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Isaiah's Messianic Vision

"And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." - Matthew 1:21.

THE story of Jesus' birth is not new; it is "the old, old story of gracious heavenly love." We hear again in carol, hymn, and sacred song the glad tidings of great joy announce centuries ago by an angel of the Lord to shepherds who were keeping watch over their flock by night. Although more than nineteen hundred years have passed since the announcement of the Heavenly Message, the good news concerning the coming of the "Christ Child" continues to inspire hope in all who put their trust in God, and whose thankful hearts echo the praise of the heavenly host: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

The Prophet Isaiah, whose name signifies "the salvation of Jehovah," has been styled "the Evangelical Prophet," because his many and varied prophecies are replete in their graphic description of the various aspects of the work of Christ. It is a remarkable circumstance that the significance of the Prophet's name coincides so entirely with the mighty work of restoration to be wrought by the Messiah—the recovery of the human family from the blight of sin and death.

The great Prophet, seeing in a vision the coming Messiah, spoke as he was moved by the holy spirit, saying, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). As the vision unfolded before Isaiah, he designated the character and work of the Messiah by revealing the appropriate names which he would bear. This great prophetic vision was one of changing scenes which like a panorama, passed before the gaze of the Seer and pictured progressively the birth, life, death, "exaltation, and glorious Millennial reign of Christ, who, as Prophet, Priest, and King, was acclaimed "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

With great joy must the Prophet have beheld the promised Seed of Abraham dispensing blessings of health, security, life, and peace to all the families of the earth. If we would share his joy, we

must also share his vision; so let us turn the pages of the Sacred Word to discover there the past scenes narrated and the future ones pictured in language fair.

FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

The opening scene of the prophetic vision was fulfilled in the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem; and so we find recorded that "Mary brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). This was the first step in God's great plan of redemption to restore mankind to the perfection of Eden's Paradise. For more than four thousand years the human family had been dying as a result of the just sentence 'of death passed upon Father Adam; for "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12). But now a ray of hope was shining; the long awaited Messiah was born; for "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," and "The Word was made flesh" (Gal. 4:4; John 1:14). The Logos, the Firstborn of every creature, the Beginning of the creation of God, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN

We turn next to the Consecration scene, in which Jesus came to John to be baptized by him in the Jordan. As we picture Jesus standing before John with head bowed in the attitude of complete submission to his Heavenly Father, the words of the Psalmist come to our mind: "Lo, I come ... I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:7, 8). "For the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Mark 10:45; John 3:16). Then Jesus symbolized his consecration by being baptized by John: "And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:10, 11). This was he of whom the Baptist spoke, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Isaiah, in another of his matchless prophecies (Isa. 53:3-5), depicts Jesus as he faithfully carried out his covenant of sacrifice to "pour out his soul unto death": "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER

This scene revealed the Messiah in the glory of his Kingdom, with all authority and power vested in him. Daniel the Beloved also saw this scene in his vision of the Messiah's dominion and kingdom, and set it down for our learning: "Behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13, 14). The Psalmist also prophesied

concerning Messiah's worldwide Kingdom, saying, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him" (Ps. 72:8-11).

AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL

This word, wonderful, is derived from the verb *pala*, to separate, to distinguish, or to be great. "It is a word which expresses with surprising accuracy everything in relation to the Redeemer." Jesus was God's great Gift to man; the Light of the World. He was the Logos, or Word of God, because he revealed or manifested God. He was the Beginning of the creation of God; the Firstborn of every creature. All things were created by him, and for him. He left the glory which he had with the Father, and was made flesh and dwelt among us in order that he might redeem mankind. He was Wonderful in his birth, life, death, and resurrection. He will be Wonderful, too, in the office of Prophet, Priest, and King; for "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

COUNSELOR

"The name Counselor here denotes one of honorable rank; one who is fitted to stand near princes and kings as their adviser. It is expressive of great wisdom, and of qualifications to guide and direct the human race." Thus during the great Reconstruction Period-The Times of Restitution-the Messiah will guide the redeemed over the highway of holiness, and "a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." Then directed by the wise Counselor, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"; for "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Isa. 35:10; Ps. 25:9).

THE MIGHTY GOD

This scene of the vision will meet its fulfillment when the Messiah comes in the glory of his Kingdom to judge the earth; for "he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Then "times of refreshing shall come out from the face of Jehovah"; and Christ, as Immanuel (God with us), shall be acclaimed "The Mighty God." The Apostle Paul also spoke of that day, saying, "He [God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). And to this may be added the testimony of Jesus: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

Again "the Evangelical Prophet" pictures for us another view of the Messiah; this time in the role of "The Mighty God"; "And in this mountain [kingdom] shall the Lord of hosts [through our Lord Jesus Christ] make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation," for "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm [Christ in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 25:6-9; Isa. 52:10).

THE EVERLASTING FATHER

The Vulgate renders the expression, The Everlasting Father, "The Father of the future Age." Literally it is "The Father of eternity." Both renderings are correct, for the title, "The Everlasting Father," will be ascribed to Christ in his Millennial Kingdom; for then the blessing of everlasting life will be offered to all of the human family who will "heed that Prophet" and take of the water of life provided by the precious sacrifice of Jesus. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

The closing scene of the vision revealed the Messiah as "The Prince of Peace." In this great role he shall make wars to cease unto the end of the earth and break in pieces the oppressor; then shall he usher in the era of eternal peace among men, and the desire of all nations shall come. For the God of Heaven shall set his King (Christ) on his holy hill (Kingdom) of Zion, "And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it" (Mic. 4:3, 4). "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Ps. 72:4-7).

We have come to the end of the vision; and have shared Isaiah's joy as we hearkened to inspired New Testament Prophets bend their voices with those of holy men of old to tell "The Message of Salvation from God's own holy Word."

It is particularly fitting at this season of the year that we steal away in the spirit from the world with its cares and distractions, and in the quietness of our own soul tune in again the Heavenly Message: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Then let us join with the heavenly host in praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

- R.. W. Godfrey

CHRISTMAS

I heard the bells of Christmas ring,
"No-el, No-el, No-el,"
The choirs then began to sing,
"No-el, No-el, No-el,"
And o'er the air the grand old hymns
Came to my room -- and then
My thoughts harked back where once I stood
In far-off Bethlehem.

And, standing on the hillside there
The Shepherd's field lay green
Before me in Judea's sun,
All rugged land between.
And, in my fancy, as I stood
I heard the angels sing,
And watched the fleecy, sleepy flocks
Follow their shepherds in:

[No better right had kings than they,
Symbols of God's own Son --
A Lamb slain e'er the world was made
For man by sin undone.]

And then a Cross before my eyes
Stood outlined on a hill,
A broken Heart before me cried,
A suffering form was still.

The heavy darkness gathered round,
An earthquake shook the ground,
"'Tis finished" --Yea, upon that Cross
Man's substitute is found.

Two thousand years I saw roll on,
Sad is the story told
Of pestilence and storm and flood
And war from greed of gold.
The son of widowed mother feels
No hand upon his head,
His funeral cortege moves along
To burial of the dead.

Jairus' daughters slumber on
No voice to bid them rise,
A world in travail moans her pain
No help comes from the skies.

And now as Christmas bells ring out

"No-el, No-el, No-el,"
The bitterest hours of that race
Are here for Israel.
And blue stars on our banners
Change to gold of heart-break when
A message comes from out the din
Of battle -- and 'tis then
That anguished hearts look upward
"Lord, must these things always be?
The promise of Thy coming?
When, O, Lord, to set us free?"

To the Holy Book I turned then,
Saw upon the Gospel page
That all things had been as promised
Down the Jewish-Gospel Age;
That a King *shall* reign in justice,
Man, delivered from the fall
Will with one consent then serve Him,
King of kings, and Lord of all!

Yes, the great Time-clock is striking,
Never have its notes been wrong,
Ushering out life's night of weeping,
Bringing in earth's morning song.
Christians, *watch* - the Bridegroom cometh
Satan's power no more shall sway
Quarreling factions, warring nations,
It is coming, that glad day
When the Bride, joined to her Bridegroom
Sees his glory, shares his throne --
When all in their graves shall hear him,
"Lazarus, come forth, O come."
Where, cold grave, is then thy victory?
Where, O death, shall be thy sting?
Let the Christmas bells ring loudly
Welcome to earth's coming King!

- *Grace M. Harris*

A Thanksgiving Catechism

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever." - Psalm 136:1.

WILLIAM Shakespeare, that understanding and eloquent spokesman for fallen man, has this to say of mercy:

The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath, it is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein cloth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the heart of kings,
It is an attribute to God Himself;
And earthly power cloth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

Psalm 136 is a hymn of thanksgiving for mercy. The refrain of every one of the twenty-six verses is in the words of our text: "O give thanks unto the *Lord*; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever."

In the Revised Version "mercy" is rendered "loving-kindness," a more awkward but perhaps a more definitive word. Yet it must be admitted that the mercy which mitigates the punishment of the guilty, or pardons the weak but repentant sinner, is the highest manifestation of kindness.

Every right thinking member of the race of Adam is conscious of his own imperfection and guilt before his Creator, and of his consequent need of mercy.

'TIS MIGHTIEST IN THE MIGHTIEST

Mercy is the attribute of heaven. The greatest single act of God's mercy was the provision of a propitiation, a corresponding price, "for the sins of the whole world." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift."

But mercy does not end with this supreme manifestation. Even those of whom it is written: "But *ye* are washed, but *we* are sanctified, but *ye* are justified" -- even those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and have covenanted to walk in his footsteps-these still require mercy of their Judge.

To be sure their case has been transferred to Christ; the Father has quashed the indictment against them, the "corruption of blood" consequent upon the "attainder" of their father Adam for high treason against his Lord; he "*will not* impute iniquity" to them. They now "stand before the judgment seat of *Christ*" (2 Cor. 5:10).

IT IS REQUIRED IN STEWARDS THAT THEY BE FOUND FAITHFUL

Upon what basis are they now judged? *As stewards and ambassadors of Christ*. As his representatives before the angels, the brethren, and the world. They are judged as candidates for joint-heirship with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom-this word means the *Royalty* - not on the basis of those unwilling sins of *commission* which are of the flesh that is "disowned and reckoned dead," and which are all covered by the Blood the red robe of their Sponsor's righteousness. Rather, they are judged for their fitness for future office on the basis of their sins of *omission* -the things they should do and do not; even as it is written: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Equipped for their high ambassadorial office with power of the holy spirit; with angel guardians and friends; with constant guidance of a living Word, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"; it would indeed appear that each one of this favored company should be able to "keep the faith," to "fight the good fight" to "finish the course" with the joy of accomplishment and success. But how many can plead before their judge, that they have done these things, as did Paul by inspiration, speaking not his own judgment but his Judge's -- to assure the humble-minded of the possibility of such a verdict.

Can *any* appear before that Bar of Justice and plead: "I have this day faithfully and wholly presented thee to all observers. I have not been guilty in any degree of unfaithfulness. There has been no variance; no weakness, no hesitancy in my course this day. The motions of sin in my flesh have been put to death. And as I have receive mercy, so have I shown mercy to all who have trespassed against me." Can *any so* plead? Verily, Nay! "Where is boasting then? *It is excluded*" (Rom. 3:27).

THE BOASTERS

Only "the workers of iniquity *boast themselves*" (Ps. 94:4). Only such will have the effrontery to plead before him: "Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" The verdict against these boasters is already entered: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22, 23). "I never knew you" in the intimate sense, as my prospective Bride-certainly he did not mean "I never knew *about* ou." The boasters' statements are not contradicted. They *had "worked,"* and many, including themselves, had honestly thought their works "Christian" and "wonderful." But "All the workers of iniquity *boast themselves!*"

On the contrary, the daily and final justification (constituting righteous) of the 144,000 is and will be in response to their throwing themselves upon the mercy of the Court. Their plea will ever be: "O righteous judge, thy merit and thy mercy must still make up my imperfection. I am unworthy."

WILL ALL BE JUSTIFIED?

Will this *plea always avail*? Will *all* who offer it be approved as members of the Bride of Christ-the *144,000* of the Little Flock upon whom it is the Father's great *pleasure* to bestow the *Royalty*?

If we accept as accurate the oft repeated refrain of Psalm 136 -- "His mercy endureth *forever*" -- *it* would appear that the answer should be yes. But there is no word in the Hebrew that has the precise significance of the English word "forever." The Hebrew word so rendered here is "olam,"

literally meaning an invisible and indefinite *end*. The end is far off, but it is there. "Behold the goodness and the severity of God." "He will not always [to the end] chide [mercifully contend, rebuke, plead, chasten - Heb. 12:5-11]: *neither* will he keep [guard, restrain, reserve - Jer. 3:5] his anger forever [olam]" (Psalm 103:9).

There is a limit to his long patience and mercy. With many, the final plea for mercy will result in commutation of sentence -- the deserved extreme penalty of death -- to loss of Kingdom honors, as it is written: "he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved" (1 Cor. 3:15).

WHAT IS OUR OWN STATUS?

"Examine yourselves," urges the Apostle, "whether ye be in the faith." He is referring to this very issue, for he continues: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates literally, rejected]"unless you he passed the limit and have been disapproved for the Body -- the Royalty (2 Cor. 13:5).

Upon what lines shall we proceed with this most important self examination? Shall it be as to doctrinal conformity? Or as to "great and wonderful works"? Or for emotional exaltation? No, we will not be so foolish! We have a law Book to guide us, wherein we find written: "*This* is the will of God, even your sanctification" -- that is, *setting apart* for a holy purpose (1 Thess. 4:3). "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29).

What, then, is the nature of the evidence that must be brought out, to show that we are not rejected? The cross-examination to which we subject ourselves should be upon these lines, our answers "Yes" or "No"; remembering that "the thoughts and intents of our hearts" are being judged, and that they are "naked and open before him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:12, 13). And so we ask ourselves:

Am I still "seeking *first* the Kingdom of God and his righteousness?"

Do I still clearly see and embrace the opportunity of *sacrificing* with my Lord?

Am I really *suffering* with him?

Do I love *all* the brethren?

Do I perceive and act upon the beauty and privilege of "laying down my life" for the brethren -- particularly the often discredited ones who need me most?

Can I claim mercy because I am consistently merciful?

Am I "*diligent* in business, *fervent* in spirit, serving the Lord"?

Am I an "overcomer," to some extent at least, in my own rebellious domain, my fleshy body? Am I "bringing it into subjection"?

RELEVANT AND PROPER QUESTIONS

This may seem a drastic examination; but does not evidence toward which these questions are directed vitally concern the "reasonable service" incumbent upon a consecrated Christian, covenanted to follow in the footsteps of his Lord?

If I can answer "Yes" to these questions -- even with some hesitancy and uncertainty and tears-is it not evidence that my Head is still dealing with me as a prospective member of his Body: and is not this conclusion the greatest reason for thanksgiving, that I could possibly have -- not alone on an appointed day, but every day?

Shall I not then read the Psalms of Thanksgiving and find every refrain therein has an echo from the depths of my being:

Give thanks unto the Lord, O my soul; for he is good; for his mercy still endureth toward *me*, and will endure until the end he has appointed. Then whatever his verdict, it *shall be well with my soul*.

- H. E. Hollister

The Solitary Way

Alas! How few may know the grace it takes
To tread the solitary way! Alone!
Ah, yes, *alone!* No other human heart
Can understand the nameless sorrows there
The nights in weeping spent, and yet, when dawns
The day, to greet the world with radiant smile,
And scatter sunshine while you whisper low
To your poor heart, "*Cant bear a little more?*"

Alone! Poor heart, and dost thou question, *Why?*
Dost think it *strange* that thou must walk this way?
Ah, no! Thou dost but follow in His steps
Who went before, and of the people there
Was none with Him! Alone! Yet *not alone* --
Hath not thy blessed Lord and Master said,
"My presence shall go with thee"? Ah, my soul,
No longer, then, *a solitary* way!

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

"But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last." "So the last shall be first, and the first last." - Matt. 19:30; 20:16, Am. R. V.

THIS PARABLE is confessedly one of the most difficult of the New Testament Scriptures. Here are men hired, some at six o'clock in the morning, some at nine o'clock, some at noon; some at three o'clock in the afternoon, some even at five; and yet at six o'clock, when they come to be paid off, they all receive the same wage. Instinctively we feel that that is not fair; we feel that those who had borne the burden and heat of the day should have been better paid than those who entered the vineyard -only in the cool of the evening. As we read this parable we instinctively sympathize, do we not, with those who had borne the heat and burden of the day. It puzzles us as it puzzled them, to know why those who had worked only a single hour in the cool of the evening, should be put on a level with the weary men who had labored through the oppressive heat of the day, and had borne the brunt of the toil. It ought to puzzle us; for next to the quality of love there is nothing in us that is more evidently of God than that deep sense of justice which resents whatever is unfair and inequitable.

Nor is the wrong done to-our sense of justice at all mended, when, to vindicate his conduct, "the goodman of the house" begins to talk of his right to do' what he will with his own, and to declare that it is his will and pleasure to put the last on an equality with, or even before, the first. Indeed, to conceive of God as saying, "May I not do as I will with Mine own?" or "Simply because it pleases Me to do so, I will give unto these last even as unto the first?" -- such a conception of Him is but a new shock to our sense of justice, to our faith in the equity of His rule. Like Abraham of old, we believe that the God of all the earth cannot but do right. We have been taught to conceive of Him as actuated by love, not by caprice; as rewarding our service according to a law divinely just, and not according to the uncertain impulses of an arbitrary self-will; and we are at a loss to know how to attribute such conduct, or defense of His conduct, to the God whom we believe to be absolutely just and full of grace.

There are some people, doubtless, who are not perplexed by the householder's conduct, and his defense of it. Those who find a key to the inequalities of life and providence, in what they are pleased; to call "Divine Sovereignty," those who believe that of His own will God has elected a few to be saved and doomed the great majority of our race to be eternally tormented, and who believe that He is as truly glorified in the damnation of the many as in the salvation of the few--such, of course, find no difficulty in this parable. A penny more or less means nothing to them. But **we** who believe that God loves all men, and that Christ died for all men, and not merely for the few--we cannot hear this naked assertion of the Divine Sovereignty without perplexity and amazement. We believe not only in God's sovereign power, but in the fact that that power never has nor can be exercised except in accordance with justice and love. To hear **Him** say, "I shall do as I will with Mine own" or "I shall bestow the rewards of My grace as I please," cuts our deepest convictions against the grain. "**He** cannot be less just than we are," we say, "He must be far more just; and therefore there must be a meaning in the words which we have not yet fathomed, a meaning which, when once we find' it, will be seen to be in harmony with our loftiest, conceptions of His character." We fully believe that there is such a meaning, and it will be our endeavor in this article so to bring it out as to solve the difficulties which this parable presents.

Two Erroneous Solutions

Two very ingenious, but, to our understanding, erroneous, solutions of these difficulties are worth a moment's attention. The main difficulty of the parable is, of course, the apparent injustice of giving all the laborers the same wage. And to escape this difficulty some of our ablest expositors have assumed, that either those who were first called grew slack and careless, or the last called displayed so extraordinary a diligence that in one hour they did as much as those who had been in the vineyard all day; just, for example, as St. Paul, though the last called of the Apostles, labored more abundantly than they all.

To this interpretation, however, there is one fatal objection. If all the laborers had done an equal stroke of work, how is it that the lord of the vineyard fails to urge so obvious and so complete a vindication of his conduct? Evidently what he does say is said in an endeavor to justify himself. When, therefore, his justice was called in question, why did not "the goodman of the house" meet his impugnors with the unanswerable reply "Although you were first in the vineyard you have done no more work than those who came last; and as these have done as much as you, it is but fair that they should receive as much." Instead of taking this tone, however, he falls back on his contract with them, and on his power to do as he liked with his own. His very defense implies that the last called had not done as much as the first called, although he chose to give them as much.

Another ingenious interpretation turns on the various kinds and values of the Roman denarius, translated in our Authorized Version, "penny. There were the brass, the silver, and the gold denarius; the double, the treble, the fourfold. -- And the solution is offered that just as in the Kingdom there will be one reward, namely eternal life, and yet this one reward be capable of enjoyment on various planes of being -- the Divine plane, a lower spirit plane, the human plane -- so in the parable each received a denarius, a penny, but the pennies were of different kinds and values.

But the objection fatal to the previous interpretation is also fatal to this. True and beautiful as the thought is in itself, we have no hint of it in the parable. We have hints that point in an opposite direction. If the wage, though nominally the same were really different, why did not "the goodman" bid the complaining laborers look at their penny, mark that theirs was a gold penny, while that of those taken on at midday was a silver penny, and that of those called late in the afternoon was but a brass penny? With so complete and unanswerable a defense at his command it is simply inconceivable that he should have fallen back on his contract, and his right to do what he would with his own.

We must admit, then, that there was at least an apparent injustice in his dealings. We must admit that those who were really first were put on a level with the last, and that those who were really last were put on a level with the first. We must admit that those who had done most work received no higher wage than those who had done least. In fine, we must admit the inequality of treatment, and learn, if we can, how it is to be explained and justified.

The Rich Young Man Whom Jesus Loved

To understand this parable it must be studied, like all Scripture, with reference to its context. And to do this in the present instance it is necessary to go back to the previous chapter. There we find the circumstances which moved our Lord to utter this parable. Commencing with verse 16 of chapter 19 we read the story of the rich young man whom Jesus loved. A young ruler-rich, learned, and of dignified position, yet modest, humble, sincere, had come to Jesus with every gesture of courtesy and deference, to ask Him how he-might win eternal life. Despite the temptation of luxury, he is pure; despite the temptations of wealth: and reputation he is humble, modest, dissatisfied with his present attainments, eagerly stretching forth to things before. The Lord Jesus bade him, if he would enter life, keep the commandments. This demand the ruler was able to say that he had met. He had kept the commandments.

And Jesus, looking on him, and seeing, we suppose, that on the whole he had been as good as his word, loved him. But the young ruler, emboldened by the grace and love of Christ, reveals the secret ambition of his heart. Mark how pure and lofty that ambition is. He is not content with mere life, even though it be life eternal; he longs to be perfect, perfect in all his relations with God and man. Not content with mere salvation he asks counsel of perfection. And our Lord gives him what he asks. So high and pure an ambition as his can be attained only at the cost of utter self-sacrifice. "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor." It was a difficult demand to make on a young, wealthy, learned man; and all the more difficult because it was sudden and unexpected. For, in all probability, the ruler anticipated nothing more than that he should receive a new and more austere rule of life; that he would be urged to a profounder study of the Law, or a more rigid attendance on the duties of religion. To Bear that he must voluntarily become poor and homeless, that he must part with all he prized and loved, to follow One who had not where to lay His head, must have taken him by surprise. For the moment, the test is too severe. Amiable, modest, with a heart set on the eternal realities, the young man, cursed with great possessions, cannot, all at once, give them up. In his surprise and consternation he finds himself unable to meet the rigorous demand. He goes away sorrowful.

The Master's Gracious Spirit

But if he was sorrowful as he went away, can we suppose that Jesus, who loved him, was not sorrowful to see him go? -- that He did not yearn over him, and pity him, and long to bring him back? We may be sure that He did. For, see, the young ruler, smitten with shame and grief, has no excuse to offer for himself; but Jesus begins to make excuse for him. Turning to His disciples He tells them, lest they should judge the ruler harshly, how hard it is for rich men to enter the Kingdom. It is easier for a loaded camel to push through the Needle-gate, than for a man burdened with wealth to enter the Kingdom of heaven.

Now if Peter and his brethren had been in sympathy with their Master, if they had shared His loving, gracious spirit, what would they have done on., hearing Him speak so tenderly of the young man who had just gone away? Would they not-above and before all would not ardent, impulsive Peter, have run after him, and told him how sorry the Good Master was to lose him, and have-' besought him to come back? But instead of manifesting the Master's spirit of love and tenderness, they are thinking only of themselves. "We have left all, and followed Thee;" cries Peter, "what, then, shall we have." And no words could have more conclusively shown his lack of sympathy with his Master. It is easy to conceive how this boast and question must have jarred on the heart of Christ. He was full of pity for the young man who had won His love, and who loved Him, though as yet he could not leave all for Him. And to see that Peter, instead of sharing His

pity, instead of being moved with regret for a man who had had so heavy a trial to meet, was pluming himself on, his superior virtue; to hear him exalting himself over the modest, refined, meditative ruler, who had just gone away sorrowful, with scalding tears of shame at his own weakness -- this, we may be sure was hard for Christ to bear. Christ was mourning that a man of a disposition so lovable, with a heart bent toward the loftiest aims should miss the high mark of perfection; and Peter breaks in on His tender, wistful, reverie with: "Never mind him, Lord; **He** won't come. But **we**, we have left all to follow Thee." We like to think that Peter's words here were not entirely selfish; that in his rough, blundering way, he meant to console Jesus, and to remind him that, if some went away from Him, others were ready to cleave to Him; but his very attempt at consolation must have been a new wound to Christ. For He loved Peter as well as the young ruler, and would be grieved at his boastfulness, and selfishness. Yet with what infinite grace He responds to his selfish demand. There is an infinite grace, but also, we think, a little weariness and conscious patience in the words: "No man hath left all for My sake and the Gospel's but shall receive an hundred-fold, now in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting." But it would not be for Peter's highest good that his selfishness, his lack of sympathy with his Master, his want of pity of the young ruler, should escape without rebuke. And so our Lord follows up His gracious promise with a warning and a parable "No man hath left all for My sake and the Gospel's but shall receive an hundred-fold now, and by and by life everlasting, but many first shall be last, and last first." There is the warning appended to His gracious promise. And then to make the matter plain our Lord proceeds to relate the parable of the laborers in the vineyard: "But many first shall be last and last first, for the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that was a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard." Then comes the story of some laborers who, though called into the vineyard at the eleventh hour of the day received an equal wage with those who had been called at the first hour. What did the warning mean but this -- that though Peter and the other disciples had been the first to respond to Christ's call, others might yet be called who would rank before them; that though they were the first they might become the last, and were in danger of becoming the last so long as they could boast of their superior fidelity or show a selfish and unloving spirit?

Many First Shall be Last

In this warning and parable it was as though our Lord had said to Peter: "You and your brethren have indeed left all to follow Me. Have no fear of your reward. You shall receive it to the uttermost farthing. You were amongst the first to enter the vineyard, and you work in it as well as you know how. You have done much and well. You are bearing the burden and heat of the day, and when evening comes, you shall in no wise lose your reward. You shall have a full day's wage. But while you labor in My Father's vineyard and employ your time and talents in His service and Mine, are you thinking only of reward? only of how much you may get by serving Me? Well, you shall have even more than you hope. But there are many not called yet who will come to Me by and by. These may show a nobler spirit. They may serve from love, and not merely because it is part of the contract. And these last-will it not be just that they should be put on a level with you, or even be preferred before you, if you retain your mercenary and servile disposition?"

That this warning, that many first shall be last and last first, is the key with which to unlock the teaching of this parable is, we think, abundantly clear from the fact that after relating the parable, our Lord repeats the warning: "So" says He, "the last shall be first and the first last." We may be sure that in these two sentences, or rather in this one sentence with which the parable both opens and closes, we have its key, or our Lord Jesus would neither have laid it so conveniently to our hands, nor so emphatically called it to our attention.

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

"But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last." "So the last shall be first, and the first last." - Matt. 19:30; 20:16. Am. R. V.

IN our last issue we endeavored to view this parable in proper relationship to its context; let us now see how it may be applied. In doing so we must remember that with this parable, as with all parables, it is not possible to make every little detail fit precisely. Thus, for example, we have no difficulty in recognizing the relationship of our Lord to His people, as indicated in the parable of the Shepherd and His sheep. When we think of the leadership, the guidance, the love and protection which a shepherd affords his sheep, and of the unquestioning obedience to and reliance on the shepherd 'which the sheep manifest, we are impressed with the appropriateness of the picture. However, if we were to press the illustration beyond its proper limits, we should run into difficulty, for the main interest that a shepherd has in tending sheep is the amount of wool he is likely to get from their backs, or how much a pound lamb chops will bring in the market. So, also, in seeking to apply the parable before us. We shall experience difficulty in trying to make each little feature count, but its main lesson should not be difficult to apply.

The Rich Young Man Whom Jesus Loved

Out of many possible applications which the parable may have there are three which especially appeal to us as having merit. In the first place, there is one possible, and even likely, application of this warning and parable which cannot fail to be very welcome to us all. We are thinking now of the young man whom Jesus loved. *We* love him, too, do we not? A rich man, yet not spoiled by his wealth; a zealot for the law, and yet bent on learning more than the law could teach; a young man, and yet modest and teachable. We do not think it strange that he found it hard to give up "great possessions" all at once, and to become a penniless, homeless, wanderer, even that he might become perfect. It irks and grieves us to think that *he* should have gone away from Christ. We cannot easily persuade ourselves that he never came back. Nor need we try, for in our Lord's rebuke to Peter, "But there are last who shall yet be first," we have at least a hint that he who went sorrowfully away came joyfully back. For, surely, he was one of the last who became one of the first in Christ's regard; or why, as he went away, should Christ begin to speak of late-comers, who would be as dear as those who came early, and to tell a story of certain laborers, who, though they entered the vineyard at the evening hour, took as high wage as those who came in the early morning hours? To us it seems that our Lord Jesus, yearning with love and pity for the sorrowful young ruler, was comforting Himself with the thought that he *would* come back by and by. *That* seems to us the reason why He harps and lingers on the thought so long. First, as the ruler departs, He says, "Well, well, there are last who will yet be first." Then He tells the story of the laborers in the vineyard. And again when He has told it, He reverts to the thought with which He had started: "So shall the last be first, and the first last." Let us cherish a good hope for that young man. There is much reason to believe that he now stands very near the Throne. In his reference to him, Brother Russell comments (Reprints R3529) that this ruler (Luke 18:18) is supposed to have been Lazarus, brother of Martha and Mary, whom Jesus later awakened from the dead.

The First-called Jews became Last

As a second illustration of the main, the essential, teaching of the parable, let us take the case of the Jews and Gentiles. And here it will be helpful to notice a point in the parable to which we have not yet alluded. We refer to the contract into which the householder entered with the first-called laborers. With them, we are told, He **agreed** for a denarius for the day. Scholars tell us that

the word here translated "agreed" suggests that a certain amount of bargaining went on and it was only when an agreement had been reached for a certain stipulated wage that these particular laborers commenced work. This is a point -of no little interest, for, as we read on, we find that no bargain of the sort is made afterwards. At the third hour, nine o'clock, the householder takes on more men; but to them he simply promises: "Whatsoever is right I will give you," and they go their way into the vineyard without demur, not haggling for terms, trusting simply to his justice and his generosity. At twelve o'clock, at three o'clock, even at five o'clock in the evening he takes more men on; but in no case have we any hint of a bargain, nor does he even promise: "I will give you whatsoever is right." The laborers are eager for work on any terms; and there is something, we suppose, in the householder's face, and in his tone of voice, which is a promise in itself.

Well, now, let us see how this may apply, at least in part, to the Jews, and have constituted both a warning to them and a prophecy of the causes which would lead to their rejection. Their nation was the first to be called into God's service, centuries before the Gentiles were invited to labor in His vineyard. Moreover when the Jews engaged in God's service it was not without an **agreement** as to wages. They would keep so many laws, offer so many sacrifices, say so many prayers, on condition that God would bless them above all other nations of earth. And, taking them as a whole, excepting only a few choice souls, a few men and women among them of faith and vision, the Jews, who, before entering His vineyard, had contracted, covenanted, **agreed** with their Householder for a definite wage, did their work in the spirit of hirelings. The ruling motive of their service was the reward. So long as they got their wage they were therewith content. But when they heard that God had shown His grace to the Gentiles also, they were offended. They murmured and complained: "We have borne the heat of noon, and the weight, the burden, of the toil. These have wrought but one hour, and that in the cool of the evening, yet Thou hast made them equal to us."

They had all that was stipulated in the contract, but with this they were not content. God kept, and more than kept, His agreement with them. He blessed them in basket and in store when they sought to walk in His counsels; He graciously chastised them when they deflected from the paths of truth and righteousness, so that their national conscience might - be kept tender; although they were most unprofitable servants to Him, God acted towards them as a Father and a Husband combined. But it was intolerable to them that the uncovenanted Gentiles should be placed on an equality of privilege and favor with them, and rather than continue to work with the late called Gentiles they left the vineyard.

Here, then, were first who became last. Was it unjust that they should be among the last? Was it **God** who put them last, or **themselves**? Surely it was themselves, for they might have remained among the first. Did not St. Paul, although a Hebrew of the Hebrews, become the foremost Apostle of the Christian Church?

The Last-called Gentiles became First

Compare with theirs the case of the Gentiles. They were not permitted to even enter the vineyard until the seventy weeks of special covenant favor which God had made with the Jews had expired. They stood idle in the market-place. If any should ask them why they remained unemployed so long they might truthfully reply: "Because no man hath hired us. We were there in the market-place, at least a good many of us were, blindly groping after God, if haply we might find Him. Christ Jesus, He whom Israel rejected, was our desire, although we did not then know even His Name. But how could we find Him, till He revealed Himself to us? or enter His service until He taught us what His service was, and bade us enter it?" **We** may plead for them, as St. Paul **does** plead: "How should they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how

should they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? And how should they hear without a preacher? And how should the preachers preach, effectively, until their minds were illuminated by the Holy Spirit of truth, and they were divinely commissioned, or sent?" - Rom. 10:14, 15.

Here, then, in the Gentiles, we have last who became first, just as in the Jews we have first who became last. Was there any injustice in calling the Gentiles from the market-place in which they waited with longing hearts, into the vineyard in which they rejoiced to work? If now that they are in the vineyard they serve as sons and not as slaves, from love and not for hire; if they love their fellow-laborers and grudge them no good that befalls them; if they love even the Jews who have left the vineyard and try to win them back,-is it not meet and right that though the last called, they should be ranked among the first in God's service, and before those who were first, but have become last? In this application of the parable does not much of its difficulty disappear? Can we not see the Divine equity which animates it, and rejoice that even unto these last God grants the same grace as unto those who were earlier called?

(To be continued.)

- P. L. Read

Enter in

Fellow-Christian, enter in --
Into the work that calls for you,
Into the promises grand and true:
Into the joy of faith that waits:
Why stand idly without the gates,
When the fields are ripe?

You sadly say you cannot know
What God has here for you to do,
Or the way wherein your feet should go:
But if you enter in today,
He'll show you, in His own sweet way.
Your privileged place.

And when the sheaves are gathered in,
We may be sure, in that blissful day,
To sowers and reapers Christ will say, --
"You who well toiled and labored and bore,
And zealously sought for more and more
Of God's blessed work, --

"Come in, beloved, come in, come in --
Into the rest prepared for you,
Into the glory now brought to view."
Our heavenly Bridegroom will await
Our triumphant entrance within, the gate
Of Immortality.

Ten Visions of Christ Triumphant

Visions 6 & 7. The Beginning of the Advent

FIVE visions are past; five more are to come. The events of the First Advent are now left behind; vision six takes us well along the way towards the Second Advent and after that we have four glorious pen-pictures of the stirring happenings of that Advent and the inception of the Millennial Kingdom. But first of all it is necessary to view vision six.

VISION NO. 6

John saw another mighty angel come down from heaven (Rev. 10: 1-3). The splendor and glory accompanying this visitant from above was something greater by far than that revealed in any of the former visions. John had seen our Lord once as a man-child, twice as a sacrificial Lamb, twice as an officiating priest. All these appearances had to do with his First coming to earth, his resurrection, and ministry on behalf of his Church. But now there is evidence of action; the time has come to set in motion those forces which are to gain power and momentum until at last they overturn and destroy all that there is of evil in the earth and establish a world of everlasting righteousness. No wonder that John, looking upon this new scene, described the visitant as a "mighty" angel.

The newcomer was "clothed with a cloud" -that is, he appeared as if surrounded by the clouds of heaven and almost as if walking upon clouds which were swiftly bearing him earthwards. His head was encircled by the rainbow, his face radiant as the sun, and his feet -- properly "legs" -- shimmered like pillars of fire. There is much in this description that is reminiscent of the vision of Deity seen by Ezekiel and described in chapter 1 of his prophecy. He too saw a transcendently glorious Being enthroned in the clouds, surrounded by the rainbow, and radiant in a fiery glory. There is one difference. Ezekiel perceived that he was face to face with the Lord God of Israel, and the voice which spoke to him was the voice of God. John knew that the appearance which was before his eyes was a representation of Christ, the Son; his mind went instantly to the vision of the Heavenly Assizes in Daniel 7 where "One like the Son of Man" comes before the Ancient of Days to receive his kingdom. Just as that Son of Man descended from Heaven to earth to assert his power and claim his domain, so now John saw this visitant from Heaven "*set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth*" (Rev. 10:2). In symbolic gesture, He comes to assert his authority over a world which is in rebellion against him, but not yet to institute the Millennial reign which will quieten that rebellion. First of all there is to be an enlightenment, the dawning rays of the "Sun of righteousness" who Malachi (Mal. 4:2) said would arise with healing in his wings-his beams. Jesus himself likened his Advent to the *astrape*, the radiance of sunrise (Matt. 24:27). So now, John saw the angel with a countenance "as the sun" and he looked intently to see what the vision should portend.

The angel "*had in his hand a little book open*" from which he proclaimed a message. Later on John was told to take the book and eat it; it would be sweet as honey in his mouth but afterwards he would experience bitterness. In this he did but repeat the experience of Ezekiel who also was given a book, in which was written "lamentation, and mourning, and woe" (Ezek. 2:10). Ezekiel, too, was commanded to eat the book "*and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness,*" but he soon sensed the bitterness of the message he was to preach from the book. Here the similarity ends, for Ezekiel's mission was to an unfaithful and apostate nation who had been taken into captivity to Babylon for their sins, and the message was one of condemnation. John's vision had to do with the coming of new light and new knowledge into the world, the rising of a sun which is

never going to set, and the bitterness represented the fiery trials and hard experiences of those who championed this new light against the entrenched forces of darkness. For this vision of Revelation chapter 10 continues into chapter 11, where there is depicted the symbol of two witnessmartyrs who are raised up to bear faithful testimony during the persecution period of the mystic twelve hundred and sixty days, and are finally silenced for a short space only to receive and be vindicated by the coming to earth of the Messianic kingdom, when the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of Christ (Rev. 11:3-15). That seems to indicate the interpretation of this vision of the rainbow angel and the little book. This is Christ, three quarters of the way through the Christian Age, bringing the first harbinger of the light and truth of his Second Advent which itself is still in the future, and the time indicated is that of the Reformation.

The Reformation was the first effective challenge to the power of the Antichrist. The battle was not won then -- it is not completely won yet -- but that great event in the history of the Age does mark the point when the risen Christ intervened from Heaven to halt the downward decline of true Christian faith in the world and begin to bring before the minds of men the true gospel of the Kingdom. The light which then began to shine upon the Word of God has never been extinguished; not only so, but it has increased and grown brighter as the centuries passed until now in these closing days of the Age understanding of the Divine Plan and the purposes of God is clearer and more complete than at any previous time. But this is only to the Church, the true-hearted followers of Jesus. The rest of the world goes on its way, unknowing, until the cataclysm comes, as Jesus himself said (Matt. 24:37-39). This is shown here in Revelation. The resplendent angel, standing upon sea and land with the open book in his hand, reads from it in a stentorian voice like the roar of a lion (ch. 10:2-3). Nevertheless only John, the symbol of the faithful, the Church, heard what he said. Then 'seven thunders uttered their voices'-the proclamation of the angel echoed and re-echoed from the skies sevenfold, and John made ready to write down what had been said. But a voice from heaven commanded him to seal up the things that had been said, and not to write them. In other words, the proclamation and the revelation of the Divine purposes which it brought was not for all; it was only for those who are pictured by John.

During the long centuries of the Reformation period, when as yet the end of the Age was a measurable distance away, the power of Antichrist was exerted to suppress the truth and the true faith. The faithful were in the main submerged and oppressed, and the Faith, although becoming better and better understood by the Reformers and their followers, was still a closed book to the greater part of Christendom. The message of the seven thunders was continually and consistently being given in secret and under cover, but it remained largely unwritten and unknown. Only as time went on did it slowly force its way to the surface. Only at the end of the Age does the voice of the seven thunders become audible to the many, when the power of the Antichrist is in process of being broken. Paul referred to this in 2 Thessalonians. 2:8 when he said of the Antichrist that the Lord would consume that great system "with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy [it] with the manifestation of his presence," a clear reference to one of the consequences of his Second Advent.

So this mighty angel, our Lord at the time of the Reformation, gave this message to his Church. But he also had another and a wider proclamation. "The angel. . . lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth forever and ever... that the time should no longer be delay ed but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel . . . the hidden purpose of God will be fulfilled" (Rev. 10:6-7). When, later on in chapter 11, the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, it is to announce the transfer of world sovereignty from the powers of this Age to the benevolent and just rulership of Christ. The Second Advent will have become fully accomplished "and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev., 11:15).

The setting of this vision, then, is from the time of the Reformation onward to the end of the Age. In a sense the descent of this mighty angel and his proclamation was a kind of preparation for "the gospel of the kingdom" which was to be so marked a feature of Christian witness in the final few centuries of the Age. The message was sweet, sweet as honey, but its consequences in opposition, oppression, persecution, and all the horrors inflicted by Antichrist upon the faithful in Christ Jesus made it bitter when eaten. Nevertheless the witnesses were faithful in their testimony and at the end they were raised to heaven and to life immortal, "and . their enemies beheld them" (Rev. 11:12). As Jesus had already said, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

VISION NO. 7

There now come into view the four visions which between them picture various aspects of the Second Advent itself. Vision seven enshrines very familiar Scripture symbolism -the Son of Man crowned as a king, coming to take possession of his kingdom but first of all to gather to himself those who are truly his. The harvest of the earth is the description given, taking the theme from the parable of the wheat and tares in Matt. 15. The 14th chapter of Revelation contains the glorious picture. I looked, and behold a white [bright, brilliant] cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle" (Rev. 14:14). A cry from heaven comes to this kingly figure, calling upon him to thrust in his sickle and reap the harvest of the earth, for the time of harvest has come. So the harvest is reaped.

It is very important to observe here that in this vision the King does not come immediately to take his kingdom and reign over the nations. That aspect does figure in the later visions but not here. He comes for a specific purpose, to reap a harvest. Following this reaping there is another factor in the sequence of events leading to the full end of the Age, the gathering of the "vine of the earth" and the treading of the winepress, Armageddon (Rev. 14:17-20). Only after that does the kingly function, the reign of Christ and his Church over the earth, commence. At this point in chapter 14 the Lord returns to gather his Church, to resurrect to immortal life all who during the Age, having "made their calling and election sure" have been laid aside in death to await the resurrection call. And beside those who are thus raised from the dead to be with the Lord, there are those still living at the time He comes. These, says the Apostle Paul, will not sleep (in death) but will be "changed," in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. *"For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"* (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Again in writing to the Thessalonians he says, *"we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God -- and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord. . . ."* (1 Thess. 4:15-17). This is the same as is pictured by the harvest of wheat in the parable of Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). The seed, sown by our Lord through his servants and agents throughout the Age from Pentecost to the end, has borne fruitage in those faithful souls of all generations laid aside to wait the coming of the Chief Reaper to initiate and supervise the harvest. The harvest, he said in this parable, is the end of the Age. Now in Revelation 14 we have this very thing pictured in vision. The kingly reaper, sickle in hand, comes to reap. Those who are thus reaped are joined with him to be revealed with him a little later on to a wondering world. But at this moment the world knows nothing of this. The harvest is a process that is unknown to and unobserved by mankind in general. The resurrection of the sleeping ones is not to a renewed terrestrial existence upon this earth. They closed their eyes in death, perhaps, some of them, many centuries ago; they open them again to a celestial world outside the range of human sense but one in which their Lord is waiting to greet them. The others, who are, to use Paul's words, "alive and remain," will pass into death in the normal fashion and find themselves,

again in Paul's words, "in the twinkling of an eye" in that same celestial world and amidst that exalted celestial company. *"We know not what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"* (1 John 3:2).

Later on in Revelation (Rev. 19) there is a picture of a somewhat later stage in the events of the Advent. The Church, the Bride of Christ, has now been gathered together and translated to that celestial home which the Lord himself has prepared. He said so to his disciples: *"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 19:2, 3). This union with Christ in the heavens, immediately prior to the manifestation of the Church with him to the world at the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, is described in Revelation chapter 19 as the "marriage supper of the Lamb." Just what is the reality behind this vivid metaphor is difficult to surmise; it relates to conditions and activities in the celestial realm of which we, having only terrestrial experience and knowledge, can have little if any conception. The language of Rev. 19 appears to indicate a kind of triumphal reception into Heaven and introduction to the citizens of the celestial realms. It must surely indicate a being familiarized with the privileges and duties of life in that realm and those connected with the ordained work of the Church among mankind upon earth during the Messianic era, the Millennium. For be it remembered that the glorified Church is destined, in association with her Lord and Head, to minister Millennial blessings to men and lead them through the successive stages of repentance, conversion, and acceptance of Christ, to reconciliation with God and entry into the eternal state, as man will, or can be thus persuaded. So this "marriage supper" must be accomplished before the climacteric of the Advent when the Lord Christ, accompanied by the Church, is revealed to the entire human race as earth's ruler and man's shepherd. The prophet Isaiah, saw that in vision. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd . . . the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isa. 40:5, 11). The earlier events of the Advent are hidden from the eyes of men but when at last all things are ready, the resurrection and translation of the Church has become an accomplished fact, the kingdoms of the earth have given place to the Kingdom of our Lord, then all men shall know, and see, and accept the fact, that Christ is Lord, and will cry, as Isaiah, again, said they will cry, *'Lo, this is our God -- we have wanted for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord- we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.* " (Isa. 25:9).

So the harvest, the gathering of the Church, occupies the earlier part of the Advent period and is followed in Heaven by the "marriage supper," the union of the Church with her Lord, and upon earth by the onset of Armageddon, the final scenes of the breakdown of human society . Both these -events are succeeded by the commencement of Divine rule in the earth, when Christ and his Church are manifested in a manner not yet comprehended by men, but one which will amply fulfill the prediction of Jesus *"they shall see the Son h Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"* (Matt. 24:30). It is the province of the remaining three visions to depict the essential characteristics of the various aspects of that final event.

(To be continued.)

- A. O. Hudson

"Even at the Doors"

"What will be the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?" - Matthew 24:3 (Diaglott).

"When ye shall see all these things, know that he is near." - Matthew 24:33 (margin).

IN the September-October issue of the *Herald* we expressed the belief that the very fact that the disciples asked the Lord what the sign of his presence would be, indicated a recognition on their part that it might be possible for them to reach the end of the Age, and be actually living in the days of his second presence, and not know it. As corroborating this view we noted that that very condition had obtained at his first advent. Signs, plain and eloquent enough to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear, failed altogether of recognition by the great majority of "his own to whom he came (John 1:11).

Again, dear brethren, we urge the utmost consideration of others who may not be able to reach our conclusions. In his own mind it is, and not in that of another, that the Apostle urges every man to be fully persuaded (Rom. 14:5). No matter how sure we may be that we have the truth on this or on any other subject, we know not anything yet as we ought to know it (1 Cor. 8:2). When we know even as we are known, we shall realize how dim even our clearest vision here has been (1 Cor. 13:12). Meantime let us think and let think. And as we test the teachings which come to us (1 John 4:1), let us observe carefully the effect which such teachings have had in the lives of those who introduce them to us (1 Pet. 1:22; Heb. 13:7).

PAROUSIA

Since these views depend to some extent on our understanding of the word *parousia*, it will be appropriate at this juncture to consider objections which have been urged against its translation by the word presence.

That the word *parousia* is frequently used without any reference to our Lord's return is undoubtedly true, as anyone may see for himself by reference to the twenty-four places in the New Testament in which it appears. Furthermore, the impression, if any hold it, that the word denotes an unseen presence is doubtless erroneous. Nothing in the word *parousia* indicates whether the presence of the person or thing under discussion is seen or unseen. *That* must be determined by the context in every case. But that the literal meaning of *parousia* is presence no scholar disputes. In the two instances in which it is thus translated in the Authorized Version it is evident that the translators realized neither coming nor arrival would do. "For his [Paul's] letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:10). To say that his bodily coming or his bodily arrival is weak would not make sense. Yet it is the same Greek word *parousia* translated coming in the other twentytwo places. Again "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). Manifestly the Apostle is not contrasting his coming with his going or his arrival with his departure, but, as the translators themselves recognized, his presence with his absence, and the obedience of the Church not at the moment of his arrival or departure, but during the period of both his presence and his absence.

The translators of the R.S.V., while retaining the word coming in the text of many passages, disclose in the margin that the literal meaning of the Greek is presence.

ROTHERHAM'S EXPERIENCE WITH PAROUSIA

Some of our readers may recall the series of articles on "Signs of the Master's Presence" which appeared in this journal thirty-four years ago. They may remember that in the issue for October 1936 we examined the word *parousia* and were not a little perplexed that so able a scholar as Rotherham did not translate it uniformly by the word presence in the twenty-four places in which it occurs. At that time we said:

"Rotherham, who does not *deny*, but affirms, the correctness of presence, uses arrival twenty times and presence only four times. When so learned a scholar as Rotherham selects arrival rather than presence for his translation, although admitting presence to be the literal meaning, we are naturally interested in learning his reasons. But when we ascertain them, they prove singularly unconvincing. In an elaborate footnote to 1 Thessalonians 2:19 he labors (unsuccessfully, we think) to vindicate his position. We quote:

'The sense of presence is so plainly shown by the contrast with absence, implied in 2 Cor. 10:10, and expressed in Phil. 2:12, that the question may be asked, Why *not always* so render it?' [Yes, Brother Rotherham, we do ask this very question.] 'The answer is,' he continues, 'because *parousia*, in some cases, plainly marks an event rather than a condition, a transitional point, rather than a continuous line. Take for example, 1 Cor. 15:23. Here the three points: first, Christ's resurrection; second, his *parousia*; third, his delivering up the Kingdom, etc. The *parousia* will not fall into series, will not file off a rank in the resurrection, except as a point. Hence, for this place, presence, a state, is not the word; coming or arrival may be.'

"But what if it should appear that in 1 Cor. 15:23 the resurrection, the *parousia*, and the delivering up of the Kingdom are not three points, three events, but are three states, three periods of time? In that case this argument of Rotherham's would fall to the ground, and he himself would then, presumably, *always* translate *parousia* by presence."

Just after *The Herald* for October, 1936 had gone to press we learned that the second edition of Rotherham's New Testament, which was the one in our library, had been followed some years later, by a third edition,* in which *parousia* is consistently translated *presence*. Note the following, from the Appendix of his third edition, given in his own words, under the caption, "Presence."

"In this edition the word *parousia* is uniformly rendered presence (coming as a representative of *this* word, being set aside). The original term occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament. The sense of presence is so plainly shown by the contrast with absence (implied in 2 Cor. 10:10, and expressed in Phil. 2:12) that the question naturally arises, Why not always so render it? The more so, inasmuch as there is in 2 Pet. 1:16 also, a peculiar fitness in our English word presence. This passage, it will be remembered, relates to our Lord's transformation upon the Mount. The wonderful manifestation there made was a display and sample of presence rather than of coming. The Lord was already there; and, being there, he was transformed and the majesty of his glorified person was then disclosed. His bodily presence was one which implied and exerted power; so that power and presence go excellently well together—the power befitting such a presence; and the three favored disciples were at one and the same moment witnesses of both. The difficulty expressed in the notes to the second edition of this New Testament in the way of so yielding to this weight of evidence as to render *parousia* always by presence, lay in the seeming incongruity of regarding presence as an event which would happen at a particular time and which would fall into rank as one of a series of events, as 1 Cor. 15:23 especially appeared to require. The translator still feels the force of this objection, but is withdrawn from taking his stand upon it any

longer by the reflection that, after all, the difficulty may be imaginary. The *parousia* in any case is still in the future, and may therefore be enshrouded in a measure of obscurity which only fulfilment can clear away: it may, in fine, be both *a period* - more or less extended, during which certain things shall happen -and an *event*, coming on and passing away as one of a series of divine interpositions. Christ is raised as a first-fruit - that is one event; he returns and vouchsafes his presence, during which he raises his own -that is another event, however large and prolonged; and finally comes another cluster of events constituting the end. Hence, after all, presence may be the most widely and permanently satisfying translation of the looked-for *parousia* of the Son of Man."

OUR LORD'S PAROUSIA OCCUPIES A PERIOD OF TIME

Other scholars of note have written in a similar vein. Amongst those we have consulted may be mentioned G. H. Pember, *The Great Prophecies* (1881); J. A. Beet, *The Last Things* (1898); George Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians* (1908); and J. A. Seiss, *The Last Time* (1878). From the last named we submit the following extracts:

"It is now clear to the writer, that what the Scriptures call the Coming of Christ, at the end of this Age, is not a single, but a complex event, stretching through various periods and administrations, each being sometimes referred to as the Coming, though in reality only a part, stage, or section of it. In this respect, the Second Advent is a counterpart of the First, and presents the same characteristic distributiveness. If any one will be at the pains to examine, it will be found that the prophecies which foretold Christ's first coming can, by no possibility, be all referred to one precise day, hour, year, scene, or event, but spread themselves over a period of more than thirty years. Christ *came* when he was born at Bethlehem; he *came* when called out of Egypt; he *came* when John presented him to the people as the Messiah; he *came* when he announced himself at Nazareth; he *came* when he rode into Jerusalem on the ass; he *came* when he reappeared after his death. And yet there were not a half dozen advents, but one advent. All these separate presentations, at different dates and places, are comprehended under what the Prophets, and we still, denote, both separate and together, by the general and comprehensive expression of his *coming*, or First Advent. Thus, Micah had said that he should '*come*' out of Bethlehem - Ephrathah; and Hosea had said that he should *come* 'out of Egypt'; Malachi had said that he should '*suddenly come* to his temple'; Zechariah had said that he should *come* to Zion 'riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass'; Isaiah had said that he would *come* 'in the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali,' as 'a great light'; while other Prophets had said that he would *come* out of Nazareth. Each of these predictions had its literal fulfillment, and each fulfillment was his *Coming*; but they were after all so many different scenes, stages, or manifestations in the one *Coming*, which is called the *first*, in contradistinction to the *second*. In other words, the Advent was complex, consisting of many diverse facts and presentations, in different localities, and successively running through the course of thirty-three years. These several prophecies could not possibly be fulfilled, except by the intervention of time to give the place for them. And, as a matter of fact, a succession of years was covered in the fulfillment.

"This, then, is the *key* by which to explain and reconcile the equally numerous and diverse predictions concerning the *Second Coming*. It is not a singular and simple thing, all accomplished in the same moment of time, or in one isolated event or scene; but it is a succession and variety of scenes, events, and manifestations, each of which is called the Coming, but all of which together make up the complex of the one Second Advent.

"If any will look up the various passages which describe the Second Advent, it will be seen that no man can do justice to the language of inspiration, and yet construe them all with reference to

one and the same thing, occurring in one and the same point of time. In the nature of things, Christ cannot come 'as a thief in the night,' and at the same time be openly displayed in the clouds of heaven with 'every eye' gazing upon him. It is impossible that his coming *for* his saints - the gathering of them up from their graves, avocations, fields, and beds (1 Cor. 15:22, 23, 51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; Luke 17:34-37) should be identical in time and character with his coming *with* his saints' (Jude 14, 15; Zech. 14:4, 5; Rev. 19:11-14). It is simply out of the question, that the precise coming spoken of in the Apocalyptic Epistles to the Seven Churches, or that referred to in Rev. 16:15, should be the same with that portrayed in Rev. 19:11-16. The Scriptures also distinguish between a simple parousia or presence, and the epiphaneia, or appearing. Where there is an epiphaneia, there is, of course, a presence, but a manifest, apparent, discernible presence; whilst parousia denotes simply presence, without the implication of manifestation or visibility. Epiphaneia is used six times in the New Testament, and is in five instances rendered appearing, and in the other instance brightness, in the sense of manifestation; parousia is used about fifteen times, and is uniformly translated coming, in the general sense of presence, or personal and local nearness, whether openly and visibly or not. In 2 Thess. 2:8, both words are used together in reference to the final overthrow or annihilation of the great anti-Christian confederation, which is said to be by the epiphaneia of his parousia; that is, by the appearing of his presence; which involves the implication *that the presence, 'coming,' is not manifested or discernible until then*, thus showing that the Advent involves different phases, stages and times."

For those who have not recently done so, we suggest a review of the twenty-four places in which *parousia* occurs in the New Testament. The references are given as a footnote to page 159 of Scripture Studies, Volume II, and are therefore omitted here. Such a review we have made ourselves, and find that Brother Russell's position is sustained; *parousia* never has the thought of coming, of being on the way but always, in the New Testament, has the sense of presence, and the context need never be understood as out of harmony with this sense. However, on this, as on all matters, we exhort: "Let every man be fully persuaded *in his own mind*" (Rom. 14:5). "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1). And even if we think a brother holding a different view from ours is incompetent to teach us on this particular subject (he may not be incompetent, but even supposing he is), let us not hastily conclude that he is, therefore, incompetent to teach us anything. He may have rich stores of knowledge and wisdom on other lines of Christian doctrine and experience in which we ourselves may sadly lack, and of which it would be foolish, to say the least, for us to say we have no need (1 Cor. 12:21).

(Continued in next issue)

- P. L. Read

Some Time -- Somewhere

“Unanswered yet? The prayer your lips have pleaded
In agony of heart these many years?
Does faith begin to fail: Is hope departing?
And think you all in vain those falling tears?
Say not the Father hath not heard your prayer:
You shall have your desire -- some time -- somewhere.

“Unanswered yet? Though when you first presented
This one petition at the Father’s throne
It seemed you could not wait the time of asking,
So urgent was your heart to make it known.
Though years have passed since then, do not despair:
The lord will answer you -- some time -- somewhere.

“Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say ungranted.
PERHAPS YOUR TASK IS NOT YET WHOLLY DONE.
The work begun when first your prayer was uttered,
And God will finish what He has begun.
If you will keep the incense burning there,
His glory you shall see some time -- somewhere.

“Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered!
Her feet were firmly planted on the Rock.
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,
Nor quails before the loudest thunder-shock;
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,
And cries, “It shall be done -- some time -- somewhere.”

- OPHELIA G. BROWING

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