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Life Invested or Wasted - Which?

THE UNIVERSAL feeling of disappointment and frustration that is being experienced in every part of the post-war world has had a dampening effect upon the spirits of those optimistic thinkers who had hoped that the clearly marked sign shown in the catastrophe through which civilization had passed would be understood and heeded by the leaders of the great nations, and that victory would bring about a betterment in the relationships between the various international and social groups which make up the present-day world. These discouraged optimists are now re-echoing the words of the ancient Prophet, "We looked for peace and behold trouble," for it is manifest to all that the cessation of hostilities has not resulted in the abolishment of the old abuses.

The threat of a common danger which, while it lasted had forced the usually antagonistic groups to band together for mutual protection, now having been removed, all the old animosities and jealousies have reasserted themselves. The high-sounding promises which had given mankind hope for a better and kindlier world have all apparently been forgotten, and once more men everywhere eye each other with suspicion and distrust, while the cynic wonders with bitterness whether the human race is after all worth saving from the result of its own folly and stubbornness.

One fact must be becoming increasingly clear even to the most obstinate believer in man's ability to evolve unaided into a millennium of peace and security, and that is that nothing short of a miracle will be able to reconcile the mutually hating races and classes and avert absolute world chaos.

But this widespread condition of suspicion and mutual distrust is not confined to the uninstructed and blinded world as many of us are regretfully aware. Many there are in the "household of faith" who years ago walked with us as brethren and looked forward with supreme confidence to the establishment of the Kingdom, first in or about 1914, later on other dates between 1914 and now, and whose feelings of disappointment (in which perhaps we all shared) at the failure of our expectations have led them to plaintively re-echo the words of Ezekiel 12:22: "The days are prolonged, and every vision, faileth." Many of these are brethren of long-standing in the Truth, who witnessed the beginnings of the harvest work, and joyfully took part in it, but now in discouragement fear that they belong to the class who complain that "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." - Jer. 8:20.

The very disappointment and perhaps in some instances chagrin which some of these brethren appear to feel is in itself evidence of the fact that they along with many of the rest of us were not at that time sufficiently advanced in Christian character development to be fit for the Marriage of the Lamb, and that the apparent delay of the Bridegroom is yet another proof of the infinite patience and longsuffering of our heavenly Father, and the greatest blessing that could come to us in that it has given us much precious time to show the Master that our heart loyalty was not dependant upon any time limit but was fixed for all eternity.

Some of the household of faith, misled by false prophets and perhaps because "iniquity has abounded" even in the Church, have allowed their "love to wax cold." For these, the prayers of all who have the Master's spirit ascend to the throne of grace, and it is our fervent hope that they may be recovered from the snare of the adversary and once more quickened to zealous service. Still others whom we have known and loved for years have passed on to that realm where all controversy ceases, and faith gives way to sight. How our hearts rejoice for them as we look forward with longing hope to the glorious meeting in the Kingdom.

And so, the siftings and separations go on in full accordance with the designs of the great Master of the Harvest, and almost daily the ranks on this side the veil become further depleted from one cause or another. Still there remains a little band steadfastly holding fast to the promises and walking humbly with their unseen Master in the face of every discouragement.

There come to us all at times, seasons of despondency, in which our lives seem to become stale, flat, and unprofitable. Our spirits become low, and we continue the fight against the world and against the weaknesses of our own flesh more because that is the course we have vowed to pursue, rather than because we feel any enthusiastic joy for the endless task. Very frequently mere physical infirmities and weakness force our spirits to low ebb and make it increasingly difficult for us to "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Even our great Leader had moments when he groaned in spirit and said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," and surely we his followers cannot expect to be exempt from such periods of despondency. After all, if our experiences were confined to mountain-top joys, it would be impossible for us to attain to the stature of overcomers, and besides this, we should forfeit one of the most blessed lessons the Lord teaches us, that of walking through the valley of the shadow with none but him to lean upon or to look to for comfort and assurance. He showed us the way by treading the path himself, for was he not a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"?

It is a generally recognized fact that men deprived of their daily food can exist for long periods of time upon the nutrition stored up in their own bodies during times of plenty, and we also in periods of discouragement and frustration, discover that we possess previously unsuspected reserves of faith and courage sufficient for the needs of the hour.

It is our own experience that at times when the obstacles in our path take on a more than usually formidable appearance, it is frequently quite helpful to allow our minds to recall in retrospect those days before the Lord brought us up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings. (Psa. 40:2.) There are doubtless many of the Lord's people whose happy antecedents as children of Christian parents resulted in their being born in a more favorable condition, and whose personal consecration to the Lord' came as a logical sequel to their upbringing. This was the case in respect to our late Pastor, Brother Russell. To such perhaps the change into the new life was not so cataclysmic in nature as it was to some of us who came out of a far different environment and were distinctly "children of this world."

How futile and drifting were our lives in those days, for the most part void of any definite aim or purpose. We were ships without rudder or compass, drifting aimlessly upon the great ocean of life, not knowing from whence we came or to what bourne we were traveling. In the case of most of us the few motivating forces we were conscious of in life were but the fitful fancies of the moment -- sports, politics, financial success, the more or less sensual pleasures of youth, and the other transitory toys the world gives its children to play with. The true meaning and object of life was an inscrutable mystery. The only fact that was indisputable, was, that after passing a few brief and perhaps disappointing years in the society of our fellows, after burning out life's little candle, we should go the way of all flesh and join the great majority in the realm of death, as the Wise Man once said: "*The living know that they shall die* but the dead know not anything." Yes, that was the one outstanding fact of which we were certain. All else was problematical and vague. Three thousand years ago Solomon spoke gloomily of the utter futility of man's efforts to find lasting contentment or happiness in the goals to be attained through human effort. What profit, he asked, hath a man of all his labor that is done under the sun? All roads, he concluded, ended in frustration of desire and a heart perpetually unsatisfied. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"; and many of earth's disallusioned have agreed with him.

And then one day a change came. Something happened to us. Something which transformed our entire outlook upon life, and made it beautiful and full of meaning. The people that walked in darkness had seen a great light. They who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them had the light shined. - - Ah yes, God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and glory forever.

Here indeed was a goal to strive for, a call which awakened a long dormant instinct that lay deep in the human heart -- the impulse to sacrifice self in a great cause, probably one of the noblest, most Godlike longings that fallen man still retains in some small measure. It is noblest, for in its very essence it is the absolute antithesis of the spirit of selfishness, and God-like because it is a direct reflection of God's own spirit, that God who is himself the greatest of all sacrificers, in that he gave the dearest treasure of a father's heart, his own well-beloved Son, that the world through him might have life and be brought back to a blessed condition of at-one-ment with its Creator.

Yes, it was true. A gate of opportunity had been left ajar, a door which opened the way to a blessedness such as we had never dreamed of, a goal to strive to attain which satisfied the inarticulate yearnings of our secret hearts as nothing else had done or could do. True, the cost of entering was a high one. This was no cheaply gained salvation to be secured through the mumbling of a few Latin prayers by a priest or by the wearing of a good luck amulet around the neck. The price was simply all that we had, including ourselves with those pet idiosyncracies and thought -- habits of which we had been perhaps a little proud -- in a word, all that we were or had hoped to be, and that meant the laying down in sacrifice of our very lives. Well, what of that? Those lives were forfeited in any event. We could expect to retain them for but a few brief years, and then the blackness of darkness forever. And lo, like the merchant of our Lord's parable who had found a pearl of great price and went and sold all that he had to buy it, we entered the way of the cross. To merely say that we have never regretted the step would be a monstrous understatement. We bless the day that we set our hands to the plough, with a joy that grows deeper and fuller with the passing years.

And this decision on our part was no mere cold, intellectual assent to a logical statement of the facts concerning our justification, secured through the satisfaction of Divine justice, but a warm, glorious realization of a truth that gripped our very hearts, and drew them in love and adoration to the heart of the Father, as the stupendous fact forced its way into our consciousness that we were

accepted in the beloved One, and were from. henceforth to be regarded ourselves as beloved children of the Most High.

"Deep in the human heart, crushed by the Tempter
Feelings lie buried which grace can restore;
Touched by a gracious truth, wakened by kindness
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more."

And now, we who have vowed to forever relinquish all claims to the possession of those justified lives of ours, are admonished by Jesus himself not to turn back. His words are "Whosoever shall [after making this covenant] seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." - Luke 17:33.

In the second chapter of the Book of Exodus an incident is recorded which aside from its interest to the Hebrew people as a part of their early history, contains, we believe, an allegory directly bearing upon the experiences of those who have accepted the gracious invitation to enter in at the strait gate, and who are journeying up the pathway which leads to life. The moral of the little story might well be said to have been based upon those words of our Lord quoted above - Luke 17:33. The course taken by its principal character bears such a striking resemblance to that one taken by those who have presented their bodies a living sacrifice to God, that the analogy could scarcely be a mere coincidence, but rather one specially designed by the Lord as so many Old Testament stories are, to serve as a means of instructing and encouraging those upon whom the ends of the ages are come. - 1 Cor. 10:11.

The story we refer to is that one beloved of all children, which concerns the wise decision of Jochebed, the mother of the infant Moses, to preserve, the life of her babe by relinquishing all claims to it. The name Jochebed -- glorious or honored -- is itself full of significance, for it should remind us of the King's daughter who is all-glorious within (Psa. 45), and thus reveals the identity of the class at whom the allegory is pointed.

According to the findings of Egyptologists, the "Pharaoh's daughter" of the story was the daughter of the preceding Pharaoh and the sister of 'the reigning monarch. She was married but childless, and like every other woman in the East, both at that time and the present, she desired above all things to become the mother of a man child. Her custom of going down to bathe in the Nile, and probably to pray to the gods of Egypt for the fulfilment of her heart's desire was doubtless well known to the people of the neighborhood in which the family of Amram and Jochebed had their home. (Incidentally, this practice among childless women of seeking the favor of their gods by bathing in some sacred river, is, we believe, observed in various parts of the East even to this day, and is mentioned by the English writer Kipling in one of his Indian tales connected with the sacred river Ganges at Benares.)

As recorded in the first chapter of Exodus, the reigning Pharaoh had become alarmed at the rapid growth in numbers of the Hebrew people who during the lifetime of Joseph had been invited by the then reigning monarch to come to Egypt and to settle in the land of Goshen. (Gen. 47:6.) After trying different methods designed to check the growth of the Hebrew population and failing to accomplish his purpose through any of them, Pharaoh finally decided upon the very cruel and drastic procedure of ordering every Hebrew male child to be killed at birth or immediately afterwards. Thus when Jochebed's child was born, he was already under condemnation of death, just as in a universal sense every member of the Adamic race is when born already under the death sentence, for as Paul puts it "all in Adam die." - 1 Cor. 15:22.

So this very wise mother, faced by the certainty of losing in death the most precious thing she possessed, the life of her infant son, unless she was able to find some way of preserving that life, decided upon a very daring but wise course. Putting her trust in the God of her fathers and led by his spirit, she contrived her little plot.

Aware of the custom of the princess to bathe in the Nile on certain occasions and knowing of her longing for a child, Jochebed placed her babe in a small boat or ark of bulrushes which she had made for the purpose, and placed the ark among the reeds which grew at the river side, hoping that the princess would find it there, and adopt the babe. Even after the passing of thirty centuries one cannot but feel a thrill of sympathy with this brave woman. She fully realized that her plan even if successful, would entail the relinquishing on her part of all claim to ownership of her baby, and what mother can fail to understand her terrible dilemma and anxiety.

All, however, fell out in accordance with the good mother's planning. Pharaoh's daughter came along, and saw the ark. "And behold, the babe wept, and she had compassion on him." (Ver. 6.) One writer has pointed out what a gracious and kindly word this one "compassion" is. It is of a far higher order than mere pity, for it embodies the thought of doing something to help. It is written that Jesus had compassion upon the multitude that had followed him for three days (Matt. 15:32), but his pity did not stop there; he fed them. And so in this case. The princess not only pitied the babe. She took it, and nourished it.

The incident can not but remind us of the course of our heavenly Father. He looked down and saw our lost and helpless race, and had compassion upon us. As the old hymn has it: "He saw men plunged in deep despair And flew to their relief."

It was also a noble and brave action on the part of the great princess, for doubtless slanderous tongues were just as busy then as they are now. And one can imagine how the reputation of the princess would suffer by the sudden appearance a few months later at Pharaoh's palace of a strange child whom Pharaoh's daughter acknowledged as her son.

If she had wished to adopt a child, she could doubtless have selected one from some of the noble families of Egypt, who would have been glad to furnish a future heir to the throne; but instead, her generous heart went out in sympathy to the helpless child of a condemned and despised race, one who was already under sentence of death. Was not this also the choice of the Heavenly Father who when he determined to select a Divine Family -- to become copies of his dear Son, went not to the angelic host, spotless and perfect though they were, not to the cherubim or seraphim, no, not even to the noble and great of earth, but chiefly to the poor of this world, rich only in faith, these hath God chosen. - James 2:5.

But let us return to Jochebed, and consider her strange status, for she now stood in an entirely changed relationship to her infant, and it is in the details of this new relationship that her position is analogous to our own. She had as we have seen saved the life of her child by giving it up, or in other words by sacrificing it, and no more claiming it as her own. But now note what followed. Actually the princess handed the child right back to his true mother, to be taken care of. The case is identical with our own, for when we presented our lives in sacrifice to the Lord, he gave them right back to us *But*, and this is a very important *but*, we now stand in a new relationship to these lives of ours.

Formerly Jochebed had owned her child outright, and could do with it anything in reason that she wished. But now all this was changed. She had become merely his nurse or caretaker. The child was no longer hers. It had become royal property, and must be so regarded.

And this is exactly the way in which we as new creatures are to regard our own lives and all that we have. They have become royal property. "Ye are not your own, but bought with a price." Formerly our lives were at our own disposal. We could do as we' wished with them-use our faculties, mental and physical, in any way we chose. Our time, our talents, were our own. Now all that is changed. We are no more own own, but his. Our status is that of caretakers or stewards of the King's property.

And what of our education, our training? Jochebed might have had her own ideas about how she wished her child to be reared. As a member of a race which even at that early period stood apart from all others she probably would have wished to instruct him in the Hebrew tradition, but she was no longer arbiter of her child's schooling. He had to go to Pharaoh's palace and be trained for future kingship, and thus many centuries later we hear Stephen declare concerning him that Moses "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." - Acts 7:22.

And we also who are being trained in the school of Christ as prospective members of the Bride class are admonished to "forget thine own people and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." (Psa. 45:10.) The new arrangement, however, was not a completely distressing one to the heart of the mother. From the time her child had been born up to the making of her momentous decision, her existence must have been one of hourly terror. Day and night, every step she heard on the street outside her house must have sounded to the mother's anxious ears like the tread of Pharaoh's soldiers on their way to carry out the death penalty upon her helpless infant. Day after day she must have lived in expectancy of the coming of the executioner. But now, no longer was there cause for fear. Her child was under the protection of the great king, and there was none who would dare to do him harm. We, too, have a precious consciousness of being sheltered under the wings of the Most High, and until that day dawns when he shall bid us to "come up higher" we can rest secure in his protective care, and say to all danger, as our Master did, "Thou couldst have no power over me except it were given thee from on high."

One feature of the analogy remains to be touched upon. In verse 9 we read, "And Pharaoh's daughter said to her [Jochebed] Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." How wonderful, to be paid wages for doing the thing that she delighted to do above all else, the nursing of her -own infant. And we may be assured that during the child's formative years, while he was yet in his mother's care, he was carefully reared in the fear of the Lord. His record as a man shows this clearly. And does the parallel hold good in this case? Do we who have made this covenant of sacrifice, we who have been permitted to lay down our human lives as our Master did in order to preserve them on a higher plane, can we be said to receive wages? Indeed yes, wages now, and a glorious reward in the future. Let the Apostle describe what these wages are: "Now he ... which hath anointed us is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. 1:21,22.) "The earnest of the Spirit," the hand payment, that precious sealing within the heart, of which "no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. 2:17), that is our present wage, and constitutes a pledge of future blessedness, if faithful, when we shall see him face to face, for "In thy presence there is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for ever more." - Psa. 16:11.

- J. R. Hughes

The Dominion of Death Versus Shepherding the Nations

In Hebrews 2:14 we read: "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

From this statement are we to understand that Satan has the power to destroy whoever he will?

"Satan, the tempter, by starting sin amongst men, brought all under the sentence of the divine law, under the dominion of death. It could hardly have been his original policy to prostrate the human race in death, but merely to transform man's allegiance and prospective empire to himself. In all God's Universal Kingdom death had not heretofore occurred among God's intelligent creatures."

"Satan appeared to Eve as a benefactor and liberator, arguing that the death penalty in event of disobedience, was an impertinent obtrusion, restriction, a hindrance to freedom; and that instead, great good would result by ignoring it. Thus Satan became the father of lies, the father of sin and thus of sinners." - John 8:44.

"With untiring persistence he has devoted himself to the frustration of God's purposes. He is called 'the god of this Age,' 'The prince of this world' or cosmos, order of things, 'The prince of the power of the air.' It is said that 'the whole world lieth in the evil one.'"

"Hence it is a marked truth that in becoming Christians, we become soldiers, for we take another Lord, come under a new rule, enlist under another standard, and so we are at once thrown into conflict with Satan's empire and must contend and fight to maintain ourselves and to come off victorious."

In Hebrews 2:14 we read that Satan "has the power of death." "Had he this power fully in his control, we may be sure that the saints of God would have perished from the earth long ago." "The saints "are kept by the power of God" and from this Scripture and many others including Job ,1 and 2, we must conclude that Satan's operations are restrained within certain limitations. It seems evident that the word translated "power" (*kratos*) would have better been translated "dominion" in this text (Amer. Revised Version. See footnote *Reprints*, page R1271) as has been done in the following cases:

"That God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and *dominion* forever and forever." - 1 Pet. 4:11.

"The God of all grace, who called you [ver. 10] . . . to him be the *dominion* for ever and ever." - 1 Pet. 5:11.

"He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to Him be the glory and the *dominion* for ever and ever." - Rev. 1:6.

"Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be . . . glory and *dominion* for ever and ever." - Rev. 5:13.

"To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, *dominion* (*kratos*) and power (*exousia*) . . . now and forevermore." - Jude 25.

In this last instance, we can readily see that the word "*kratos*" should *not* be translated power because the very next word "*exousia*" is translated power.

SHEPHERDING THE NATIONS

In Rev. 19:11-21 John sees heaven opened and beholds the King of kings and Lord of lords coming forth with the armies of heaven following-the great heavenly expeditionary army on its way to overthrow evil and to establish righteousness in the one rebellious province of God's Universal Empire.

In verse 15 we read that he will "smite the nations" (with 'the sword of his mouth) and "Rule them with a rod of iron." This may not at first sight seem a very hopeful prospect for the nations. However the word "rule" (*poimaino*) would better be translated "to shepherd" seeing that it is derived from "*poiman*" (a shepherd), and Rotherham so renders it in the following texts:

"Out of Bethlehem shall one come forth to govern, who shall *shepherd* my people Israel." - Matt. 2:6.

"*Shepherd* the beloved flock of God which is among you." - 1 Pet. 5:2.

"He that overcometh-I will give authority over the nations and he shall *shepherd* them with a sceptre of iron." - Rev. 2:27.

"Behold the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall *shepherd* them [the great multitude] and lead them to life's fountains of waters." - Rev, 7:17.

Satan has ruled over men to satisfy his own desires, his own selfish interests, but Christ will shepherd men for their good that they may be restored to the image of God.
- *Selected.*

Let Us Pray

The day was long, the burden I had borne
Seemed heavier than I could bear,
And then it lifted -- but I did not know
Some one had knelt in prayer.

Had taken me to God that very hour
And asked the easing of the load, and He,
In infinite compassion, had stooped down
And taken it from me.

We cannot tell how often as we pray
For some hurt one, bewildered and distressed,
The answer comes, but many times those hearts
Find sudden peace and rest.

Some one had prayed, and Faith a reaching hand,
Took hold of God, and brought Him down that day.
So many, many hearts have need of prayer
Oh, *let us pray.*

- *Grace Noll Crowell.*

The Parable of the First and the Last

"So the last shall be First, and the first Last." - Matthew 20:16.

THE STATEMENT of the Evangelist that "without a parable spake he nothing unto them" (Matt. 13:34) evidently has particular but not exclusive reference to our Lord's teachings of *facts* as distinguished from moral truths -- facts having to do with his Father's purposes, plans, and performances, past, present and future.

The New Testament language of parable is identical with the prophetic language of "similitude," referred to in Hosea 12:10, and described in Isaiah 28:9, 10, where it is represented as a foreign tongue, sounding like jargon or nonsense to the unenlightened and irreverent; or, as Ezekiel (Eze. 33:32) says, even to the well disposed among mankind it is "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not." Isaiah says that the kernel of the message of this language, which brings into comparison the principles ("lines") and decrees ("precepts") of heaven and earth, is "Rest" and "Refreshing," or Restitution. How many, even among professing Christians, have learned enough of this language to understand what is embraced in the "Rest" (Heb. 4:1-11) of the Gospel Age, and the "Restitution" (Acts 3:19-24) of the coming Age?

About twenty of the Lord's parables are introduced by the expression: "The kingdom of heaven" or "of God," is "like unto...." This formula is a reference to the Church of Jesus Christ in its temporary, embryonic condition in the flesh. It is obvious, upon examination, that the first thing mentioned in each of these parables is not always thane to which the Lord is comparing his Church -- the comparison is usually to the whole apologue. This introductory phrase should therefore be understood as meaning: "The kingdom of heaven, in some of its relationships, is like unto the following story."

One of the more obscure and subsidiary features of God's great Plan for man's salvation is the arrangement for a "Great Company Class" of antitypical Levites, destined to be companions and associates of the Bride of Christ -- the "Royal Priesthood." It is not surprising, therefore, to find the parable that particularly sets forth this feature of the Divine Plan is one of the most abstruse and difficult of all to interpret.

The parables of Jesus were composed by a perfect mind, to reveal spiritual truth to those whose minds were prepared to receive it. Accordingly, unless definitely excepted in the setting of the parable, each one is of general application to all the Church, throughout the Age; and every feature is significant. Nothing is introduced merely as stage-setting, or to round out the story. Man finds such expedients necessary, but not so the Lord. His ideas and language are perfect.

The exceptions to this rule of interpretation themselves attest its general applicability. In the parables of the Ten Virgins and of the Sheep and the Goats, the comparison is limited to a particular time. The former begins with the Greek word *toto*, which means "at that time." The latter commences: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory" -- which fixes the comparison at the beginning of the Millennial reign of Christ, and the parable carries the action forward to its end. Another kind of exception is expressed by the Greek words *dia touto*, meaning "through that" or "in this," which are used to introduce the story of the Unforgiving Debtor, and call attention to the preceding statements which the parable illustrates. An expression of similar

meaning, *omoia gar*, "like for" or "for this reason," introduces the parable of the First and the Last. It forewarns the reader that the comparison is limited to illustrating preceding statements, and that it is not necessary to seek a parallel for every item of the story. The absence of any time exception in this introduction, indicates that the parable is applicable to the whole Age, not limited to any part thereof.

The preceding narrative and discourse of Jesus, to which the opening words of the parable (Matt. 20:1) refer, go back to verse 16 of the preceding chapter. A rich young ruler had come running to Jesus and, kneeling before him, asked the supreme question of all religious and philosophic interest: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit ETERNAL LIFE?" The young man's unwillingness to meet the terms of discipleship laid down by Jesus prompted his remark concerning the difficulty a rich man experienced in gaining a part in the Kingdom -- the Royalty -- of God; and the ensuing question by St. Peter elicited certain important doctrinal statements by Jesus, and the giving of this parable to illustrate and record them.

Peter's question was a perfectly natural and proper one. Before them was an example of one who declined to follow Jesus because it would cost him too much in earthly possessions. The disciples had done what he refused to do: "left all and followed" Jesus. It was a question in very different spirit than the application for preferment in the Kingdom, presented to Jesus later on by "the mother of Zebedee's children" in behalf of her two sons -- though the latter was doubtless just as natural.

Jesus' reply to Peter was without implication of reproof. He divided the question into two parts, and answered each part separately. (1) "Ye who *have* followed me" -- and this would necessitate their having "left all" to do so -- would be given royal status in the Kingdom: "When the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (2) "And every one that hath left" any of his dearest earthly possessions "for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall inherit ETERNAL LIFE" -- that for which the young ruler was seeking. It is obvious that the latter class is much larger than the former: many are willing to sacrifice possessions for his name's sake, who falter when it comes to "following the Lamb *whithersoever he goeth*" - *even* through Gethsemane to Calvary -- falter and turn back. Of these Jesus said: "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom [the Royalty] of God." "If he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." (Luke 9:62; Hebrews 10:38.) The position of these would be desperate, indeed, if God had not made special provision for them, as outlined in this parable and in many other Scriptures.

It is evident that in so dividing Peter's question into two parts and answering them separately, Jesus intended to record a great fact: that there would be some who would be "saved" and attain eternal life, who would not be of the exalted Royalty on the throne -- the *ultimate* Kingdom of God. However, it evidently was not his intention to make this revelation too plain, doubtless because it is not the desire of the Lord that any should "run for" or try to be of this class. There is but "one hope of our calling" held out in Scripture: the hope of immortality; the hope of joint heirship with our Lord and Elder Brother, our heavenly Bridegroom. The provision in the Plan of the Father for the "Tribulation Saints," the Great Company, the members of which are "saved so as by fire," yet "suffer loss" of the great reward because of lack of zeal, determination and faithfulness in seeking to "make their calling and election sure" -- this provision of God's is a matter of mercy, a consolation prize for those who "also ran." If those who ultimately find themselves of this class had understood fully the provisions in the Lord's plan for this Company, the knowledge would have tended to cause them to still further slacken their efforts. "If I don't get into the Little Flock I'll at least make the Great Company, and that's good enough for me," would probably in most cases express their mental attitude. But it was the Father's desire that all should

have the spur and stimulus of striving for the highest possible place; and to others the understanding of the possibility of losing the Great Prize and receiving only a partial reward would act as, the greatest possible incentive to faithfulness and zeal. The Apostle Paul was such an one: "I severely discipline my body," he writes, "lest I be disapproved" -- for the "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In the stress and pressure of the Harvest time this knowledge has been most helpful.

So, to conceal this knowledge from all but the inveterate seeker after truth, to whom alone it would be valuable, Jesus illustrated his seemingly casual remarks by the obscure parable of the First and the Last; in which some further details are embedded. Four specific points are covered by our Lord's reply to St. Peter, and recorded in the parable:

(1) Those of his disciples who *followed him* should reign with him -- be of the Royal or Bride Class -- the "Firsts." The parable, as well as many other Scriptures, shows that those to be seated "on twelve thrones" were to be not only the twelve Apostles, but the whole overcoming Church. The Lord's words were addressed to *all* who would be prompted to follow him. - See Luke 22:28-30; Revelation 3:21; 14:1-5.

(2) Those who suffer loss for him should receive a hundred-fold, and inherit eternal life.

(3) There are two classes of disciples in the rewarding, which Jesus named "The First" and "The Last." Both Classes are included in the embryonic, probationary Church in the flesh.

(4) The initial position of the individuals composing these two Classes would in some way be reversed in the end.

The last proposition is the introductory statement of the theme of "the parable: "But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last." To emphasize the connection between the statement of fact and the parable designed to illustrate it, this opening statement is repeated in more positive and comprehensive format the end of the parable. "So" or "Thus" (as shown in the parable) "the last shall be first, and the first last."

The parable indicates that the arrangement of the two classes is of Jehovah, the great "Householder" of the Universe; the consummation will be through the Son, his "Steward"; as it was said by Jesus: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the Prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me." (John 6:44, 45.) How precisely the parable reflects these great truths?

The First and the Last of this parable have been variously interpreted as representing the Jews and the Gentiles; the Ancient Worthies and the Church; and those called at various times to membership **in** the Church, during the Gospel Age or its Harvest. None of these fits perfectly. To be sure the same thing is intimated of the Ancient Worthies and the Church in other Scriptures (Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30) but these have no reference to this parable. The "last" ones of the parable, whom the Lord twice states were to become "first," are the eleventh hour laborers. To apply the parable in any way to the Jews or to the Ancient Worthies, would make the whole Gospel Age the eleventh hour -- a manifestly incongruous interpretation. If we apply the several hirings of the laborers, at the first, third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours of the day, to calls by the Lord at fixed intervals of the Gospel Age, then again we have the difficulty of the preference given to the eleventh-hour laborers, and the murmuring on the part of those hired earlier in the day. The Apostle positively states that those remaining alive until the Lord's second coming shall

not precede those of former years of the Gospel Age, who have fallen asleep in Christ. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.) Even if this were not so, it is not conceivable that St. Paul and the other Apostles and members of the early Church should murmur at the time of receiving their rewards because some one else had received his reward before them. Still less are the time -- intervals of the parable applicable to artificially conceived stages of the Harvest of the Gospel Age. The parable says nothing of the work for which the laborers were hired being "harvest" work. It may just as properly be assumed to have been to cultivate the soil, or to trim the vines.

The meaning of the cryptic statement with which the parable both begins and ends, may be thus understood: "[As illustrated in this parable] the last [in point of time of her calling] shall be first [in precedence -- in honor] and the first [called] shall be last [in honor]." No expositor would hold that only those called in the end of the Gospel Age would be of this "First" Class, thus relegating the Apostles, fathers and martyrs of the early Church to a position of inferiority -- to be of the "Last" Class.

The Steward's only explanation of his action in preferring the laborers last hired, was that "It is my will to give to this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Here, as in several other Scriptures, the absolute authority of the Lord is asserted, without explanation of the reasons for his actions. Examples of this are: John 21:22; "Jesus saith unto him [Peter], if I will that he [John] tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" and Romans 9:11, 21: "Hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" The explanations are left to other Scriptures. It is essential that the Lord's sovereignty be recognized, apart from argument. In these Scriptures this is asserted, as in the Steward's reply to the murmuring laborers.

The only Scriptural way in which every "first" member of the probationary "Kingdom of heaven" will become "last" and every "last" member will become "first" is to regard the attainment of each separate individual membership in the Kingdom or royalty as a separate and individual contest. This is the conception presented by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, in which he asks: "Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may attain."

Consideration of this parable (comparison) of St. Paul's throws so much light on our Lord's parable of the First and the Last that it strongly indicates the one was suggested by the other. Indeed, most "Pauline theology" may be traced to its source in the Lord's parables. The prize for which the Christian athlete is running, the Apostle says, is "an incorruptible crown," the symbol of excellence and victory. Actually the contestants have been running their courses over a period of more than nineteen hundred years. Many more have run than have gained the meed of victory, as the Apostle intimates in the passage just quoted, and as the Lord states (Matt. 22:14) in another parable: "Many are called, but few are chosen"; and of the "chosen" still fewer are found "faithful." But only the "called *and* chosen *and* faithful" in a descending scale of numbers but an ascending scale of honor, will eventually be found "with him," the Lamb, in his throne. (Rev. 17:14.) It is only a "little flock" of "Firsts" that is to receive the Kingdom. - Luke 12:32; Rev. 14:1-5.

The Apostle notes certain similarities between the Christian's race for the "incorruptible crown" of the High Calling, and an earthly race -- probably the Greek Marathon race, which was the full measure of the athlete's training, stamina and determination. This is one point of likeness the Apostle mentions "every one that striveth exerciseth self-control in all things." The dissimilarities are not only the one mentioned by St. Paul-the relative value of the crowns contended for -- but particularly the fact that in the Christian's contest he is not actually running *against* any other

contestant, for the more he helps his brother the faster he gets on himself. But in an accommodated sense the later runners are striving to excel the records of every one who has previously run for the prize and has been disqualified. They were disqualified not because they did not run fast enough, but because they did not reach a required standard of achievement; and every one who gains the crown must excel all who were so "disapproved" -- as the Apostle feared he himself might be, in spite of his vast labors for the Church. - 1 Cor. 9:23, 27.

So the Apostle pictures each separate membership in Christ's Body as entitling the recipient to a "crown"; and each crown as being separately run for. The peculiarity of the race as we have noted, is that the rivals are not visibly running against each other. race under such circumstances today would be called "a race against time," or against the "track record," or "for the title" (of champion) Let us observe such a race. We reach the track early in the morning, when the colts and novices are being exercised and 'tried out. We see one of the horses being brought forward as if for a race. The jockey is "up" -- the colt faces the barrier alone -- the starting gate is raised -- he is off! No other horse is on the track to "give him a race," but the jockey urges his mount to the limit of his speed -- as he comes down the home stretch the rider applies whip and spur. The runner flashes across the finish line *a winner* -- *he* has established a new speed record for the track; he has beaten all the other horses that ever ran there!

It is thus with the Christian's race. He is not competing with any other present runner, but there is an undetermined but doubtless considerable number of disapproved candidates for the particular position in the Body for which he has been nominated. (Matt. 20:23.) He is running against these invisible contestants -- a "cloud of witnesses" of his race, different indeed from those referred to in Hebrews 12:1, but in a metaphorical sense also appearing as competitors to spur him on. We may each be sure that in our own case each of this invisible group are persons *like unto ourself*, because each was running for the *same crown* which we are now privileged to strive for -- for the identical position in the Body now offered to us. They fell short because of the same weaknesses which beset us, and which will cause us also to fail if we do not strive with greater earnestness and zeal than they did.

When the modus operandi for the selection of the members of the Body of Christ is thoroughly understood: that the required standard for acceptance is conformity to the "image" of the Son, who is the "character-image" of the Father's personality (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 1:3); and that the antitypical Levites are a "Great Company," composed of those who "left all" by covenant of consecration to do God's will and walk in the footsteps of Jesus, each of whom "drew back" and thereby forfeited the crown previously assigned to him-when this is understood, the aptness of the comparison to a "race against time" will be recognized. Unless the race-runner does better than all who have preceded him, he cannot receive the prize. All that were before him failed to reach the required standard. If he does not run "according to a mark" and attain the goal of Christlikeness, he, like his predecessors, forfeits the crown tentatively set aside for him when he started in the race. Thus it continues -- has continued down the Age -- until the "last" runner "apprehends that of which he was apprehended by Christ," and wins the prize, thus becoming "first" in the contest for that particular crown. All preceding runners are now "lasts" in relation to the winning "first." Thenceforth that crown is no longer offered as a prize; it is "laid up, a crown of righteousness" -- a crown of equity, fairly won -- for the one who "first" met the conditions. This was the case with the Apostle Paul's crown-he was the first to run for it, but he was also the last. - See 1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12.

"Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve, and press with vigor on:
A heavenly race demands thy zeal, and an immortal crown.

"A cloud of witnesses around hold thee in full survey:
Forget the steps already trod, and onward urge thy way!

"'Tis God's all-animating voice that calls thee from on high;
'Tis his own hand presents the prize to thine aspiring eye.

"That prize, with peerless glory bright, with thee, O Lord, we'll gain,
When earth's great monarchs shall have lost their glory and their fame.

"Blest Savior, introduced by thee, our race have we begun;
And, crowned with victory, at thy feet we'll lay our trophies down."

The introduction of the parable of the First and the Last permits a very general application to be made of the time feature of the various hirings. There being no reference to time in the preceding statement referred to by the introduction, time is to be disregarded in the interpretation -- "time is *not* the essence" of the parable. The implication is merely that the call -- the hiring -- was to go on at intervals throughout the Age assigned in the Plan of God for the selection of the Christ Body, until the full predetermined number, one hundred and forty-four thousand, should be "called, and chosen, and found faithful."

The specially significant part of the picture has to do with the distribution of the wages of the laborers. The *wage* was the same to all-eternal life on the spirit plane, in peace and happiness, beyond the "corruption that is in the world through lust." But in addition there are rewards super-added by, the Householder and his Steward, for fidelity and devotion. The superiority of the reward of the "First" Class -- the Overcomers, the Bride, the Royalty -- is *suggested* only, in the precedence in the payment of the eleventh-hour laborers' wages. To have made the point of their preferment stronger would have made the understanding of the parable too easy, and emphasized, in a manner not desired by the Lord, the doctrine of the Great Company. But the "murmuring" by all but the "Firsts" upon receiving their wages, hints at some greater preferment of the latter than merely a few minutes in time.

But what of the murmurers? We cannot think that any of those who receive the "full reward" of the great High Calling will ever be found in any such attitude or frame of mind. On the other hand there is a Class who are elsewhere in Scripture similarly represented -- namely, those "before the throne" in Revelation 7:13-17, from whose eyes it is written that God wipes away tears. Apparently these, like the earlier laborers in the vineyard of the parable, have received their reward, yet are weeping. Are theirs the tears of mortification and vain regret over wasted hours and lost opportunities of service and sacrifice? It would appear to be so.

How may such tears be wiped away? The parable indicates the answer -- the Steward reasons with them and shows them the justice in the preference of the Little Flock of "Firsts." "Friend," says the Steward of the Householder-'friends they are, not enemies: "Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny?" The Great Company Christian has, in reality, seldom gotten any higher appreciation of the prize for which he is striving than what the penny represents-eternal life and happiness on the spirit plane-admission after death into "heaven." Appreciation of the greatness of the opportunity to achieve membership in the Body of Christ, and consequent Kingdom honors grows in proportion to development in the Christ likeness. The murmurers really receive what they had "agreed for." So the Steward continues: "Take that is

thine and go thy way" -- your position is honorable, happy, glorious in its opportunities of serving and blessing others. It is what you are best fitted for -- it is *"thy way."* Thus their tears are wiped away -- this reasoning restores their spirits; being at heart in harmony with the Lord, when the situation is made clear to them, and they realize that the rewards have been distributed in accordance with strict equity, they are satisfied.

The 126th Psalm typically represents the resurrected members of the Little Flock, to whom "it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom, as being "like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." The great question for each consecrated, spirit-begotten Christian is, which shall be our first experience when we awake in the resurrection -- laughter or tears? Songs of joy or murmurs of disappointment? A little more energy, a little stronger determination, a little greater zeal, makes all the difference. *Which shall it be?*

"If thou, impatient, dost let slip thy cross,
Thou wilt not find it in this world again;
Nor in another: here and here alone
Is given thee to suffer for God's sake.
In other worlds we may more perfectly
Love Him and serve Him, praise Him,
Grow nearer and nearer to Him with delight.
But then we shall not any more
Be called to suffer, which is our appointment here.
Canst thou not suffer, then, one hour or two?
If He should call thee from thy cross today,
Saying: It is finished -- that hard cross of thine
From which thou prayest for deliverance,'
Thinkest thou not some passion of regret
Would overcome thee? Thou would'st say,
'So soon? Let me go back and suffer yet awhile
More patiently. I have not yet praised God.'
Whensoe'er it comes, that summons that we look for,
It will seem soon, too soon. Let us take heed in time,
That God may now be glorified in us."

(From Ugo Bassi's Sermon in a Hospital.)

-- H. E. Hollister.

"A Man Shall Be"

"And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." - Isaiah 32:2.

When the blast's o'erwhelming force
Breaks upon us in its course,
Then A Man shall be, in grace,
From the wind *a hiding-place*.

Bursts the tempest, thundering dread,
From the dark'ning clouds o'erhead,
Sent by God, A Man shall form
Sheltering covert from the storm.

As our eyes in all around
Nothing see but barren ground,
In A Man our hearts shall trace
Rivers in a barren place.

When the sun with scorching ray
Beats upon our pilgrim way,
As *a rock* A Man shall stand,
Shadow in a weary land.

Jesus! Thou the Hiding-place,
Covert from the tempest's face,
Waterbrooks where all is dry,
Shading Rock when sun is high.

- H. J. M.

The Question Box

Question:

Please explain Psalm 110:1, which reads as follows: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine, enemies thy footstool."

Answer:

We will first state our understanding of the passage and then submit Scriptural proof as to the correctness of our exposition.

(a) Explanation of text:

First, then, as to our understanding of the passage: In this verse, David, writing under the influence of God's holy spirit, reports a revelation of Jehovah's intention in regard to Messiah. In vision he, David, heard Jehovah addressing one, who though David's son, was yet his superior. David heard Jehovah say to this great One: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

(b) Scriptural proof as to the correctness of this interpretation:

Let us now examine the Scriptures in proof that this understanding is correct.

That the Psalm was written by David is a fact accepted by most scholars of repute. To begin with, it bears a superscription which reads: "A Psalm of David"; thus, on its very surface, it claims to have been written by him. Moreover, in the New Testament our Lord Jesus himself evidences his belief that David wrote it. (Matt. 22:43; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42.) Not only so, but Jesus declares also that when David wrote this Psalm he was "in spirit," that is to say, he was aided and guided by, or under the influence or control of, the holy spirit of God. Accepting this New Testament confirmation of the fact that David was the author of our Psalm, it follows that the expression "my Lord" means David's Lord; that is to say, David's Master, his Superior, his "Adon."

However, the first occurrence of the word Lord refers not to David's Adon, but to Jehovah. This is signified by the fact that here the word "Lord" appears, in most Bibles, in small capital letters. The meaning may be seen more clearly by reference to the Revised Version, which reads:

"Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Just now we referred to Matt. 22:43. Let us read that verse, together with the four verses which form its context, and note the additional light they throw on this inspired statement of the Psalmist. Commencing with Matt. 22:41 and reading from the Revised Version:

"Now while the Pharisees were gathering together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in the spirit call him Lord, saying,

The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet?

If David calleth him Lord, how is he his son?"

Considering these verses carefully we note, first, that in asking the Pharisees "What think ye of the Christ?" our Lord was not asking them what they thought about himself. True, he was the Christ, but he was not, in this question, insisting on that title. Rather, he is drawing them out. It is as though he had asked: "What have your studies of the Old Testament led you to understand is to be true of the great Messiah, when he comes? Whose son, whose descendant is he to be?" There was, of course, only one reply for them to make: "The son of David." This was common knowledge. The Scriptures had established this fact beyond question. (See, for example, 2 Sam. 7:8-17; Psa: 89: 3, 4; Psa. 132:11; Amos 9:11.) Not only the Pharisees, but the masses of the people, too, were well aware that Messiah was to be of David's line. - See Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; Luke 1.32.

Yes, all were agreed that according to the predictions of the Prophets, the Messiah was to be a son of David, and the heir of his throne. But now, having by this preliminary query prepared the way for his main question, our Lord puts it to them: "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?" "How do you explain this remarkable language which David employs here, in Psalm 110, verse 1? What is the reason that justified-nay, what is the reason that, under the influence of the holy spirit, impelled David to call him Lord?"

It is easy for us, with the New Testament in our hands, to answer our Lord's question! David's son was David's Lord, in the prophetic vision unfolded to David which he records in this Psalm; because, at the time that vision would meet its fulfilment, this great son of his would have become his Lord. Following his birth as a babe, he would have pursued the path marked out for him by The Father to, and beyond, Calvary. Highly exalted as a reward "for his faithfulness; he would now become the Everlasting Father of the human race. As such he would be David's Father -- David's Life-giver. (See Isa. 9:-6; Rev. 22:16.) By his question, then, our Lord intimates to the Pharisees that, understanding merely that Messiah was to be a son of David, and failing to understand this verse, which declared that Messiah was also to be David's Lord, they had but a poor, outside, view of the real nature, character, and work of the long promised Messiah. It was not a mere monarch, somewhat like David, that was needed. It was one who was fit to be David's monarch, and the monarch of all monarchs, one who would have power with God, and whose throne might be established in the hearts of men.

This Psalm is quoted not only by our Lord in Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts, but also elsewhere in the New Testament. The first verse is quoted by Peter in his great sermon on the Day of Pentecost, a sermon which carried conviction to the minds of three thousand hearers. - Acts 2:34, 35, 41.

In 1 Cor. 15:25 we are told that Christ "must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet" -- language which is quite evidently borrowed from David.

Again, in the first chapter of Hebrews, verse 13, the inspired writer, in showing the supreme excellence of the Christian dispensation over the past, and the vast superiority of Christ over all the angelic order of beings, exclaims triumphantly in concluding his argument: "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," as God did say to Jesus -- the Messiah, as you will find recorded in the 110th Psalm of David. This is the culminating point of the writer's argument, and its force rests upon the universal acknowledgment of his hearers that this Psalm referred to the Messiah, and that there was only one being in all the universe so high, so exalted, so powerful, to whom its language could be applicable, and that that Being was David's Son and David's Lord.

Nor are we left in doubt as to the occasion in the experience of our Lord when this prophetic utterance of David would meet fulfilment. Would it be when Jehovah brought him into existence as the mighty Logos? Did Jehovah *then* say to him: "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Was it when his life was transferred to earth as a babe at Bethlehem? Was it when he consecrated himself at Jordan? No! it was 'on none of these occasions. It was when, following his death and resurrection he ascended to heaven. Have we a Scripture to prove this? Yes, indeed. Hear the writer to the Hebrews, in chapter 10, verses 12 and 13:

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."

And again, in Ephesians 1:19-22, where the Apostle speaks of the mighty power of God:

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand ... and put all things under his feet."

St. Peter, too, takes up a similar strain, when in 1 Pet 3:22, he speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

Concerning the Messiah of Jewish hopes we have found in the foregoing discussion at least two things taught in the Scriptures, and condensed in Psa. 110:1:

(1) He must be a descendant of David.

(2) He must also be David's superior.

St. Paul was a man highly educated in the Old Testament Scriptures. Note the following from his pen, which testify that Jesus possessed these two qualifications:

"Remember [Timothy] that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel." - 2 Tim. 2:8.

Yes-whatever else Timothy forgot he must remember that, and maintain it in his teaching.

Again, in Rom. 1:3, 4 in what has been called the "Gospel according to St. Paul," he writes of that Gospel:

"Concerning His son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Just a word in closing. Jehovah is heard, by David, addressing Messiah: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." How shall we understand these words?

According to an able commentator (Perowne) this expression "denotes that the person thus honored occupied the second place in the Kingdom, taking rank immediately after the king, and also sharing as viceroy in the government."

If such be the meaning, if the solemn address, "Sit thou at my right hand," is equivalent to saying, "Be thou associated with me in my kingly dignity, in my power and universal dominion," then the best comment on the passage is to be found in Daniel 7:13, 14, where one like the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven and is brought unto the Ancient of Days, and there is given him a kingdom and glory and a dominion, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. The two passages, the one from the Psalms and the other from Daniel, are in fact combined by our Lord himself, when, standing before the High Test, he says: "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of sitting ..on the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." - Matt. 26:63, 64; Mark 14:6.1, 62.

-- P. L. Read.

Jesus in the Midst of Israel

"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you." - Acts 2:26,

AFTER HIS baptism our Lord's life was as public as it had been previously private and secluded. His appearance among the people, as expressed by the Prophet Isaiah, was like that of a bright light shining in the midst of a blackout. "The ,people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." - Matt. 4:16.

In our text, taken from the Apostle Peter's Pentecostal address, he declares that Jesus was in the midst of Israel as a man approved or accredited of God. The Lord came not as representing himself, but on a mission from the Father, and bore credentials establishing his authority. He came to a people in a position to examine these credentials, for his advent had been foretold for 4,000 years, and the Jewish nation were the custodians of the oracles of God. Much detailed information had been given concerning his coming, running along three lines of testimony. The Messiah was to be a prophet, like unto Moses; a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and a king of the seed of David: Let us note briefly how the Lord demonstrated that He was approved of God, as prophet, priest, and King.

As prophet the Messiah was to be like unto Moses. Moses brought to the people a fresh revelation of God in a law written and engraved on tables of stone. Jesus brought an entirely new revelation of God, of which he himself was the embodiment. He was God manifest in the flesh, and they who had seen him had seen the Father. While all he said was true, Jesus himself was the Truth. The Lord's credentials as a prophet were acknowledged generally by Israel. He spoke as one having authority, they said, and not as the scribes. If the mere reading of the beautiful words, wonderful words of life, contained in the Gospels stirs us so deeply, what must it have been to listen to them as they fell fresh from the lips of the Savior himself. If imperfect men can hold us spellbound by their eloquence, what must Jesus' influence over the people have been. Blessed indeed were they who had the privilege of listening first-hand to such teaching as the Sermon on the Mount, the parable of the prodigal son, the interview with Nicodemus, or the farewell discourse on ,the night of the betrayal. Even his enemies were impressed in spite of themselves. In the synagogue at Nazareth the eyes of all were fastened upon him, and they marveled at the gracious words -that proceeded out of his mouth. The scribes and Pharisees sent messengers to arrest him, but on the outskirts of the crowd they stopped, rooted to the spot. Returning empty handed to their masters they exclaimed with awe, "Never man spake like this man."

Not as prophet only was Jesus in the midst of Israel, but also as priest. This was an aspect of the Messiah's credentials which Israel entirely overlooked, believing as they did in the permanence of the Levitical priesthood. The function of a priest was to bring God and man together on the basis of sacrifice, to accomplish at-one-ment by means of atonement. At Jordan Jesus offered up himself to God, and for three and a half years was laying down his life in self-sacrificing service for man. As a priest his compassion for the ignorant and those who were out of the way was the most outstanding feature of his ministry. One of the main charges leveled against him by his enemies was that he was a friend of publicans and sinners. Simon the Pharisee says to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner." But Jesus was a prophet and more than a prophet; he was a priest.

The centre of interest and of hope, the Lord moved up and down throughout the land. What a wonderful sight it must have been to see the crowds streaming out to meet him, bringing their sick and afflicted.

"At even ere the sun was set,
The sick O Lord around Thee lay;
O with what divers pains they met!
O with what joy they went away!"

The disciples who journeyed with the Lord' must have been thrilled by their experiences. To witness the joy of the lepers rescued from a living death, the blind restored to the priceless blessing of sight, the deaf and the dumb translated to a new world of sound and speech, and the multitudes cured of all manner of diseases, must have made their cup of joy full to overflowing.

The Jews did not expect their Messiah to come as a priest, although it was in that direction that their need was greatest. They did, however, expect him to come as King, and in this respect Jesus in the popular estimation failed to establish his credentials. Even his disciples said sadly, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Nevertheless, Jesus was accredited by God as King just as truly as priest and prophet. The idea of a king carries with it the thought of power and authority. Alone of all the people, Jesus was free, and master of himself. All others were bondslaves of sin. Of all the race of Adam, only he could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" The only one with complete power over himself, he demonstrated that he was the only one fitted to have complete authority over others.

As king, Jesus manifested his authority not only over the power of sin, but over Satan and all his evil hosts. No demon can withstand his royal command. The devils hear and obey. Even the elements are under his control. In amazement and awe the disciples ask themselves, "What manner of man is this that even the winds and the waves obey him?" In fear and wonder they behold him approaching in the midst of the storm, walking on the sea. His authority extends over the laws of nature, and water is turned into wine, and a handful of loaves and fishes multiply so that they suffice for multitudes. So royal is he in his kingly mein that his enemies quail before him, and are powerless to do him harm. Even death itself, the king of terrors, yields up its prey at his royal command. At the last, when sinners in derision crowned him and he stands before them despised and rejected, with the traces of shameful spitting on his face, so kingly does he look, that he draws from the Roman governor the involuntary tribute, "Behold the Man!" And although Pilate is bound hand and foot by his guilty past so that He cannot release him as he earnestly desires, he expresses his conviction in the superscription on the cross written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, "Jesus of Nazereth, the King of the Jews."

Thus was Jesus a man approved of God in the midst of Israel by miracles and wonders and signs. But not only in the midst of Israel, for, broadcast by the Gospel message, he has been in the midst of all men ever since, and ' to those who have had ears to hear and hearts to appreciate, he has "satisfied their deepest longings, met, supplied their every need."

And now that the Gospel Age has almost run its course and the world is entering into its darkest hour and deepest distress, how blessed are we in the knowledge that God's great prophet, priest, and king, is ready to take over the control of earth's affairs and bring about the desire of all nations. Soon,

"The beam that shines on Zion's hill
Shall lighten every land,
The King that reigns in Salem's tower,
Shall all the world command."

Soon earth's great High Priest, clad no longer in sacrificial dress, but in the garments of glory and beauty, shall lift up his hands in blessing. Meantime may we to whom he is so precious open our hearts and lives more and more to the influence of that light and love and life that flow to us from him by virtue of his threefold office, and may he as the Way, the Truth, and the Life conduct us closer and closer to the heart of the Father.

- *Contributed.*