will you not be accepted? And if you do not well”* – and here came the warning - *“sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it”* (Gen. 4:7 RSV). Here is the first intimation that man has a positive responsibility to strive against sin. The basic promise that sin would one day be undone because the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head did not authorize man to adopt a static and non-committal attitude, passively waiting for the Lord to execute his word. Sin was an active reality, waiting to ensnare men; it was imperative to give heed and not be entrapped. God apparently passed over Cain's failure to offer of his best, and stressed as of greater consequence his unjustified wrath which could so easily-and quickly did-lead to jealousy, violence and finally murder. The Lord exhorted Cain to take stock of his position and fight the dark thoughts that were crowding into his mind before it was too late. Cain did not heed the warning.



The death of Abel.

Tragedy followed swiftly. According to the Septuagint, Cain invited his brother into *“the field,”* the Hebrew word denoting cultivated or irrigated land as distinct from pasture or wild land. In other words, Abel was enticed away from the family home into Cain's own area of labor. There, in the field, Cain slew his brother. It may have been a premeditated act; it may have been a sudden uncontrollable upsurge of jealousy. In any case it is a sad commentary upon the ease with which human free will, undisciplined by loyalty and allegiance to the Divine way of life, can sink to actions so contrary to the basic instincts of man. These two must have grown up as boys together in the wonder of a world revealing ever new and increasingly exciting discoveries. The knowledge that death must one day come, because of the original sin, was with them, but in the vigor of their near-perfect manhood the event must have seemed almost inconceivably far away. It is not likely that Cain intended the death of his brother, but rather that in the intensity of his resentment he struck a blow

which proved fatal. But the sequel of his animosity proved the reality of the Lord's warning. Sin was already there, crouching at the door, waiting to obtain the mastery. He could overcome it if he would, but he must exert his will so to do. And Cain, like Eve his mother before him, failed to do so.

His immediate reaction was fear, a futile endeavor to avoid the consequence. In what manner the Lord spoke to Cain we know not, but the dialogue between the two must have been real in Cain's mind. *“Where is Abel thy brother?”* came the accusing question from Heaven. *“I know not”* the surly yet apprehensive

reply, "*Am I my brothers keeper.*" Then was pronounced the fearful condemnation before which Cain quailed and was broken. "*What has thou done? the voice of thy brothers blood crieth unto me from the ground ... when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield to thee her strength,- a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.*" The "ground" and the "earth" from which Cain was banished is *adamah*, the land of their habitation, but the "earth" in which Cain was to be a fugitive and vagabond is *erets*, meaning the earth as we use the term, the whole extent of the world, the earth as a planet. Cain was to be exiled from his home, his family, and his land and doomed to wander -"fugitive" is a wanderer fleeing as an enemy or from justice; "vagabond" a wanderer as having no home an exile in the earth.

"My punishment is greater than I can bear" cried Cain. He was to be cast out into the desolate earth with no means of subsistence, he was to be hidden from the presence of God; and he was to be in danger of death at the hands of his fellow men. "*Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth*" he cried "*and from thy face I shall be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth,- and it shall come to pass, that everyone that findeth me shall slay me.*" His dismay at being banished from the Divine presence is thought by some to be an indication of some residual reverence for God which led him to lament the separation; more likely, perhaps, it reflected a fear that banishment from God's presence implied withdrawal of Divine protection, leaving him with no shield against possible avengers. There is a fundamental principle here. Fear of the consequence of sin is no basis for acceptance with God. An upright life gains no credit in the books of Heaven if that uprightness is dictated only by fear of the alternative. Had Cain admitted the enormity of his crime, given evidence of sincere contrition, and placed himself in the hands of God for judgment, the outcome would have been different. But he did not, and he went out into the wilderness unrepentant and resentful.

FEAR OF VENGEANCE

The birth of Seth was the next event recorded as worthy of note following the death of Abel. Since the story must be considered against its own claimed background, it is logical to accept these long life spans as part of the picture presented. Cain and Abel, then, might well have already become the fathers of several sons and daughters so that the family springing from Adam and Eve already numbered grandchildren. There is however, no mandate in Genesis for thinking that other human beings, not derived from Adam, existed in other parts of the earth. The whole Bible stands or falls on the position that all humanity came from Adam. It becomes necessary then to examine the hypothetical "*every one*" that meeting Cain, might conceivably slay him. Cain's fear in vs. 14 is usually understood in English as that any individual man of all possible men might be the slayer. Verse 15 supports this by saying that the Lord set a mark upon Cain lest "*any*" finding him should slay him. But the Hebrew in both cases is the same, "*chol*," which in the grammatical case here used means "everyone" in the sense of a whole or a totality. Cain's fear, and the Lord's action, both presupposed the whole of the race of mankind then existing acting together as a unit, as a single body, in this matter of slaying. The narrative therefore implies, not that he might meet death at the hands of some stranger in a chance encounter, but that his own family, in the face of this crime that he had committed against them all, might consider it imperative to capture or seize or fall upon him-this is the meaning of *matsa*, rendered "find" in this context-and put him to death.

It is impossible to conjecture what was the reaction of Adam and his family to this terrible calamity which had befallen them, a circumstance for which no precedent existed, and it is not likely that any kind of Divine law had been given them to deal with such a contingency, but it is conceivable that they might reason that Cain, who had shown himself capable of destroying one life, might well do the same thing again, and must himself be destroyed to avoid the possibility. Hence God stepped in with his prohibition. The "mark," Hebrew *oth*, meaning a sign, set upon Cain, need not have been a physical disfigurement as is often popularly thought, but an indication of some kind to his fellows that he must not be interfered with, but left to go his way into exile.

TO THE LAND OF NOD

So Cain departed, taking his wife, “*and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.*” This is one of the geographical indications which date the first writing down of the story, for the Hebrew “Nod” is the Sumerian land of Nadu, on the eastern side of the Persian Gulf (modern Iran), as it was known twenty-five centuries before Christ. (Later on the land became known as Manda and this name survives to this day as that of the main river of the district.) The Sumerians believed that the primeval Eden was an area now covered by the waters of the Gulf, so that the whole story is geographically consistent. Cain went east, out of the valley, into the mountains where his descendants were afterwards the first men to work in metals - metals that are still mined in those same mountains.

There he disappears. His descendants to the eighth generation are recorded, and then, silence. The man who was the firstborn of the first family, peculiarly one who was God's own and might have become the first link in the line leading to the promised Seed through whom all families of the earth shall yet be blessed, the firstfruit of the procreative power God had implanted in those to whom He had entrusted the populating and the dominion and the enjoyment of the earth, so far failed to appreciate the goodness of God that when he came to make his acknowledgment he only brought God his second-best. Because of God's inevitable rejection of second-best he allowed resentment, jealousy, hatred, to take possession of his soul and drive him into the commission of sin - sin which was never repented of and the consequence of which, because it was never repented of, was alienation from God and loss of the honored future he could have had. The lesson of Cain's tragedy is that the placing of God first in the life, the giving of one's self unreservedly to him for his purposes, and the best of our abilities and talents and achievements to his service, is a sure defense against the “wiles of the devil.” Satan cannot gain entry where God already reigns. Sin is ever crouching at the door, ready to spring -but in the power of God we gain the mastery. And it is all really so very simple. Micah knew the secret. “*He hath shown thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*”

- Condensed from “*Bible Study Monthly*,” Sept./Oct. 1987

Sinful Flesh (Romans 8:3)

The possibility of any claiming that this text suggests Jesus had sinful flesh is easily offset by other texts (e.g. Hebrews 7:26). But the strongest argument is within the verse.

1. The reasoning at the beginning of the verse is (to paraphrase): “The law could not succeed because fallen flesh was not able to keep it.” How illogical, then, that God should send another one possessing sinful flesh! What ill would that cure?
2. Also, if Jesus came in sinful flesh, how, as the verse concludes, would sin in the flesh be condemned? Is this not tantamount to saying that God sent His son so that He could condemn him? So, the verse interprets itself: Jesus looked like man because he was man, but he came that way not to be sinful but to relieve sinful flesh in whose likeness he came.

- David Doran

The Great Company

In Revelation 7:9, the Apostle John sees “a great multitude which no man could number.” He is asked to identify the white-clad, palm-bearing (a symbol of victory) multitude, and, with characteristic humility, tacitly acknowledges his inability to proffer a response. He refers the reply back to the questioning “elder,” who obviously possesses superior insight into the matter. It is apparent to John that the query is intended to attract his attention to this particular group praising God amidst the host of heaven. What class is referred to?

The Scriptures teach that all who are drawn of God to Jesus are called to repentance and conversion, and are instilled with the one hope, if faithful, to be with Christ in glory and to reign in his future government over earth. In the final outcome, however, there will develop two classes who receive a heavenly inheritance. The first, the Little Flock, will obtain Kingdom honors. The second, the Great Company, will receive a lesser but spiritual reward, for God's grace cannot admit to heavenly perfection those who do not have robes of spotless righteousness in the eventide of the Gospel Age. The following are only a few of the many examples thus set forth in Holy Writ of the two classes.

1. Rebecca, a type of the true Church, was accompanied by those described as her damsels when she went to meet Isaac, a figure of Christ, who was in the field (the world) at the end of a long journey (the Gospel Age)-Genesis 24:61-67.

2. Both the wise and the foolish virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom. The former went in to the wedding, the door being shut; the latter had to go back to the marketplace of experience (the Time of Trouble) to secure more oil for their vessels-Matthew 25:1-13.

3. In addition to the King's (Jehovah's) daughter, the true Church and future Queen of the world, there are “the virgins her companions that follow her. ... *With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought* - they shall enter into the king's palace.” - Psalms 45:13-15.

4. Jesus and the glorified Church speak on behalf of their little sister who “hath no breasts,” that is, who lacks proper development and maturity according to the precepts of the Old and the New Testaments-Song of Solomon 8:8.

5. In the spiritual poem of the two sisters, one awakens and arises of her own volition and ventures into the night, diligently seeking her Lord. Shortly she finds him whom her soul loveth, and both enter her mother's house (the Sarah Covenant, *cf* Genesis 24:67) - Song of Solomon 3:1-4; 5:1. The other sister needs to be prodded to bestir herself and to follow the example of her sister, but-alas!- she finds that the Lord has already entered his garden - Song of Solomon 5:2-8; 6:1, 2.

6. Two surviving sons were in line to succeed to the office of high priest upon Aaron's death. The one, Eleazar, did obtain that office; the other, Ithamar (*land of palms*), did not - Lev. 10:12; Deut. 10:6.

7. There were two goats upon which lots were cast: the one lot was for the Lord, and the other lot was for the scapegoat (Azazel) - Leviticus 16:8. Whereas the Lord's goat was sacrificed upon the altar in the Court, the live goat was taken by the hand of a fit man to Azazel in the wilderness. The scapegoat corresponds to a class referred to by the Apostle Paul: "To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, *that the spirit may be saved* in the day of the Lord Jesus"-1 Cor. 5:5; 3:15.

8. "Two parts [the Little Flock and the Great Company] therein shall be cut off and die; but the third [part - Israel] shall be left therein"-Zech. 13:8.

9. Neither the priesthood nor the Levites had any inheritance in the land; in other words, in antitype both receive a spiritual inheritance. The Levites were given as a gift to Aaron and his sons, that is, to the priesthood Num. 8:19.

Jesus, as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, will furnish ("*feed*" Rev. 7:17) the Great Company with everlasting life on the same basis as the angels who proved faithful and *sinned not* in the days of Noah (Luke 20:35, 36), for the Great Company will be accounted a similar degree of worthiness to those angels. Consequently, they also will not die anymore, being at least equal to those holy angels; they too will be counted as the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

The Great Company will live on a spirit plane of being in harmony with their former aspirations. However, they will need to partake of nourishment and the spiritual water of life to sustain that life which they possess, for spirit beings (except those who are partakers of the *divine* nature) need spirit food as much as humans need natural sustenance. Having been followers of Jesus in their former state on earth, the Great Company will rejoice that the Master himself assumes personal responsibility for this provision and for their care. They proved to be overcomers, but not more than overcomers, and therefore, they receive not the abundant entrance into the Kingdom of heaven referred to by the Apostle (2 Peter 1:11).

Since the Great Company, in their prior life, did make a commitment to serve the living God with all their heart, it is indeed pleasing to note that the Father also loveth them. Magnanimous Grace condescends to offer words of comfort and additional deeds of kindness, consoling them for their effort to rectify mistakes and for their failure to achieve the higher reward -thus wiping away their tears of disappointment for not pleasing God supremely.

- FrankShallieu, "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*"

Prefactory

The following prefatory to the 1905 publication of Hymns of Millennial Dawn may be of historical interest to many of our readers.

We published in 1890, with several more recent editions, a volume entitled "*Poems and Hymns of Millennial Dawn*" without music. The same collection of hymns with the music is now urgently needed, and therefore appears in this volume. The poems, although highly prized, are omitted for greater convenience in size. We have preserved the same alphabetical order, because so many of our readers have the older book; and where a different tune is given from that originally suggested the latter is indicated by *Alt.* for alternative tune, with the number where that tune can be found.

Both words and music are credited to the same class to whom the work is dedicated—to the Lord and His faithful people, "the Saints." The authors of many of the best of them are unknown to us, and, besides, slight changes have been made in the phraseology and sentiment of quite a number, which we could not be sure their original authors would approve, and to give personal credit to less than one half would seem invidious. To all of these dear "Saints" of all ages we therefore give united and hearty thanks for the blessings which they, as the Lord's servants and handmaidens, have bestowed upon their fellow-members of "the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven." Most of them died long ago: their abundant reward will be of the Lord in the resurrection.

That the collection is thoroughly undenominational, unsectarian, will be manifest to those recognizing the fact that it includes the choicest old hymns and tunes used by all denominations. Although we have gathered far and near and winnowed carefully we cannot hope to have gotten all the golden grains, though we do hope that no chaff can be found. The collection is for the Church, for "believers" "reconciled," and hence contains none of the "sinners" hymns, such as "Come, ye sinners poor and needy," because willful sinners are in no sense members of the "Body" of Christ, nor are those who have not yet accepted the Lord as their Savior.

Those who will feel the deepest interest in this collection, and whose sentiments will be most fully voiced in its verses, will undoubtedly be those in fullest degree of sympathy with the divine plan of the ages, as set forth in the several volumes of *Millennial Dawn* - the eyes of whose understanding have been opened to the clearer, purer light now shining from our great Redeemer's cross, showing the fulness and the completeness of his salvation.

In fact, this volume, while not numbered as one of the volumes of the *Millennial Dawn* series, is designed to be a companion volume, a melodious *accompaniment* to the "new song," "the song of Moses and the Lamb" (the grand harmony of the Law and the Gospel), as presented in the regular *Dawn* series.

Let the music of God's good and great plan ring through your hearts and lives, dear fellow-pilgrims and fellow members of the "royal priesthood," so that every day and every hour shall be filled with joy and praise and thankfulness! And that this little volume may assist in deepening the work of grace in your hearts is our hope and prayer.

- Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, July, 1905, Allegheny, PA, USA

Getting Ready to Move

The house in which I have been living all my lifetime is getting very much out of order and repairs do not seem to last long, and a light wind causes it to tremble (Eccl. 12:3-7), so I am getting ready to move (2 Cor. 5:1-4).

The house to which I am moving is of such surpassing loveliness that no language can describe it (I Cor. 2:9, 10) and has every convenience and comfort anyone could ask or even think of (Eph. 3:20, 21).

My elder brother, my best friend (John 15:13, 14; Heb. 2:11; Prov. 18:24), formerly lived here in a house similar to mine (Heb. 2:17), but his Father promised him the grand home mentioned above on conditions of loyalty and obedience (Heb. 12:2), and he has offered to share it with me and others of his friends on the same conditions (I Pet. 1:13-15; 2 Pet. 1:3-11; 1 Pet. 2:21; 2 Pet. 3:11, 14). He has been nearly 2000 years preparing this home for his friends, his brethren (John 14:2, 3), a great mansion, and all who will live there are selected with great care (2 Cor. 7: 1; Rom. 8:28, 29; Luke 12:32; Rev. 14:1-5; Psa. 107:3, 7).

He has furnished me such abundant information about this home and the beauties of that country, that I am not only ready to move, but rejoicing that the day is so near when I shall see him, be like him and share his glory as his joint-heir (1 Pet. 1:3-8; 1 John 3:1-3). One of my friends has written me that he gave up everything here, that he might live in those mansions (Phil. 3:7-14; 2 Tim. 3:10-12; 4:6-8), and others have written me also (2 Pet. 1:13, 14; Jude 24; 2 John 8). I hear that many others, some living in fine houses with bright prospects, are also giving up everything here to live in that home (Matt. 10:37, 38; Psa. 45:10).

I am enjoying so much the samples of the fruits he has sent me from that country (Gal. 5:22, 23; Phil. 4:7, 8; Eph. 3:17-19; 5:19, 20) that I long to go where I will enjoy them in their fullness (Psa. 16:11) and meet those who have preceded me (Rev. 2:7, 10, 17; 3:5, 11, 12, 20, 21). And my brother wants to see me too (John 17:24) and assures me that his Father and my Father loves me even now (Psa. 103:13; John 16:27).

He has prepared a great banquet especially for this select company (Rev. 19:5-9), all of whom have made themselves ready (Matt. 25: 1 0; Rev. 19:7, 8) for this great event beside which all other hopes and ambitions are mere bubbles in comparison (Rev. 22:20).

I trust that you are also getting ready to move (Matt. 6:19-21).

The Throne of God

REVELATION 4:1-3

“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.' At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.” (Rev. 4:1-3, NIV).

PROLOGUE

In the first chapter of the book of Revelation, the Apostle John mentions that he was raptured in the Spirit on the island of Patmos. He saw our Lord Jesus Christ in a symbolic form, like a Son of man. John perceived the One who received the Revelation from God to show to his servants what must soon take place.

The Lord commanded John to write seven letters to the seven Churches, representing the whole Lord's Church in seven epochs. In those letters, we find a summarized history of the whole Church, various encouragements and reproaches together with promises to the overcomers. The letters are inserted in the second and the third chapters.

However, in the fourth chapter John also saw God Himself in a symbolic form, seated on a throne and holding in His right hand a scroll written within and on the back, closed and sealed with seven seals.

A DOOR WAS OPENED

The chapter begins with these words: “After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven.” The book of Revelation is symbolic, that is why it is not for us to understand those words literally, although John saw heaven opened literally.

We remember that the heavens also opened when our Lord Jesus Christ, after His baptism in Jordan, went up out of the water (Matthew 3:16). Then the Spirit of God descended like a dove to alight on Him. Jesus, being begotten of the holy Spirit, was thenceforth able to understand the deep things of God, the spiritual and heavenly things. Heaven opened to Him.

A similar event is recorded in the prophecy of Ezekiel. The prophet said: “The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.” Undoubtedly, the vision of Ezekiel is similar to the vision of John. It might even be said that these visions are connected and that we cannot explain one without the other. Ezekiel and John could see the glory of God, the throne of God, not a literal throne, but a symbolic one. We perceive that both visions refer, to some extent and in a second sense, to the time of our Lord's second presence.

Sometimes, what is said about our Heavenly Father also refers, secondarily, to our Lord Jesus. For example, the prophet Isaiah, speaking of God, declared: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:1-3). The Apostle John, in his gospel, applies this prophecy to our Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote: "They could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts ... Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him" (John 12:39-41).

In Psalm 97 we read: "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne" (Psalms 97:1, 2). These words refer first of all to our Heavenly Father, but they have also reference to our Lord Jesus secondarily, since 1878, because our Lord then began to reign in the name of His Father, as the representative of the Almighty.

It even happens that the throne is common to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, as we read: "The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city" (Revelation 22:3). But we do not understand that the Lamb would be equal to God. The position of the Lamb would only be at the right hand of God. It is written: "When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

In view of these facts, the word heaven in our text may have a larger meaning and represent the new heavens, in which righteousness dwells, the third heaven or age; this third age follows the Judaic age and the Gospel age (2 Peter 3:5, 7, 13; 2 Cor. 12:2).

When John saw the door opened in heaven, he was not in heaven, but on the earth, on the island called Patmos. The word Patmos means death. John represents here the last members of the Body of Christ, being still in the flesh and dying a sacrificial death. We remember what the Lord said about John: "If I want him to *remain* alive until I return, what is that to you?" (John 21:22). Not John, but those whom he represented, were to remain alive. The Apostle Paul has written: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... and the dead in Christ shall rise *first*: *then* we who are alive and *remain* ..." (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

The last members are caught up by the Spirit on the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10, NEB), in the time of the second presence of the Lord, in the beginning of the last day (John 6:40, 44), the seventh thousand years, when the Lord girds Himself and gives them spiritual food in due season (Luke 12:37; Matthew 24:45-47).

These members are caught up by the seasonable truths; they understand them by the holy Spirit. They see that a new age is beginning and the old age is finishing, that the day is dawning and that the night is disappearing, that light is increasing and darkness is decreasing, that the old heavens are being shaken and the new heavens are already at the door. The door of the new heavens is opened and they see the beginning of the blessings which will be the lot of all mankind.

A VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET

John heard a voice speaking to him like a trumpet. John heard the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he declared that he heard this voice before. He had heard the same voice when he saw our Lord like a Son of man. We read in Revelation 1:10,12,13: "On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpeter. I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man."

These words refer to the time of the Lord's second presence, when the John class is caught up by the Spirit on the Lord's Day, when they receive a clearer understanding of the Truth, at the beginning of the last day. The Lord's Day is to say the present day. Paul said: "For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2).

In this first chapter of Revelation, the Lord spoke to John like a trumpet, and the Lord speaks like a trumpet during his second presence: "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven ... with the trumpet call of God" (1 Thess. 4:16). The trumpet of God sounds in the Lord's day.

If the first Lord's speaking to John, like a trumpet, refers to the time of the second presence of the Lord, the second speaking of the Lord to John, also like a trumpet, recorded in the fourth chapter of Revelation, is connected in a sense with the time of the Parousia, with the present time.

The prophet Ezekiel does not mention the trumpet, but he makes mention of an event which applies to the time of the Lord's presence. We read in verse 4: "I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The centre of the fire looked like glowing metal." A windstorm came out of the north. Our Lord precisely left the sides of the north (Isaiah 14:13) where He was seated on the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 8:10; 10: 12); He "*himself* came down from heaven" (1 Thess. 4:16). The prophet saw an "immense cloud"; our Lord came with the clouds (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7). The expression "with flashing lightning" or "with a fire flashing continually" according to another version, reminds us of 2 Thessalonians 1:7 where Paul said that the Lord will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire. It is said that the cloud was surrounded by brilliant light, because a fire was in it. The coming of the Lord is accompanied by fire. We remember what the Psalmist said: "Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles" (Psalms 97:3, 4).

In the book of Exodus, however, in a similar statement which also relates to the second coming, the trumpet is mentioned. "On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him." (Exodus 19:6-19).

The descending of the Lord on mount Sinai in fire represents the descending of the Lord Jesus from heaven at his second coming, because fire, thunder, the sound of the trumpet, smoke, the voice of

God, lightning and the trembling of the mountain are symbolical and represent events of the present day in the world (Hebrews 12:18-27).

The sound of the trumpet heard on mount Sinai corresponds to the sound of the trumpet of God (1 Thess. 4:16), the last trumpet, at the sound of which the Church is raised up (1 Cor. 15:52). The last trumpet is of necessity the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15) and corresponds to the trumpet of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:9, 10). At the increasing sound of this symbolic trumpet of liberty and truth, the world is awakening and asserting its rights. All nations claim freedom and the abolishment of every form of slavery.

“COME UP HERE”

Our Lord, speaking to John like a trumpet, said to him: “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” John did not ascend to heaven, but he was caught up by the Spirit: 'At once I was in the Spirit.'” He came under the Spirit's power, according to some versions. God, who is rich in mercy and because of His great love for us, “made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions, raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-6). John, being begotten of the holy Spirit, to a spiritual nature, was seated in the heavenly places and reckoned spiritual (Gal. 6:1) as a new creature in Christ Jesus. In this case, however, he was raised up still higher in Spirit, in order that he might see what was to take place in the future.

Those who belong to the John class and who like him are begotten of the holy Spirit, and among whom we are counted, ought to raise themselves high in spirit, that is to say they ought to possess as much holy Spirit as possible to understand the deep things of God, the timely truths, and by the same token to be strong in the faith.

- *Antoine Papajak, France*