

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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Joseph's Silver Cup

The story of Joseph is one of the longest in the Old Testament (14 chapters from **Genesis 37** to 50). It is a soul-searching story mixed with villainy and great character. Both hatred and love drive the story while divine providence moves to fulfill God's purpose. In the end love wins out. The beautiful part of God's plan is that love triumphs in the end. There is also a happy ending for Jacob. He believed Joseph was dead only to find him alive in Egypt. When Jacob's life ends, in God's tender mercy, it is Joseph who closes his eyes. (**Genesis 46:4**) Jacob's body is carried back to the Promised Land and is buried in the cave of Machpelah with Abraham and Isaac. This confirmed his hope in God's promises.

Jacob's Love for Joseph

Joseph was the child of Jacob's beloved Rachel. He was younger than most of his brethren because Rachel had been barren for some time. When Rachel finally gave birth to Joseph, this tended to make him especially loved. And even more importantly, he was a delightful child. Consequently, they tended to spoil him. This may have been fine for Joseph, but it created jealousy among his brethren. However, it is important that we understand Joseph's close association with Jacob was the very means by which he came to learn and appreciate his heritage in the Abrahamic promise. In all the years he spent in Egypt, probably not a day passed that he didn't recall these treasured promises. Perhaps he may have felt that in becoming the Savior of Egypt the Abrahamic promises were beginning to have a fulfillment.

Jealousy is as Cruel as the Grave

Once jealousy starts to grow it can turn a normally good heart into an evil one. We all remember how Joseph's brethren hated him and finally plotted to kill him. Reuben, the oldest son, would not let his brothers kill Joseph. He suggested they throw Joseph into a pit hoping later to rescue him. Here we see how God turns the wrath of man into his own glory. God wanted Joseph in Egypt. He allowed the wrath of Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery. This was a mean and despicable thing to do. Brothers are supposed to stick together and help one another. That is one lesson we should keep in mind. If we ever find ourselves wishing to injure another brother or sister, we certainly have not passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. The highest injury we do when love fails under the test is to ourselves. We must love our brethren. It may not always run with the grain of our old nature, but without love we are nothing. Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver, which was the price of a slave under 30 years of age--Joseph was seventeen years old at

the time. Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver because he was a mature man. The lesson is the same, except that we have allowed for an age difference. We are not told how they divided the money. In that there were ten brothers, each would have received two pieces of silver if divided equally. Perhaps some refused the money when the pangs of guilt began to trouble them.

Joseph Did Not Allow His Environment to Shape His Character

Modern thought tends to expect individual performance to be governed by environment. It is explained that people behave badly or well because of their environment. No matter what environment we are in, we can live on the higher plane of our ideals and hopes. That is the lesson of Joseph. He did not become a criminal because he was in jail with criminals. Because his brothers were mean and spiteful did not make Joseph that way. He maintained his integrity when there was no reward for doing so, only punishment. Why? Because he lived on a higher plane and would not allow himself to descend to the plane where tooth and claw governed. He did not plan to get even with those who had mistreated him. He had plenty of cause to be bitter and vengeful. He had been badly treated by his brothers, by Potiphar and his wicked wife, and then by the butler who forgot to mention him to Pharaoh for two years.

The Genesis account tells us that God was with him and he prospered in all that he did. It might not seem God was with him when being carried bound to Egypt. It may not seem that God was with him when Potiphar's wife accused him falsely. It may not seem that God was with him in jail for two additional years. Yet God was with him and he prospered in jail. He was a man of impeccable character and amazing ability to organize and supervise in a fair and brilliant way. Yet there he was in jail, spending some of the best years of his life as a slave or criminal. How many of us would be able to overcome under such adverse conditions? It is human to want God to remove the mountain for us, but God wants us to climb the mountain while he grants strength to do so.

You know how Joseph was taken from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dream and then became ruler over Egypt. In **Genesis 41:44** we read: 'I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.' Pharaoh here pictures God. Joseph pictures Christ. What a marvelous relationship came to exist between Pharaoh and Joseph. Think of what awesome power was held by a man who was just about thirty years old, who had languished as a slave and prisoner for 13 years. Imagine how far reaching was the power given him, that no one could lift up his 'hand or foot' except by Joseph's consent. Of course this was exaggerated language, but it meant to one and all that Joseph was in complete power and authority.

The seven years of plenty picture the grace and bounty of God laid up in Christ during the Gospel Age--the time of grace. The seven years of famine represent the Mediatorial Kingdom where Christ will reign supreme. In that time no one will be able to stand in his own righteousness. The Mediator will shelter them from the exact demand of righteousness. Christ will sustain them. As the famine worsened, the people had to sell their possessions and themselves to be servants of Pharaoh. This pictures how all men will have to consecrate to God and will be totally consecrated to him when Christ delivers the Kingdom to the Father. Their only chance for survival will be accepting the terms that antitypical Joseph places upon them. The world will need to be provided for by their Mediator whose righteousness will shelter them from standing before Jehovah's throne until they attain their own human perfection. Without antitypical Joseph's provisions they would all perish--they could never attain perfection or their own righteousness.

We, by way of contrast, are able to consecrate our lives now. We gave up our possessions and our wills to God during the period of grace and hence our place will be with Joseph. Our task in the kingdom will be to make men poor to self-will and bring them under the will of God. In order to get Joseph's stores of food (which as they eat this food they will grow in righteousness), they shall have to unload themselves of their treasured resources and finally yield totally to God's sovereignty. (**Genesis 47:24,25**) Israel had to give one

tenth (a tithe) to the priests and Levites. Joseph made the Egyptians give one-fifth to Pharaoh--a double tithe in God's Kingdom.

I know none of this sounds very generous of Joseph, but these are the terms for everlasting life. The 'goats' will not like this arrangement. They will chafe a little under the Kingdom rule, and be eager to create better terms for themselves. What we must understand is that actually mankind will have four-fifths, which is abundantly more than they can ever use. If mankind would only devote one-fifth of their labors to the general good, how rich this world would be. Has God ever taken as much as a penny from earth? No! And he never will. However, God and Christ will count what is offered to benefit mankind as done unto them.

'Thou art even as Pharaoh'. (**Genesis 44:18**) These are Judah's words to Joseph. Yes, Christ exercises power and authority given by God. The Egyptians probably resented Joseph being in such power. I am sure they tried to by-pass his authority. However, Pharaoh would not let one Egyptian get out from under Joseph's authority--not one. Christ is our head now. We cannot expect the world to accept his headship then if we are not keeping the head now. Those who would aspire to be the bride of Christ must be eager to accept the headship of Christ now and forever. Those otherwise minded need not hope to be his bride.

The Struggle for Supreme Authority

Much of the pain and suffering in the world comes from selfish men and the Devil trying to have authority. Nimrod's tower of Babel was built as a quest for world dominance and authority. God had to intervene and end that project which was driven by ambition. Nations have been at war as long as we have had human history. The mighty nations preyed on the weaker nations, dominating them and enslaving them. We see a similar spirit even among the apostles before Pentecost. In **Mark 9:33,34** we read: 'What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.' They were ashamed to tell the truth of their discussion to the Master.

It should not surprise us to see that later in the Christian Church a rivalry occurred among the bishops. As the bishops multiplied, the question soon arose as to who would be the bishop of bishops. Emperor Justinian ended the struggle by declaring the bishop of Rome to be head of all the holy churches. From there the world sank into the Dark Ages ruled by priestcraft and kings bent on controlling the world and men's minds. Satan has been represented in that cruel and bloody rule. The authority being exercised in this world is fatally flawed by sin. Consequently some have come to the conclusion that all authority is to be resisted and deplored. This has given rise to excessive demand for human rights and privileges. In this quest for rights it often happens that all authority is resisted and people imagine that human sovereignty must be without limits.

We live in a time when restraints of authority are being resisted and refused. We must not allow the anarchistic spirit in the world to get into our blood. We must remember that God is looking for those who love and appreciate the headship of Christ. Christ is to be our head every day of our lives. Even in the resurrection we will be under Christ's headship unto all eternity.

The lesson of Joseph is that while he exercised total authority yet he kept himself fully under the authority of the Pharaoh, just as Christ always acknowledged the sovereignty of his Father. He had no uncontrolled ambitions. Unrestrained ambition destroyed Lucifer. It will also destroy any Christian not keeping the head.

Genesis 45:8 reads: 'So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.' This is a beautiful Scripture. Joseph had become the father of the nation--they lived only because of him. Christ will be the everlasting Father of the world. He will ultimately bring them to God. Did Joseph's fatherhood begin only in the

famine? Did it begin in the years of plenty? Did it begin while he was enslaved and imprisoned where he had to learn to follow God's leading in harsh and painful conditions? Before greatness is humility. As the Lord's people we need to have the true nurturing spirit even now. How thankful we should be that we can share the common sufferings of the world in these years of grace and favor. This will enable us to bring the world to consecration. The practical lesson we learn from Joseph is that he was tough-minded with the people. His dealings with the people were to bring them into total subjection to the Pharaoh. This is not the permissive love now being advocated. Remember **Romans 11:22**: 'Behold the goodness and severity of God.' The modern concept of God is that he is all kindness without any severity. The God we represent is both good and severe. Let us keep this lesson before us.

Joseph's Rough Treatment of His Brethren

Joseph first accused his brethren of being 'spies' when they appeared before him. They had come to buy grain and found themselves in a lot of trouble. In **Genesis 42:17-19**: 'He put them all together into ward [prison] three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day: This do and live; for I fear God. If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses.' Here we see how our Lord had placed his Hebrew brethren in Diaspora for three days (parts of three thousand-year days from Jesus' rejection of the nation until his second advent), and on the third (Millennial) day he lets them return to their homes to feed their families. This would cover the time from Christ's death until his return when he focuses on his brethren, again allowing them to return to their homeland with some provisions.

When Joseph released them from prison, they confessed their sin in the Hebrew language, not knowing he understood them perfectly. As Joseph listened to their remorse and guilt he had to turn away as recorded in **Genesis 42:24** because he could not hold back his tears. In our time I wonder how often many Jewish people have looked back on their painful history with sadness at what had happened to Jesus. I am sure there is remorse in many hearts, but they cannot openly confess this to Gentiles. It is only in the Hebrew tongue that this remorse is heard. Confession precedes true forgiveness. We believe that process has started covertly and will reach its fulfillment in **Zechariah 12:10**: 'And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.' This will be the moment when Joseph says to them: 'I am Joseph your brother.' What a happy reunion that was. In antitype it will be a great moment when Christ reveals himself to Israel and they fall into his open arms.

However, Joseph does not reveal his true identity to his brothers when he let them out of prison. He does something very harsh. He singles out Simeon in **Genesis 42:24** where we read he 'took Simeon and bound him before their eyes.' Why Simeon? Why should he be bound and cast into prison while the other brothers were allowed to return to their families? That was very painful and demeaning. Reuben is the only one who was innocent among the brethren. He declares his innocence in **Genesis 42:22**. Why didn't Joseph bind Judah who suggested they sell him into slavery? (**Genesis 37:27**) We are not absolutely sure, but we think it was Simeon who bound Joseph when they sold him and who was the least inclined to pity Joseph as he pleaded with them. Now, Simeon himself was to feel the pain of being bound. He was to see his brothers return home free and he was confined in prison and bound. He was going to drink some of his own medicine, and it was not pleasant. Perhaps also Simeon had not shown sufficient contrition of heart and Joseph used this stern treatment to help him come to a truly penitent heart. Please notice one thing here: Judah and his brothers make no plea on behalf of Simeon; no one offers to stand in for him.

In the antitype, we know who bound Jesus (typed by Joseph). It was the religious leaders who hated Jesus and sought on many occasions to kill him. Finally, with Judas' help they bound Jesus, delivering him to Pilate. Then they badgered Pilate into crucifying him. Five times Pilate said 'I find no fault in him.' Yet the religious leaders not only succeeded in binding Jesus, but also ridding themselves of him at least until he was resurrected.

Who might Simeon represent in our time, when the brothers of Joseph (Jesus) stand before him after being let out of the prison of Diaspora? In thinking about this it seems there is a class of Jews in our time who need some additional hard experiences. All the Hebrews standing before Joseph had rejected him. Simeon was put upon to receive additional harsh treatment. (**Genesis 42:24**) Who could he represent in our time? It seems that Jews who join the nominal church, the false representation of Christ's Kingdom, are going to have extra trouble. They are going to be bound in Egypt or in Babylon. Now, I am not speaking of the Messianic Jews who accept Jesus as the Messiah but who do not want to affiliate with the churches and their historic cruelty to the Jews. They just want to believe in the Messiah apart from Christendom and apart from the Trinity concept. We think Simeon might represent Jews who accept the Trinity Christ, the burning hell-fire Christ, and the desire to make common cause with the false Christian churches, mostly in the evangelical churches.

The Jews who have become a part of Babylon will find themselves in extra hardship when it collapses. They will be bound in that system incurring God's judgment. They may indeed picture Simeon in our time. Yes, the Simeon class is bound in Christendom while his brothers are back in their homeland feeding their families and Jacob. The nine brothers are sent home with the proviso that they bring Benjamin back with them.



Joseph Blessing His Brethren

The Second Meeting

The next meeting with Joseph occurs when they stand before him with their brother Benjamin, Joseph's full brother. The requirement that they bring Benjamin was most difficult to fulfill. (**Genesis 42:16,19**) You know how it broke Jacob's heart to have to send Benjamin to Egypt, but the famine left him no choice. Benjamin pictures the Great Company just as Joseph pictures Christ. Joseph singled out five brethren to represent ten of his brethren. (**Genesis 47:2**) We read: 'And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and

presented them unto Pharaoh.' This confirms the rich man and Lazarus story where five brethren depicted ten tribes. (**Luke 16:19-31**)

This second meeting of Joseph's brethren with him takes place in antitype when the antitypical Benjamin, the Great Company, comes before Christ (Joseph) in conjunction with the nation of Israel. It is interesting to notice that Benjamin, while he represents the five foolish virgins, did not reject his brother Joseph. He was innocent of the crime of his brothers. Benjamin loves his brother Joseph, just as the Great Company loves Christ and they also build on that Rock. The five portions Benjamin received in Joseph's festive hall pictured a mark of special favor. (**Genesis 43:34**) Notice how Joseph when he laid eyes on Benjamin said, 'God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother'. (**Genesis 43:29,30**) Here we see Christ yearns for his brother, the Great Company. However, he is not ready to reveal himself to them.

Joseph's Silver Cup

The plot thickens here. Joseph fills his brothers' bags with money but lo and behold, he puts his silver cup (probably the word of truth concerning natural Israel and the Promised Land) in Benjamin's bag. This is devastating to everyone. They are all arrested and it now looks as though they must return without Benjamin. Judah, the very one who suggested they sell Joseph into slavery now puts his own life on the line. Joseph insists that the one who possessed his cup would be his servant. We know the Great Company will serve before the throne 'day and night in his temple.' In **Genesis 44:18,33,34** we read: 'Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee speak a word in my lord's ears, let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh.... Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.' This was the moment Joseph waited for. Judah confesses his sins to Joseph in **Genesis 44:16**. His willingness to take Benjamin's place as a servant overcomes Joseph. Remember that it was Judah who originally suggested they sell Joseph into slavery, but now he has matured into a beautiful person. He cares about his father Jacob and his brother Benjamin. It took great character to offer himself in slavery in Benjamin's stead. Remember that no one offered to stand in for Simeon. Of course, Judah does not have to go into slavery. His beautiful heart condition at last frees him.

This is rather exciting. In **Revelation 16**, 'seven angels' pour out 'seven golden bowls'--these all come from the temple 'filled with God's glory.' The 'seven angels' are then given 'golden bowls' of divine judgments. These fill up the wrath of God. Benjamin is not included in the work of these 'seven angels' who come from the temple--the true Church of God. Gold is associated with the divine. Notice that Benjamin, picturing the Great Company, is given Joseph's silver cup. Hence silver is identified with the Great Company. In **Revelation 16:15** we have our Lord's message to the Great Company: 'Behold, I come as a thief, Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.' This is a message to the Great Company to keep on their robe of righteousness when everything around them is collapsing. Now we see Joseph planted his silver cup in Benjamin's bag just as Christ does with the Great Company. It created a great time of trouble and perplexity for Benjamin. He seemed doomed because he had Joseph's silver cup. The Great Company also will be in great trouble because of the 'silver cup' truths planted in their 'bag.'

Just as the silver cup is hidden in Benjamin's bag, so Christ will plant his silver truths on the Great Company, and they will be in possession of some important truth, which normally belonged only to Joseph--Christ. What might this be? I think the truth the Great Company will have is the truth pertaining to natural Israel. Hence the Great Company will know that any attempt to destroy Israel will be doomed. When Gog and Magog come down against Israel, the churches will bless this doomed invasion. However, the Great

Company, will know this mission is doomed to failure. They will speak out against this and bring down wrath upon themselves.

Where does Judah come in? The faithful ones in natural Israel picture Judah, who at some point, may speak out and try to shield the Benjamin class, the Great Company, from harm as the nominal systems turn against them. This will be the great turning point, when the antitypical Joseph sees the remorse in Judah's heart and he can no longer hide himself from his natural brethren. We read in **Genesis 45:1,2**: 'Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.' He then says to them, 'I am Joseph your brother.' Joseph tries to hide his yearning for his brethren from the Egyptians, the world, but soon all realize that Christ has revealed himself to his natural brethren. Isn't that beautiful?

When Gog's invasion collapses, the Great Company will leave this earth in great tribulation. Then we read in **Ezekiel 38:23**: 'Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.' Thus Joseph's [Christ's] love for his natural people will come to be known to the entire world. Notice that it is not until Judah [natural Israel] tries to shield Benjamin [the Great Company in some unique way], that Joseph [the antitypical Christ] will reveal himself to his brethren.

Christ prepares his natural brothers in the flesh, Israel, over a long period of time to receive him. However, our lesson indicates that at the end he reveals himself very suddenly and spontaneously to his natural brethren. Joseph seems to have singled out Benjamin for special trial in possessing his silver cup of truth concerning natural Israel. He also seems to give his brethren both blessings and grief up until the time that Judah offers to take Benjamin's place. (Remember, Benjamin is Joseph's full brother, a part of the Church of the firstborn.) This story seems to warrant expecting antitypical Judah to make some noble effort to modify the sufferings of the Great Company.

I mention this to open another window to prophecy that lies immediately before us. There is little doubt that the story of Joseph is a type in many ways. Perhaps the typical story was given to help us understand the relationship between the Great Company, Christ, Judah, Gog's invasion and Armageddon. What better way could 'Judah' show its true remorse and beautiful heart condition but to act in a noble way to shield Christ's brethren, the Great Company. This action will not save the Great Company. Remember Joseph said 'the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant'. (**Genesis 44:17**) The Great Company will serve God in his temple before the throne. It is Judah's plea that causes Christ to open his heart to his natural brethren.

No Sowing or Planting for Seven Years

It is important to know that one of the reasons they survived the seven years of famine is that they did not sow or plant for seven years. If they had done so, they would not have survived. I am certain that panic gripped the hearts of the Egyptians as the famine deepened. It would be natural for them to want to plant grain hoping for a harvest. Only by being subject to Joseph could they survive. In **Genesis 45:6** we read: 'For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing [plowing, RSV] nor harvest.' Then when they do plant at the end of the seven years of draught, we read in **Genesis 47:23**: 'Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.' That is when they must give a fifth of their harvest to Pharaoh, to God, or really for the common good.

One last comment comes from Paul in **Hebrews 11:22**: 'By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.' This was a significant gesture on Joseph's part. He could easily have had a great monumental burial in Egypt. His name was great

and the nation owed him their lives. However, Joseph had never forgotten the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Under no condition was he going to rest in Egypt.

The story of Joseph proves that people who once turned mean and ugly can be turned around into beautiful caring people. What a man is should not interfere with what he might be once he chooses to repent and reform. The poet has said: 'The saddest words of tongue or pen, are the words it might have been.' What people are, and what they might be, may be two different things. Everything depends on making the right choices and the right decisions. People who make the wrong choices and the wrong decisions will look back with broken hearts at what might have been had they done differently. We do not want to be 'what might have been' Christians.

Getting Back to Benjamin

We are actually more concerned with Benjamin than with Simeon. After all, Benjamin is our brother in Christ. Why would antitypical Joseph plant his silver cup in Benjamin's bag to bring such distress upon him and all the natural Israelites? Remember when Joseph saw his brother Benjamin, his soul yearned for him and he had to leave the room to seek a place to weep. (**Genesis 43:30**) He thereafter gave five portions to Benjamin his brother! He seemed extravagantly pleased with Benjamin. Then he places his silver cup in Benjamin's bag, making him look like a thief. None of this seems to add up. Benjamin was not really in danger of literally being a slave to Joseph, was he? Joseph surely would not allow any harm to come to his brother whom he loved. Joseph knew that his brothers had brought Benjamin to them under great restraint from his father Jacob. Certainly Joseph was not going to do anything to give his father further pain. This silver cup was planted on Benjamin to test his brothers. What would they do if it looked like harm were to befall Benjamin?



Jesus, the Forgiving One

To Joseph's great pleasure Judah, his very own brother who suggested they sell him into slavery, turned into a loving and caring person. When Judah realizes they might have to return without Benjamin, he fears for his father Jacob. They robbed him of his son Joseph. They cannot return without Benjamin so Judah offers himself as a substitute for Benjamin. At this point Joseph cannot hide himself from his brothers for another moment. While he orders out all the Egyptians, he cries so loud that everyone in Egypt hears him.

This, of course, is a type of Christ. The antitypical Joseph apparently waits to see his natural brother, Judah, the leading tribe of Israel, not only show verbal remorse, but express a willingness to suffer as a bondsman,

to save his brother Benjamin. That is the moment when Christ will reveal himself to all his brethren and to the world. Remember, up until this point Joseph had been a little hard on them. He repeatedly had placed them in stressful and worrisome positions, even though all the while he proved to be a great benefactor to them. It was only through his generosity they had provisions to live on.

How this might develop in the days ahead we may not be sure. It is possible that when the Armageddon climax is reached and the nations of Christendom are about to descend upon Jerusalem, that the truth about Israel will be found coming forth from Benjamin's [the Great Company's] bag. The nominal churches will be distraught with the Great Company for censuring their crusade against Israel and Jerusalem. It may be at this very moment that some of the faithful in natural Israel will speak up in defense of the Great Company. It will not save the Great Company because they must come up through 'great tribulation' to finally overcome and stand before the throne of God.

The whole point of this lesson is that Christ will not reveal himself to natural Israel and to the world until 'Judah' picturing the faithful in natural Israel offers to stand in for Benjamin, the Great Company. That is the great moment when Christ will say, 'I am Joseph your brother.'

In conclusion, dear brethren, remember why we are here today. The truth of God is everything to live for, and it is also everything to die for.

- *Eugene Burns*

The Seven Spirits

In **Revelation 1:4** the Apostle John wrote greetings from three entities, including the seven spirits which are before the throne of 'him which is, and which was, and which is to come.' We believe this refers to Jehovah God's throne, a throne of judgment and authority.

A little later John sees 'seven golden candlesticks' (luchnia, lampstand, compare Diaglott), and 'in the midst of the seven lampstands, one like unto the Son of man,' who had 'in his right hand seven stars' (verses 12, 13, 16). In verse 20 these are identified: 'The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which thou sawest are the seven churches.' One standing in the midst thereof is a beautiful picture of close association, attentiveness, and supervision as a caretaker.

In the holy of the Tabernacle this is shown in the golden lampstand with six branches off the main center stem. Each of the branches had three sets of patterns and the center stem had four sets. It may be observed that each branch with its three sets added to the main stem's four would equal seven. If the extra pattern on the main stem represented Jesus, we would again see Jesus as being in the center, in the midst, of the seven.

Each pattern was of three: a bowl, a knop and a flower. These could suggest the fruitage of faith, hope and love that results from overcoming the three sources of our trials, the world, the flesh and the Adversary.

As indicated in **Exodus 25:31-36** and 39:37, the lampstand was made without lamps. The seven lamps (**Exodus 25:37-39**) were added to the lampstand, one for each branch and the stem. This facilitated the priest in caring for the lamps: each one being taken down, filled, trimmed, dressed, and put back in its place. (Compare Tabernacle Shadows, page 115.)

In **Revelation 4:5** the seven spirits are still before the throne, and are identified as seven lamps of fire burning. Knowing that the seven spirits are seven lamps, where is the most likely place for them to be? During the Gospel Age they are on the seven lampstands, which puts the seven lamps 'before the throne,'

corresponding to the lampstand in the Holy which was 'before the Lord'. (**Exodus 40:25**) The correspondence is so close as to be beautiful and exactly as God planned it.

Since the seven lampstands (without lamps) are the seven churches, what could the seven lamps or spirits be? **Revelation 5:6** shows they are closely associated with the lamb. The 'horns' indicate power and strength, and the 'eyes' indicate wisdom. Therefore the wisdom of God is sent forth into all the earth with power. Are there seven wisdoms sent forth in connection with the lamb and the seven churches? Well, there are seven wisdoms or messages sent forth to the seven churches (Revelation chapters 2 and 3). This is indicated at the end of each message to each church, when the text says: 'Hear what the spirit says unto the churches.' The seven spirits are seven messages, not seven messengers. The messengers are the seven stars or angels. Thus the seven spirits are seven lamps to enlighten the seven churches with wisdom and to strengthen them spiritually.

This is true, although the messages also contain warnings and judgments. As these are the seven spirits of God, it shows who originated them. **Revelation 3:1** says he who has the seven stars also has the seven spirits. This helps us understand **Revelation 1:2**, that this record can be both 'the word of God' and 'the testimony of Jesus Christ.'

As God is his own interpreter, we see both the beauty and harmony of the two sets of pictures presented in the Tabernacle and in Revelation. They also show the closeness, intimacy, and importance in which our Heavenly Father holds and regards the churches. He knows the end result will be a bride for his Son, who is the embodiment of the Spirit of God, (**Revelation 22:17**) the spirit of Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power.

In that the 'one like unto the Son of man,' Jesus, stood in the midst of the seven lamps and lampstands, 'before the throne' of him who is, was, and is to come, who else would be represented in the throne? It is none else than Jehovah God, our Heavenly Father, who always is, always was, and always will be to come.

- *Thomas Adams*

Farrar on Light

Note Canon Farrar's earnest words: 'My brethren, the love that sees goodness and beauty in all human nature, helps to make goodness and to make beauty in human nature. To those who love, even a common person is a human soul, who walks in the transfiguring glory of their affection. You think someone a dull person. Why? That is because you are dull. An angel has been with you and you have known it not; and I imagine that to a spirit full of malice and self-conceit an angel would be very dull. Each human soul is like a cavern full of gems. The casual observer glances into it through some cranny, and all looks dark, sullen and forgotten. But let light enter into it; lift a torch up to the walls; let God's sunlight fall into it and flood its open recesses; and lo, it will flash with crystals and with amethysts, and each separate crystal will quiver under the touch of brightness with a transporting discovery of its own nature. If souls do not shine before you it is because you are bringing them no light to make them shine. Throw away your miserable, smoldering, fuming torch of conceit and hatred; lift up to them the light of love, and lo! they will arise and shine; yea, flame and burn with an abundant glory.'

- **R2404, R1908**

At Home and a Stranger

'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: (3) If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. (4) For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. (5) Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. (6) Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (7) (For we walk by faith, not by sight.) (8) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. (9) Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad'. (2 Corinthians 5:1-10)

The meaning of this passage is greatly obscured by the presence of poor translation. In the King James Version, two Greek words are translated three ways in English: 'at home,' 'absent,' and 'present.' The NAS uses only two English equivalents: 'absent' and 'at home.' The only word which closely gives the actual meaning of the Greek is 'at home' - meaning comfortable with one's surroundings.

The two Greek words involved are the same except for their initial syllable. One begins with ek meaning 'from' or 'out of,' the other begins with en meaning 'in.' Each prefix is then followed by demeio - the word from which we get words like demographic, democracy, etc. It means 'A people.' Thus, the two words with their basic meanings are:

1. Endemeio - to be in one's country, that is, to be 'at home.'
2. Ekdemeio - to be out of one's own country, that is, to feel like a stranger.

These definitions come from the meanings of the word as can be gleaned from several sources, including a careful and thoughtful examination of concordances. The NAS Exhaustive Concordance (an update of Strong's) and Strong's both use the same numbering system in their dictionaries. Endemeio is #1736; Ekdemeio is #1553. Demeio is #1218. The prefix en is #1722; ek is 1537.

The point is, Paul is not talking about being in or out of the body, but rather about feeling or not feeling comfortable in our present circumstances. The KJV use of 'present' is unconscionable. The use of 'absent' in both KJV and NAS versions is, at best, a poor choice. {1}

The Uses:

Verse	KJV	NAS	Greek
6	at home	at home	endemeo # 1736
6	absent	absent	ekdemeo # 1553
8	absent	absent	ekdemeo
8	present	at home	endemeo
9	present	at home	endemeo
9	absent	absent	ekdemeo

- David Doran

{1} **Editor's Note:** This portion of the text could therefore be rendered: 'Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are [at home] in the body, we are [a stranger] from the Lord; (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be [a stranger] from the body, and to be [at home] with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether [at home] or [a stranger], we may be accepted of him.'

Thy Watchmen Shall See Eye to Eye

'Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion'. (Isaiah 52:8)

The immediate setting of this text is the promised return from captivity to Babylon. There would be symbolic watchers on the walls of Jerusalem and symbolic heralds hastening over the mountains to announce to the watchers the coming of the returning hosts intent on rebuilding the Temple and city. The long night of captivity is past; the day of divine favor is come. 'I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies. My house shall be built in it, and a line shall be stretched out upon Jerusalem'. (**Zechariah 1:16**) Hence the stirring cry of the watchmen in the seventh verse. 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that bringeth good tidings of good, that sayeth unto Zion 'Thy God reigneth''. (**Isaiah 52:7**)

Then come the words of our text. The rejoicing watchmen sing together because they see, face to face, the heralds of good tidings announcing the Lord returning to his sanctuary in Zion.

That is what this expression 'eye to eye' means. Face to face. It occurs once elsewhere in the Old Testament, in **Numbers 14:14**, where it is rendered 'Thou, Lord, art seen 'face to face,' and the thought in **Isaiah 52** is that the watchmen see clearly, face to face, the heralds of glad tidings announcing the imminent return of their God to his people.

Rotherham's rendering is 'Eye to eye shall they look upon Yahweh's return unto Zion,' and he further remarks on the meaning as 'Probably 'face to face' with the event.' Moffat has it: 'They see the Eternal face to face as He returns to Zion.' Margolis: 'They shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion.' Ferrar Fenton:

'When clearly you see that the Lord comes to Zion.' The Septuagint confirms the thought by having 'Eyes shall look to eyes when the Lord shall have mercy upon Zion.'



Cyrus, a Picture of Christ, Restoring the Temple Vessels

Students know that this wonderful imagery was not intended solely for fulfilment in the days of Israel's return from captivity. Paul uses the seventh verse as applicable to the heralds of the gospel in **Romans 10:15**. Realizing that the return under Cyrus was but a picture, a type, of the greater release from captivity which should come to spiritual Israel at the close of the Gospel Age, and the joy which the imminent Advent of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, would inspire in the hearts of the Gospel Age 'Watchers,' we can discern a greater and more glorious application to these glowing words.

The 'Watchers' on the walls of the Holy City of this Gospel Age have walked through a long and dreary time during which the people of God have been held captive by an oppressive system which has crushed the Truth to the ground. Only a few of the 'poor' have remained to be 'vinedressers and husbandmen,' but these have faithfully manned the walls watching for the promised 'return.' The night is far spent, the day is at hand, but as yet only the first gleams of dawn are perceptible.

Then come the heralds. Hasting over the mountains, pressing toward the Holy City, so long downtrodden and oppressed, they come with glorious news. The KING is on his way. He is returning to Zion with favor. Enlightenment and prosperity is to come with him. The captive people are loosed - even now they are on

their way to commence the great work of rebuilding the Temple of God, and placing within it the golden vessels, the precious truths so long submerged under the defilements of a foreign power.

How eagerly the Watchers fasten their gaze upon the heralds. They haste -- therefore the news is good. Did they bring bad news their pace would be slow. They each seek to outvie the others in order to reach the city first. How beautiful the sight, heralds upon the mountains proclaiming the coming King!

So they meet, face to face. No longer any doubt. The news runs round the city. Not all the watchers receive the news at once. Not all hear exactly the same story from the different heralds, all zealous to proclaim the essentials of their message. But one central truth stands out -- THE KING IS AT HAND! He may be upon the mountain approach; He may even be within the city, and making himself known to those who have perceived his entrance. There is no lack of love and zeal on the part of those who have not actually seen him enter the gate, if so be He really is now within the walls. All are united in the one joyous theme -- the time has come. 'I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies.'

That is the story of this closing period of the Gospel Age - a period which is now well advanced. Is the King within the walls? Is He at the gates? Whether the one thing or the other, the important teaching of the text is that we are face to face with the event. The Watchers and the Heralds have met, and their united testimony has been given to seekers after the Lord for three generations past. The Temple has been built; Divine Truth, things new and old, has been established in its rightful place. The work is not yet finished; the building must go on; the Temple must be adorned with yet purer and nobler vessels of truth and understanding, that the day may at length come when the great outer doors will be flung open to all mankind and the invitation come to all men to enter and walk in its light.

The importance of a right understanding of this Scripture is great. It calls us to recognize the significance of the times in which we live; that the work begun in Christendom during the nineteenth century continues still in active preparation for the day when our Lord Jesus Christ shall be manifested in his glorious apokalupsis - His revelation of himself to all men, in association with his glorified Church, for man's blessing and salvation. How beautiful upon the mountains... the heralds... proclaiming Thy God reigneth... for the time of his Kingdom is come, and the day is not far hence when He shall 'reign in Mount Zion, and before his ancients gloriously.'

- Bible Study Monthly, 1973

Little Ways of Doing Good

'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith'. (**Galatians 6:10**)

The Apostle's exhortation here is very comprehensive - to do good without limitation, whether it be in word or deed. Some can be more benefited by words than by any other service we could render them. One of the great needs of the world is more knowledge. And if any one can dispel the darkness of this ignorance and let in light, he will surely do great good. Saul of Tarsus, for instance, was doing an evil work when he was persecuting the Church. But he did not realize this. Hence, the best service to Saul of Tarsus, or any one else under like conditions, would be to open the eyes of his understanding.

SOME GOOD WORKS ENUMERATED

Clothing the needy, feeding the hungry, assisting the blind, the deaf, taking care of the imbecile, are all good works. As we look out into the world, we see many efforts being made to do good. We should be very much in sympathy with everything that aims for good - physical good, mental good, social good, good of any kind. Then there is a way of doing good along intellectual lines, the lines of instruction. It is a good thing to teach children practical and mechanical arts that will make them useful, as in the public schools.

SPECIAL WORK OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE

But there is a higher work than all these. And we are to give our life and time to this, which we see is the most valuable of all. This is the instruction given for all who have the ear to hear, respecting the Almighty, His will, His purposes, His plan; for these are associated with every affair of life. This instruction, to those who receive it, becomes the best aid to proper thinking, proper living, proper acting, for this is God's way. And this way becomes the way of all who are consecrated to do His will, to walk in Jesus' footsteps. As, therefore, we come more and more in harmony with God's Plan, we perceive that no other work could be so grand as to make known to others God's character, God's Plan and God's will concerning us. As this has brought great blessing and sanctification to us, we should have the desire to take the Good Tidings to others, refreshing them as we have been refreshed, comforting them as we have been comforted.

This is called in the Scriptures, preaching the Gospel, by whatever means. We labor under a difficulty because the world is not able to appreciate the Good Tidings, Satan having blinded their eyes, so that they cannot see the philosophy of God's Plan. They are trying, as it were, to look around a corner, instead of coming to the corner and getting the right angle of vision. But whether people believe it or not, we believe preaching the Gospel to be the Lord's work and therefore the best. This does not hinder us, however, from having sympathy with others who are doing what they consider to be the best work, so long as the result is good. We should be in sympathy with everything that is in harmony with the Truth - in sympathy with everything the influence of which is beneficial to mankind.

So then the Apostle is calling to our minds in a general way the opportunity of doing good to all men. We could not give up preaching the Gospel and go into charitable works. A godly physician might, however, in connection with his practice, do good not only along lines physical and mental, but also along spiritual lines. So we have opportunities every day with our various contacts, all of whom are fellow creatures; for God made all mankind of one blood. As the Apostle enjoins, we should seek to do them good, seek to make them better, happier, more comfortable.

KIND WORDS AND SMILES

As we meet people in the walks of life, day by day, how can we do them good? One of the easiest ways is to look happy ourselves and thus inspire happiness in others. A person who goes about looking miserable is not likely to make others feel happy. But if we cannot always look very happy, let us look as happy as we can, and thus we will be doing good to a great many people whom we meet throughout the day. We can give a kind word, a smile, a pleasant tone, a little civility, wherever proper.

All such little courtesies of life are means of doing good, and may bring a ray of sunshine into the lives of a great many people. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God does not yet shine into their hearts. If our look, our manner, our tone, would be helpful, comforting, assuring, to these, then we would be doing them good.

We have a special work and therefore have not the opportunity to walk the streets and smile all the time. Our life work is for the great King. Our work is to be especially for the household of faith, or those who will be amenable to the message, and will wish to serve the Lord when they learn the way. And, if we desire to do good to them, how much more would we wish to encourage those who belong to the Lord, who have become members of his spiritual family!

- Adapted from R5357

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1,235.00 Donations

18.95 Interest

-2,725.00 Expenses

1,426.45 Balance December 31, 2000