

# THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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## Our New Year Message The Joy of Faith

*"The joy of the Lord is your strength." - Nehemiah 8:10*

Entering this, another year of pilgrimage, no child of faith need be reminded of our Master's predictive words:

"...upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Luke 21:25,26, R.S.V.).

Ours is a day of world confusion which might well lead to the *"time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation"* forecast by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 12:1). It is truly a day of upheaval in every sphere of life, be it moral, social, political, financial, economic, or religious. Events everywhere increasingly evidence the proximity of God's wonderful worldwide kingdom, long promised and awaited and prayed for -- *"the desire of all nations"* (Hag. 2:7). *"It is near, even at the doors"* (Matt. 24:33). *"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"* (Psa. 30:5).

These evidences that the culmination of Christian hope is close at hand are recognized only by faith. But for those who:

...See the marriage splendor Within the open door;

...And know that those who enter Are blest forevermore

there abides that inner exaltation of spirit -- that *'boy'* of our heading text. This is a joy regardless of our present circumstances, whether they be physical infirmity, loneliness, lack of fellowship, cares of life, financial needs or increasing age. Shall anxieties concerning these mar faith in our Father's provision? No -- rather, let us emulate the faith of one of old (Hab. 3:17,18) who, bereft

of all physical necessities, did yet rejoice in the God of his salvation. It is this note of strengthening joy that we would urge upon ourselves and upon all our readers as we enter the coming year.

Our master was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Yet with a delight in doing his Father's will, for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despised the shame, and left to us as a present heritage his joy, that ours might be full (John 15:11). *"Herein, "* said he, *"is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit"* (John 15:8).

## Joy: A Spiritual Fruit

It is remarkable that St. Paul in listing nine elements that comprise spiritual fruitage (Gal. 5:22,23), includes joy. The other eight require development through the disciplines of time, but joy was an immediate reaction of mind from our first apprehension of divine benevolence. God gave to us *"the oil of joy for mourning."* Our *'boy in the Lord'* increasingly glorifies our Father as in patient obedience we undergo the trying experiences intended to bring us to spiritual maturity, enabling us to heartily comply with the Apostle Paul's exhortation -- *"Rejoice evermore"* (1 Thess. 5:16).

Let us take inventory of some sources of joy which are ours and which provide the strength to persevere in our evil day. We list seven -- each being scripturally amplified.

### God

Foremost is our heavenly Father himself. To direct our thoughts to the Author of our salvation is to become filled with joy! *"I am so glad that My Father loves me!"* *"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"* (1 John 3:1). "So close to his heart does Jehovah gather his loyal and faithful children that they feel the warmth of his love, and the responsive language of their hearts is *'I will abide in thy tabernacle'* -- under thy protection -- *'forever'*" (Daily Heavenly Manna, Oct.17). *"Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous"* (Psa. 97:12). *"...let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee"* (Psa. 5:11). *"Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart"* (Psa. 32:11). *"...let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him"* (Psa. 68:3,4). *"...Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name"* (Matt. 6:9). *"Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen"* (Jude 24-25,R.S.V.).

### Jesus

Does not contemplation of our Master Jesus bring instant joy to our hearts? Does' a bride rejoice in her bridegroom? *"My beloved is mine, and I am his.. [he is] the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys... the chiefest among ten thousand . yea, he is altogether lovely"* (Song of Solomon 2:16,1; 5:10,16). *"Whom, not having seen, you love; on whom, not now looking, but believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and glorious"* (1 Pet. 1:8, Diaglott). *"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"* (John 15:11). Hear his prayer: *"that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves"* (John 17:13). And what of the prospect of seeing him as he is -- *"Face to face, in all his glory"* -- a prospect exceeding imagination! Even now, may our joy abound in the realization of his presence in our daily lives -- *"Christ liveth in me"* (Gal. 2:20).

As some rare perfume in a vase of clay  
Pervades it with a fragrance not its own,  
So, when THOU dwellest in a mortal soul,  
All Heaven's own sweetness seems round it thrown.

## Angels

What shall we say as regards the heavenly host, the *"innumerable company of angels"* (Heb. 12:22), the *"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands"* (Rev. 5:11)? They sang and shouted for joy when the Lord laid earth's foundations (Job 38:7) and praised God at Jesus' birth (Luke 2:13,14). The marvelous work of God since Calvary in *"bringing many sons unto glory"* (Heb. 2:10) is to them as a theatrical spectacle (1 Cor. 4:9) into *"which things the angels desire to look"* (1 Pet. 1:12). They themselves are *"ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation"* (Heb. 1:14), the *"little ones"* whose angels do always behold the face of God (Matt. 18:10). The Master said (Luke 15:10): *"... there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."* What will be their paean at the marriage of the Lamb! Let this fruit of joy abound and strengthen *"the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees"* (Heb. 12:12).

## Brethren

What of our brethren in the Lord, who will be part of our eternal family in heaven? Think not of them as now, beset with many infirmities, some of which may have caused us severe trials and deep suffering. Let us consider rather their good hearts, their earnest endeavors to walk faithfully this Way. Think how wonderful they will be in perfection and glory when the Potter has finished his marvelous work in them, and in us also. What joy will be there! God has promised (Psa. 132:16): *"I will clothe her [Zion's] priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy."*

How beautiful is the September 7 Manna Comment:

"These New Creatures in Christ Jesus know each other not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. In each other's spirits or new minds there are the noblest sentiments, the highest aspirations, that which is good, true, noble, pure -- whatever may be their weaknesses according to the flesh. They love each other from the new standpoint of intention, will, harmony with God, and their friendship for one another grows increasingly as they perceive each other's energy in fighting the good fight of faith against the evil influences of the world, the flesh and the Adversary. Nor tongue, nor pen can properly express the love, the friendship, which subsists between these New Creatures in Christ Jesus, to whom old things have passed away, and all things have become new."

O! How sweet it will be  
In that beautiful land,  
So free from all sorrow and pain,  
His songs on our lips,  
And his work in our hands  
To meet one another again.

## Divine Truth

Does not the knowledge of the Divine message of truth bring joy to our hearts? *"Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."* (Jer. 15:16). *"Light is sown for the righteous, and [the resulting] gladness for the upright in heart"* (Psa. 97:11). *"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth... Through thy precepts I get understanding: . . . Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path"* (Psa. 119:103,104,105). *"... ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you*

*out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage" (Psa. 119:54). Truly "the half was never told!" May our joy in God's Word be a constant source of inner strength.*

### **Tribulations**

Consider our tribulations in this narrow way. Can we find present joy in them which will strengthen us to endure unto final victory? Consider these scriptures:

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold your reward is great in heaven (Luke 6:22).

James writes (James 1:2): *"My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials. "* Paul, who rejoiced in his own sufferings (Col. 1:24) gives us these precious words of encouragement (Rom. 5:3-5): *"... we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. "* He continues in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18:

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Such counsel is truly cause for joy to every Christian. We seal it with Paul's words (Rom. 8:28): *"... we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. "* The joyful confidence of faith!

### **Humankind**

We consider poor humanity -- not their present woeful lot but their coming future, when joy unending (Isa. 35:10) will be their blessed portion. Then will we share with our beloved Master in the joyful millennial work of lavishing blessing all around even as our heavenly Father has afore determined.

How apropos are the words of Brother Russell:

What a glorious prospect the new dispensation will present when fully inaugurated! In the past, changes from one dispensation to another have been marked and prominent, but this change will be most eventful of all. No wonder the thought of such a spectacle -- of a whole race returning to God with songs and praise and everlasting joy upon their heads -- should seem almost too good to believe. He who has promised is able also to perform all his good pleasure. Though sorrow and sighing seem almost inseparable from our being, yet sorrow and sighing shall flee away; though weeping in sackcloth and ashes has endured throughout the long night of the dominion of sin and death, yet joy awaits the Millennial morning. All tears shall be wiped from off all faces. Beauty shall be given for ashes, and the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness.

This beautiful prose entrances our hearts! We would linger over this wonderful and glorious future for suffering mankind and so quote further:

No creature of the redeemed race will be too low for Divine grace to reach, through the all powerful and blessed agency of the kingdom. No degradation of sin will be too deep for the hand of mercy to fathom, to rescue the blood-bought soul; no darkness of ignorance and superstition will be so dense in any heart but that the light of Divine truth and love will penetrate its gloom and bring to it a knowledge of the joy and gladness of the New Day, and an opportunity to share the same by obedience. No disease that can attack and pollute the physical system will be beyond the prompt control of the great Physician. And no deformity, or monstrosity, or superfluity, or redundancy, or mental imbecility, will be able to resist his healing touch.

In this kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, the glorious portion available for every human being as an eternal gift of God through Christ, when contrasted with their present misery, does even now fill our hearts with overflowing joy -- yes, brings tears of gladness to our eyes. Alleluia and alleluia!

### **Joys Beyond The Millennium**

There remains the contemplation of the future joys awaiting the Church after the work of earthly restitution is completed -- the ages to come to which St. Paul refers in Ephesians 2:7. Here the veil to our understanding has not yet been drawn back and imagination is too feeble to penetrate the glorious future. There is a dim perception as made known to us by the Word of God, but it remains true that "... *now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*" (1 Cor. 13:12). There yet remain blessings untold, for it is written, ". . . *how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee*" (Psa. 31:19). "*They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.*" (Psa. 36:8).

Every plane of intelligent life possesses its share of wonderful joys. As we go up the scale from the lowest (the human) to the highest (the divine), the joys increase to that pinnacle reflected in the psalmist's words (Psa. 16:11): ". . . *In thy presence is fullness of joy [there can be no more]; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.*" For these unknown joys yet to be we sing

"A little while:" with patience, Lord,  
I fain would ask, "How long?"  
For How can't with such a hope  
Of glory and of home,  
With such a joy awaiting me,  
Not wish the hour were come?  
How can I keep the longing back,  
And how suppress the groan?

Let us then fearlessly await our consummation, "*rejoicing in hope of the glory of God*" (Rom. 5:2). We shall behold His face in righteousness; we shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness (Psa. 17:15). In these days of our earthly pilgrimage which remain, and in which our cup [of joy] runneth over, may each heart sing with praise to our heavenly Father and to our blessed Lord Jesus, heeding under every stress St. Paul's words (Phil. 4:4):

*"Rejoice in the Lord always  
Again I say, Rejoice."*

- W.J. Siekman

## Christian Fellowships

*"Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ... But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanseth us from all sin." - 1 John 1:3,7*

In the opening verses of his First Epistle, the disciple whom Jesus loved, tells us the importance of fellowship -- that by it we may determine not only our relationship with him who is the light, but also how well we are living in that light. We may determine therefore the sanctifying power light is having in our lives; the progress we are making toward the heavenly goal.

The chapter opens with the statement that his Epistle was written that we might have fellowship, one with another, as well as have *"fellowship. . with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3). In order to have this fellowship we must love one another as He loves us (see John 15:12).

This is not a suggestion but a commandment left to us by Jesus. None can claim himself to be guiltless regarding the keeping of this command; however, *"if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 2:1). His forgiveness guarantees the assistance we need to acquire the love that makes fellowship not a difficult thing, full of constraint, but the natural outworking of and spontaneous expression of the Christian principle, *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col. 1:27).

The Father and the Son are spirit beings, unapproachable by fallen fleshly senses. It is said of our brethren that they *"are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell"* in them (Rom. 8:9). Manifestly, then, the fellowship of which the Apostle speaks must be that of the spirit -- the spirit of holiness. We must have God's Spirit to fellowship with him, his spirit bearing witness with our spirit (Rom. 8:16). If confined to the limited portion of our day that is given to prayer and study of his Word, that fellowship will be meager indeed. However, larger possibilities are pointed out in many Scriptures. The fellowship with the Father and with the Son is intended to be so complete that it will include whatsoever we do, even to the bringing *"into captivity [of] every thought to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Cor. 10:5). We can then say with Jesus, *"the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me"* (John 14:24).

Jesus, when praying for us, raised the high standard of a oneness with each other which was comparable to the oneness of the Father and the Son. By one Spirit we have access unto the Father, being brought nigh to each other as they are brought nigh to Him. The new creatures' fellowship with each other should be looked for along spiritual lines, their spirits bearing witness with each other.

### Fellowship in Conversation

The fellowships we have with fellow Christians will correspond with the fellowship we have with our heavenly Father and heavenly Bridegroom. We would of course bring nothing of evil into our conversations with the Father. Would one who knows the joy of dwelling in the Father's presence, where there is fullness of joy, lessen that joy for one moment by bringing into his conversation, either with the brethren or the world, even the mildest form of evil? Or would he permit grosser forms, such as evil surmising and evil speaking to enter into that conversation? Rather, the one who is really dwelling in the Father's presence is jealous of that privilege, because he finds there fullness of joy, and gives evidence of this by having his conversation in harmony with the laws of holiness.

Association with such a Christian becomes a powerful means of sanctification. His conversation adds materially to the treasury of those things which are true, just, honest, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, praise-worthy -- things of sanctifying power to meditate on.

### **Fellowship of Works**

There will be a similarity of motive in our activities. While each one in the spiritual family will have his specific duties, there will be an absolute fellowship, regardless of how different these activities may be. All will fit in as part of the one great household, each member acting carefully that it may assist in accomplishing the great aim of the household, -- glorifying God and doing good unto all men, especially unto the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). The nature of our business and recreation, yea all our affairs, will be determined by our fellowship with the Father, the Son, and our brethren.

Jesus had his beloved John. It is not surprising to find similar discriminations in the fellowships which we enjoy -- a tendency to spend our time in the company of those who are most spiritually minded, those whose conversation and activities are most holy. Not to have it so would indicate a lack of the mind of Christ. However, the Apostle Paul warns us: to withdraw from less developed brethren to such an extent that it would become either a cutting off from or even a faction in the body of Christ would demonstrate our lack of appreciation of spiritual fellowship. This would be a demonstration of the spirit of selfishness, a lack of love and consideration, an act of actual carnality.

Note the severe denunciation of those *"who separate themselves:"*

These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit (Jude 16-19).

This danger is not to be feared by those who are living daily, hourly, moment by moment in the presence of our heavenly Associates. If we can be described as in Christ Jesus, then we have the assurance that *"the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made [us] free from the law of sin and death."* (Rom. 8:2).

### **Fellowship of All Things**

To be satisfactory Christians, our fellowship must be as complete as is the fellowship of the Father and the Son. Note John 16:14,15: The Spirit of truth *"shall glorify Me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."*

Surely, this fellowship does not now include all power in heaven and in earth. But when we have faith to lay hold on it, may we not be *"strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power,..."* (Col. 1:11)? So also His grace. God has not promised some sample, but that His *"grace [available in its entirety] is sufficient for thee"* (2 Cor. 12:9). Such fellowship is not instantly realized upon consecration. The Holy Spirit is there received but must be maintained. Our portion of it must increase, that we may finally know the fullness of joy which continually



dwelling in His presence may impart. Our heavenly Father is gradually imparting to us the wisdom that will some day rightly use the powers of the divine nature and of our character for the accomplishing of His eternal purpose.

Other treasures of wisdom and knowledge are still *"hid"* in our Father and our Elder Brother. Appreciating the truths which His wisdom has revealed will evidence itself in increased joy. We exercise our senses to discern both good and evil -- not by dwelling on errors, however conceived, but by reveling in the truth. Transforming truths have been the heritage of the Church throughout the Age. Love of the truth has always been a test as of the Christian's worthiness to fellowship with it's great Author.

More of Christ in us (not merely an anointing on us), would result in a greater shining forth of his Spirit from us. A hope of glory shining more brightly in the heart would result in a more abundant living of the fellowship that would unconsciously, as well as consciously, do good unto all men as we have opportunity. ". . . *When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*" (Rom. 5:10). His life becomes our life. The spirit of life in us becomes the power of God through us for the ministering of righteousness. Though the world will see Jesus *"no more"* (John 14:19), He did not leave them without hope. The Church is commissioned to be a *"light"* in the world (Matt. 5:14,16). "... *Because I live, ye shall live also....* " *"At that day ye shall know [in all its transforming power, the fact] that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.* " There must therefore be a, shining forth of His life from us (Phil. 2:15).

### **Unity of Spirit**

Under the phrase, *"unity of the spirit,* " the Apostle Paul describes the happy relationship of the spirit-begotten ones. He urges that an earnest effort be made to maintain it by walking *"worthy of the vocation wherewith [we] are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love"* (Eph. 4:1-2). The means are simple, difficult even to the spirit begotten, and impossible to the flesh.

However, forbearing one another in love, with meekness, is absolutely necessary. Otherwise the flesh would rob every fellowship of its joy. If God had called mostly the noble ones and not many unwise or base, a fair showing might have been made in the flesh. Do not suppose that those who do not eventually have the Spirit of God without measure will ever be entrusted with the powers of the divine nature. The dire result of possessing his power while lacking His Spirit is beyond our imagination. In this sense, the Spirit is of greater importance than the divine powers themselves.

Since we are invited to be partakers of the divine nature [*"by birth"*. Liddell & Scott], it is not surprising to read that ". . . *God giveth not the Spirit by measure:*" -- a Spirit equal to *"all powers"* (John 3:34) (the words *"to him"* are in italics, meaning that they are not in the Greek manuscripts). We are not invited to bring vessels capable of receiving but a small portion of that Spirit, with God measuring it out to us. We are encouraged to prepare our capacity to its utmost. God, Himself, says: ". . . *I will open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it"* (Mal. 3:10).

This promise is not for those who have the *"... spirit of the world,* " but for those who have the *"spirit which is of God"* (1 Cor. 2:12), for those who have brought all the tithes into the storehouse. Perhaps desiring that we might know whether we are receiving that Spirit, Jesus describes the opposite spirit, saying: *"he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth"*

(John 3:31). The Jew could not have the full blessing unless he would bring a full tenth. We who have covenanted all must bring *all* into our Father's storehouse if we would be filled with the fullness of God. Our lives must not speak of earth while claiming to be of heaven.

### **Ultimate Fellowship**

The Apostle Peter assures us that it is through the knowledge of God that we *"are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these [we] might be partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:4). Here is ultimate fellowship, crowning all our hopes. Is it possible that Peter's impetuosity has run away with him, causing him to covet a station too high and by means too simple? Is it possible that after all there is to be no cross for each of us to take up? -- that the very highest goal in the universe is to be attained through the simple and comfortable process of *"promises"*? Peter spoke under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His words are in harmony with all that the Holy Spirit has revealed regarding the future of the church.

This ultimate fellowship, the crown of life, will be attained by those who have known fellowship in His sufferings (2 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:10), a fellowship pictured in the bread and the wine of the Lord's supper. Paul calls this, *"fellowship of the blood of the Christ"* (1 Cor. 10:16-18,21). Apparently the partakers of the glory (1 Peter 5:1), those who will have common-union with the Father and the Son on their own plane, fellowship in the divine nature, will have been no common sacrificers, but willing, joyful sacrificers (Acts 5:41; 16:25; Heb. 10:34; 1 Peter 4:13; 1 John 5:2,3). For them, all crosses are gold, blessings given by the divine hand; and they will, as the Apostle Paul did (Phil. 1:7), learn to call them all *"graces."*

In the texts just noted, and in the text of our article, the Greek word translated *"communion," "fellowship,"* and *"partakers,"* is the same. The thought of the word is a *"joint participation"* (Thayer). Our English word *"partnership"* is suggested as coming nearer than any other to expressing the full thought (see Strong's Lexicon). Every Christian may enjoy an unrestricted partnership in the Apostle Paul's exuberant joy in tribulation, calling such hideous and painful things as manacles, *"graces,"* if he will but receive Paul's clearer vision of the glories to follow. Like Paul, his longing for that glorious new body, the divine one, will so overwhelm him that all his groanings will be that he may be clothed with it, not that he may be *"unclothed."* When Paul mentions the old body and his desire to be rid of it (Rom. 7:24), it is not its insufficiencies that are burdening him, but the sin that reigns there (cf. 2 Cor. 5:2-4).

*"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth"* (1 John 1:6). Paul, like John, finds the life of fellowship possible only by a complete separation from the things of the world, exhorting us to touch not the unclean thing, so that the God of Israel will be always with us (2 Cor. 6:17,18). He quotes a precious promise from Isaiah 52:11, one of a myriad of inspiring voices behind him. They were his daily portion, the sanctifying power which worked in him to his cleansing *"from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the reverence of God"* (2 Cor. 7:1). Lifted in vision to the very courts of heaven, he found the most expressive of all languages too feeble to describe his joy in the tribulation in which he was at that very time having fellowship; for he recognized that it is through much tribulation we enter the Kingdom. To quote his words literally: *"I superabound - over in tribulation"* (2 Cor. 7:4).

## No Fellowship Without Knowledge

Courage to walk so narrow a way as the one opened to us can be gained only by unusual means. The beginning, the perseverance in that way, and the victorious end are all dependent upon strength gained through exceeding great and precious promises. These promises are given over God's own signature. He enters into a contract not only to begin but to finish the good work still going on in those who walk in close and unrestricted fellowship with Him and one with the others in this narrow way.

*"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). We are "born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23), and which will overpower all opposing forces. Our fellowship is therefore one in which knowledge has its place. Without knowledge there can be no sanctification, no new creature, and no final victory. If we would "put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him which created him" (Col. 3:10), and "in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24), we must have faith to accept the knowledge which His exceeding great and precious Word gives. Each faithful one can therefore say with David: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he Meditate day and night. . . . he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season "(Psa. 1:2,3).*

In this we see a great difference between the "little flock" and the "great company." The latter bring in their fruit after the season. Partnership, fellowship, with the Father and with the Son is necessary for fruit bearing, for *"God . . . giveth the increase"* (1 Cor. 3:7). Unrestricted fellowship is necessary for the fruit to be in its season. Our partnership is to continue until we are in his image. Those who *"keep"* themselves in the love of God have no reason to fear that his power will not be used on their behalf. Bear in mind that he who gives the sunshine and the rain gives also wind and storm. *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"* (Heb. 12:6).

Fellowship with him, living moment by moment in his presence, results in walking, acting, talking daily more like him. *"If [therefore], we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but [it is equally true that] if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"* -- not *"we may have,"* but *"we have fellowship one with another."* How simple He has made it to know whether we are fellowshiping Him, whether we are *"walking in the light."*

The Centenary translation of this passage says that:

"If we say, 'we have partnership with Him,' when we are passing our life in darkness, we are lying and are not doing the truth. But if we are passing our life in the light, as He is in the light, we ever have partnership with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing us from every sin" (1 John 1:6,7).

Note well the association of *"fellowship one with another"* and the cleansing of the blood of Jesus Christ. This is reasonable. It is evident that one so unappreciative of our heavenly Father as not to rejoice in fellowship with *"the least of these"* who has any measure of likeness to him, would be one who would not guard well that likeness throughout eternity. Hence the sinfulness of carnal schisms. He who would willfully cut himself off from any member of the Body of Christ, thus cutting himself off from that much of god-likeness as represented in that fellow member, would by this evidence of carnality prove himself unworthy of the participation he has been enjoyed in the cleansing blood of Christ. Surely one who loves the Lord will make certain that even

temporary separation from any member of His Body is on direct orders from the head of that body.

Truth begets and sanctifies, but fellowship keeps us under the blood. May we say with the Psalmist: *"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord all the days of my life and to inquire in His temple. "* (Psa. 27:4). Joyful fellowship in that temple is necessary that we may have our partnership in it in the great beyond; necessary that we may know how true it is that *"in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore"* (Psa. 16:11). *"As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness"* (Psa. 17:15).

O glorious hope of heavenly love!  
It lifts me up to things above;  
It bears on eagle wing;  
It gives my joyful soul a taste,  
And makes me, even here, to feast  
With Jesus' priests and kings.  
O that I might at once go up!  
No more on this side Jordan stop,  
But not the land possess!  
There dwells the Lord, our righteousness,  
He'll keep His own in perfect peace  
And everlasting rest."

- P.E. Thomson

## The Foreshadowing of Grace

*"The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. "* John 1:17

The Law, a disciplinary and foreshadowing arrangement, was introduced by Moses. In due time, when the obtaining of righteousness and life by obedience to strict requirements of law had been proved impossible, a new dispensation of faith righteousness and a gift of life was brought by Jesus Christ, who, himself, was full of grace and truth: *"For the law made nothing perfect"* (Heb. 7:19), but the bringing in of a better hope did.

There was a law of commandment before Moses, even as grace was shown before Jesus Christ. *"Thou shalt not eat"* (Gen. 2:17) is a commandment. Certainly it was an act of grace recorded in Genesis 3:21 when, *"Unto Adam, and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. "*

It was a divinely provided garment, the obtaining of which necessitated the shedding of blood; aptly illustrating the truth continually witnessed to in the sacrifices of the law dispensation, and the great theme of the New Testament writers: *"without the shedding of blood there is no remission. "* Thus early was it manifested that no covering provided by self is suitable to relieve shame and the sense of guilt in God's presence; for had not they, the sinning ones, sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons before hiding from the presence of God?

Very little is recorded about our first parents: nothing to satisfy morbid curiosity. But what is recorded, we are assured, is *"written for our learning"* (Rom. 15:4).

What we are now particularly interested in is:

- 1) the nature of Adam's transgression and,
- 2) his reaction to the promise of redemption through the woman's seed.

### Adam's Transgression

Adam's transgression was the deliberate violation of the commandment, *"...of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it"* (Gen. 2:17). This is the truth advanced by the Apostle in Romans 5:13-14:

For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.

From Adam to Moses there was no commandment given that might be transgressed; yet the whole race meanwhile had gone, or were going, into death without the imputation of the sin of breaking a commandment, none had *"sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. "* Sin was introduced by Adam, and death came as the result of sin (Rom. 5:12).

It is not our purpose to treat the nature of sin. It is the nature of the transgression that we are dealing with.

We note that Adam did not sin against light. He sinned against a commandment. In this transgression Adam was not deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). He knew full well what the penalty for

disobedience was, if we are to accept the Apostle's statement in 1 Timothy 2:14. Adam believed God's word; he expected to, and did eventually, go into death for disobedience. Sinning against light implies the loving of darkness rather than light; it involves a certain amount of hypocrisy, willing self deceit, a shutting of the mind against truth that may be known lest it bring conviction, and accounting such truth a lie.

True, Adam had not been enlightened as to the long reign of sin and death consequent to his disobedience -- of the thousands of years of misery and degradation that would be experienced by his posterity -- but he was conscious of the truth of God's word: *"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Gen. 2:17). Adam believed God. *"Adam was not deceived"* (1 Tim. 2:14).

### **Adam's Reaction**

The naming of the woman after the promise that her seed shall bruise the serpent's head is very significant. Looking back to Genesis 2:21-23, we will see more clearly what the giving of the name "Eve" to his wife by Adam implies. In this passage we read, Adam said, *"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman [Isha, Hebrew] because she was taken out of man [Ish]"* (see 1 Cor. 11:8,9). The woman, whose existence came out of man, was now acknowledged to be the one that would mother the Seed who would restore existence. So he *"called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living [life-giver]"* (Gen. 3:20, see marginal reading).

This is generally thought to mean that Adam called his wife's name Eve because she was to be the mother of the whole human race descended from his loins. This is not what is intended by the passage. Schofield's Reference Bible gives the marginal reading for "Eve" as "living or life-giver"; *Young's Analytical Concordance* renders it "life, life-giving." This name, Eve, was given to her after the promise of the life-giving Seed, and before she was actually a mother. Thus it is recorded that Adam *believed God now for the life that was to be restored, just as he had believed God before the transgression in regard to death.*

We then read, *"Unto Adam and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them"* (Gen. 3:21) -- a covering given in grace, foreshadowing the righteousness that is to come to them through the shedding of the blood of *"the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all"* (1 Tim. 2:5,6).

### **Incorrect Ideas About Adam's Penalty**

It has been taught that Adam went into second death because his sin was willful. We note that the term *"second death"* implies that there had been a first.

The proscribed penalty for disobedience was, indeed, death; but before there could be a second-death penalty, there must be either

- 1.) A release from the first-death penalty, or
- 2.) A heart condition so at variance with righteousness and truth that *"the setting forth of Christ to be a mercy seat through faith in his blood"* (Rom. 3:25) would be met with contempt, and any spirit of grace shown would be despised.

This was not Adam's condition. No! So God's response to Adam's faith in the promise of a life-restorer was all grace.

Few realize that the life which each of us has on being born into the race of man, has been derived from the loins of Adam; that if that life has been sentenced to a death from which there is no redemption, then each and all of Adam's posterity must follow him into his death, for *"in Adam all die."* Thank God for the truth that *"since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"* (1 Cor 15:21,22). For Jesus Christ *"came to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10; cf. Matt. 18:11) and to give himself a *"ransom for all to be testified in due time"* (1 Tim. 2:6).

- F.A. Essler

## **The Memorial Supper**

*"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."*

According to our usual method of reckoning, the Memorial celebration this year should be held after sundown, Tuesday, April 22, 1986

This, according to the Jewish calendar, is the 14th of Nisan, and the appropriate time for the brethren to meet *"in remembrance"* of the Lamb who was slain.

"This do in remembrance of me."

## **The Return to Our Father**

**A story for children young and old.**

*"I will arise and go to my Father." - Luke 15:18*

In an art gallery, two men stood before a painting that made a very strong appeal to one of them. The scene was that of an ivy-mantled cottage, festooned with great trees, and in the background, cattle and sheep grazing on a hillside pasture. At the gate there stood a woman whose gaze was fixed upon a lad. He was looking up at her with the light of love and joy shining in his eyes. It was so delightful, a wholesome scene, one calculated to recall sweet memories.

At length, one of the men turned to his companion and said: "When you look upon that picture, you behold something of my own early home life. My mother was just such a woman as that, and I myself somewhat like the boy you see there. I had a good mother and a wonderful childhood at the old home. But I left it while still in my teens and have never gone back. I don't know if my folks are living or dead. Somehow that picture tells me to go home and look them up." And back he went.

The suggestion contained in the painting broke through the sin-hardened encrustment of that man's mind and heart, and caused him to think keenly enough of those who had loved and nurtured him, to send him back to do the right thing; to bring relief to hearts that had never ceased to mourn his loss. It was a good picture that could work so effectively upon his memory. Would to God there were more pictures like that in the world, and more artists who painted them, said his friend.

Thanks be to God, we do have pictures, even more heart searching than this. They are not painted on canvas with a brush, but are depicted with words -- words which, like living things, leap out from the printed pages of our Bibles, and lay hold upon the hearts and minds of all who, gifted with the power of faith in God, forsake the beggarly elements of this world and return to their Father in heaven.

## **The Prodigal Son**

Jesus was the unexcelled artist in the painting of word pictures. In the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15, verses 12 to 32 (Luke 15:12-32), we find one of these pictures that has influenced many a wanderer out in the world of sin and to a return home.

The story begins with the usual scene of life in the home of a father who has two sons. As we look at the picture, we are impressed by its harmony and serenity. It is a well ordered home, and all things *seem* to run smoothly. The father is thoughtful and kind. There is an abundance of everything necessary to their comfort and well-being. Doubtless, as in nearly all such places, the birds and the flowers enhanced the joys of their surroundings.

But, for no apparent reason, there comes a time when the younger son becomes restless; he is not happy and content with his lot. From the great world, of which he knows little, a voice seems to call him. This voice is the lure of the unknown, of freedom from the home restraints. The more he thinks, the greater becomes his desire to explore this great unknown.

Under this urge, he musters up courage to go to his father and ask for the portion of goods that would eventually be his, in order that he might have the means to journey abroad and pay his way without having to work for his sustenance. We can imagine the father's feelings. He had lived



long enough to know something of the dangers and temptations a young man would encounter. He could have refused to comply with his son's request, but, being a wise father, he realized that the boy would not be content at home, and that he needed the experience that such a journey would bring. The Father gives him money to the value of his inheritance so that he can conveniently carry it on his person, and he lets him go. But, if we know good fathers, not without many admonitions.

### **Reduced to Feeding Swine**

The school of experience soon begins instructing this young man. He learns that while it is easy to go downhill, it is hard to go uphill; easy to drift with the current, but difficult to progress against it. Having youth and money to spend, he is of course popular, and is the comrade to others who go in for what the world calls a good time in the swirl of life. Being swept into the tide of human life, he wastes his substance in riotous living and his money is soon dissipated.

How different everything is when this way of life has taken its toll. The physical powers begin to go down along with the moral qualities that were all but swept away in licentious living. The process of decline sets in. He goes down, down, down to depths of degradation he never dreamed possible.

A famine comes upon the land. His money is gone, and he is now in dire need. What shall he do? His decision shows that there is still some good in him, for he determines to go to work. So, he hires himself out to a citizen of the country to feed swine. He is aware of the disgrace he has brought upon himself and his people, for such an occupation was an abomination in their eyes. But he must feed the swine or starve, so he does it. He knows that he is at the bottom of the scale of degradation; and being threadbare and hungry, he is glad to eat even the swine's husks. What a terrible experience the far country has been to him! How indeed will it all end?

One day as he stands feeding the swine, no one near, no sound save that which the swine make as they devour their husks, a thought comes to him. It is the evening hour. The sun, like a great ball of fire, is sinking in the west. One shaft of that yellow, golden light falls near the pigsty, and it arouses a longing in the young man's heart. The light is so beautiful and pure. It reminds him so poignantly of his old home and kindred. Oh, what a wonderful home! Was there ever a home like it? Did any one ever have such a good father? Why, even the servants had plenty to spare, and here was he, a son, dying with hunger. As he thinks on these things, he decides to go home.

### **The Return Home**

But how can one who has been so foolish as to descend to the depths of degradation, expect to be received back into a godly home? Nevertheless, he is determined to go; to cast himself upon the mercy of a father whose righteousness and love could not be questioned. So he said to himself: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."

It was a great resolve he had made, and now he would lose no time before carrying it into effect. Some one else could feed these swine; he would start on his homeward journey. He had wandered far, but he knew the way back. The trail lay just over yonder under the brow of that hill where the scrub juniper grew; then over the mountain side and down into the valley and beyond. He had no way of getting there but to walk, and the trail was rough and stony, but he knew it would lead him back home.

He trudged on. Finally he began to recognize landmarks. Once he had come this way with his father, who had brought some goats to the town he had just passed. Yes, there was that old olive tree under which they had stopped to eat and refresh themselves. And this intermittently running stream -- he knew it well. He was in his home land, but would have to spend another night, perhaps two, in this wilderness country.

Another day's journey brought him to the summit of a hill where he could see, on a far distant rise, an outlying shelter for his father's sheep. It was still too far to reach home before his father's bedtime, so he decided to wait until morning, a much more favorable time for his arrival. The question is, how will he be received?

In the morning he is not far from home when he sees an old man coming toward him along the road. It's not long before these two come together, for the father recognizes his son's walk and hastens to *meet* his long-lost boy, and embrace him, and bring him home. What a wonderful reunion it was to that boy, and how grateful he felt for his father's love, a love that his own unworthiness had not diminished.

### **Home in Eden**

The beautiful story was told by the Master to show how precious in the sight of God is the sinner's return to him. And who is the sinner?

The question carries us back to Eden, where the home of the human family was located. That this home was perfect, cannot be doubted: it was prepared by God. It was an environment that wanted no good thing. The tree of life was there to sustain its inhabitants. Birds and flowers made the place beautiful, and sparkling waters flashed by in the sunshine. All went well for a time.

Then came the call of the far country, the lure of the unknown. The thing they were told not to touch, was the one thing that would make them wise. The woman was captivated by the thought. To be sure, God could have prevented their wrong doing: he could have hidden the forbidden tree in the background, or have placed an angel there to guard it; but in his wisdom, he permitted the infraction of his law. They could not longer remain in that perfect home, but wandered forth into the far country of sin, where with all their children, they had lived in degradation and want.

### **Wasting Its Substance**

Like the prodigal son, the world has wasted its substance with riotous living. It has wasted its eye-substance, by gazing on things not good for the eye to see. Likewise, its ear-substance, its heart-substance, its brain-substance, and all the priceless wealth that God gave man at the beginning. The halls of pleasure and reckless living have engulfed many millions. The world has been going down the long incline for 6000 years. There has been a great famine in the land, *"Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord"* (Amos 8:11).

Therefore, we find the world feeding the swine, the unclean things of darkness; for surely the things that people do today, nourish the unclean things of the flesh and spirit. We cannot pick up a newspaper without having these things flaunted in our faces. Murders, robberies, domestic broils, strikes, killings, turmoils, wars, governmental sins, community sins, individual sins, political corruption, bribery, and a host of other violations of the moral code of God. It is a time when, as prophesied, men are:

"...covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

Men are not wholly bad. There is some spark of goodness left. And, in *"a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation,"* the world will come to itself. Men will come to see that they have failed in all they have attempted to do; and that the reason is that they have eliminated God from the problems of human life. He is not in all their thoughts; his laws have been repudiated and cast aside. His authority has been supplanted by the great usurper, the mighty prince of darkness who took control of men's minds a long time ago. The world has sown to the wind, and now must reap the whirlwind, and *"Except those days [of trouble] be shortened,"* said Jesus, *"no flesh would be saved."*

When the world comes to itself, men will want to go home again. They will desire to return to pristine conditions. This crowding into great cities is not natural; people need to get back to the soil, and enjoy the beauty and freedom of God's earth, its fields, meadows, and hills. There is nothing degenerative or cramping in God's great out-of-doors. In due time, the world will start its journey home to God.

### **The Reception**

The striking beauty in the story of the Prodigal Son, however, is in the father's reception of his erring child. To the father, this tatterdemalion was still his son, and was dear to his heart. In the story of the lost sheep, that sheep still belonged to the shepherd. Others might say: "Lord, *here* are thy ninety and nine, are thy not enough for thee?" But the shepherd makes answer: "This of MINE has wandered away from me." Ay, yes, the fact of ownership makes all the difference. "And although the road be rough and steep, I go to the desert to find my sheep."

So, we will kill the fatted calf, if you please. And then we'll put a fine robe on this boy, and we'll put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet, and a staff in his hand: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost and is found." There was rejoicing in the old home; but there will be a much greater time of rejoicing when the world comes home.

But will there be the killing of the fatted calf? Yes, God through the Prophet say: *"In this mountain [home] shall the Lord of Hosts make unto the people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, well refined. " "He will swallow up death in victory. And the people will say: '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'"* (Isa. 25:6-9).

What a grand family reunion there will be when *"all that are in their graves hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth. " The Tree of Life* will be there with its leaves for the healing of the nations. The Law of love will supplant selfishness and competition. The finer qualities of the human heart and mind will take precedence; and people will say:

Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3).

## Spiritual Sonship

In the meantime, some, having beheld a still more marvelous picture in the invitational promises of God's Word, and having realized their sin degraded state, have turned their steps toward home in this age, the one in which the Father is pleased to accept sacrifice and offering, acts which are prerequisite to a heavenly inheritance. They realize the utter poverty of their condition, but in their case, the Elder Brother is possessed of a very different character from the one in the parable. Their Elder Brother, sharing his Father's love and sympathy, joins with him in covering their rags and filthiness with a pure linen garment of righteousness, that they may be acceptable as a sacrifice, and enter the school where they will be fitted for the position of spiritual sons.

The realization of sonship is a most precious thing to the heart of the Christian. *"I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"* (2 Cor. 6:17,18). The Apostle reaffirms this when he says:

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a faithless and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life (Phil. 2:15,16).

As the Prodigal Son was given new shoes on his feet, so the Christian is given the sandals of peace to enable him to walk in newness of life, and to endeavor to follow in the footsteps of his Lord. He is provided with the robe of righteousness, to cover the unsightly qualities of his fallen flesh. Consequently, *"There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit"* (Rom. 8:1).

The ring placed on the finger is the symbol of a covenant or promise. These enter into a covenant of sacrifice with the Lord; they are embraced in the great, everlasting covenant, for through them as the seed of Abraham, God will bless all the families of earth.

The Christian has a staff to lean on. *"Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me,"* wrote David. And what can this be but the Word of God? We remember that at the time of the Passover, the Israelites were to have their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand. In olden times, the staff was used as a means of protection. Joseph, Jacob, Moses, and other servants of God all used this staff of defense. The Christian is also dependent upon it. When Jesus worsted the great Adversary, he did it by three sharp blows from the Word of God, saying *"It is written."* The Apostle Paul compares the Word to a sword, saying, *"Take the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God."*

As a Christian stands in the light of God's great sanctuary of peace and praise, into which he was led by the hand divine; and as he thinks of his former wanderings, he is very thankful to the God of all mercies for his inestimable gifts. He is glad that he was enabled by the grace of God to come to himself; to realize his condition of poverty in his pitiful failures of the past, and that now, in the joy of the Lord which is his strength, he can press onward toward the attainment of all that he desires in the Kingdom above.

- W. Sargent

## "Every Eye Shall See Him"

*"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." - Revelation 1:7*

In what way will they "see" him; by natural sight or spiritual? In past ages such a question would not arise. The belief then prevalent that our Lord was resurrected in his fleshly human body made it the logical conclusion that he would return in that same body and hence would be seen of men by natural sight.

We know today that our Lord was resurrected from the dead in the glory of spiritual nature, a glory that cannot be sensed by natural eyes, and that the human body buried in Joseph's tomb became no part of his present being. It follows therefore that, unless at his return he "materializes" in human form as did the angels in Old Testament days, and as he did himself upon certain occasions between the time of his resurrection and that of his ascension, he must be invisible to human sight, and the fact of his return must be discerned by other evidences, and he be "seen" therefore by what we call "spiritual sight."

It is not sufficient thus to dismiss further consideration of this Scripture, for the word here is that *"every eye shall see him"*. Some have pointed out that the word is not *"horao"* which is said to have the meaning of "discern," but *"opsetai,"* which is said to mean the seeing with the natural sight, and hence that the text should be taken literally despite the considerations which have just been expressed. Now in fact both words, *"horao"* and *"opsetai,"* and their variations, in the New Testament, have both uses, to "see" with the physical eyes and to "see" mentally. Since this is a rather important point, a few instances of the word which is rendered "see" in the text under consideration are given here in order to establish the matter.

John 3:36 -- "He that believeth not the Son shall not see (*opsetal*) life."

Luke 3:6 -- "All flesh shall see (*opsetai*) the salvation of God."

Matt. 27:24 -- "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. See (*opsesthe*) thou to that."

Matt. 27:4 -- "What is that to us. See (*opsei*) thou to that."

In the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint):

Psa.49:9 -- "That he should still live forever and not see corruption."

Zech.9:5 -- "Ashkelon shall see and be afraid."

And in the Apocrypha:

Baruch 4:24,25 -- "The neighbors of Zion ... shall see your salvation ...Thine enemy hath persecuted thee but shortly thou shalt see his destruction."

From these instances (there are others) it should be clear that the word is not used necessarily to mean "seeing" with the physical sight; it does on occasion indicate "seeing" with the mental sight, and it does not follow, therefore, that the use of *"opsetai"* here teaches that Jesus at his return will be visible to mankind.

## John's Intent

The next consideration in our text is the thought in John's mind when he wrote the words. What understanding would the Holy Spirit impart to us through John's ready pen?

The verse stands by itself; it has no direct connection either with the preceding or the succeeding verses. It is an ecstatic outburst, as it were, on John's part using the language of the Old Testament. He had written his greeting, a greeting of grace and peace from the Father, the Son, and the angelic host as represented by the archangels, (the "seven spirits before the throne"). He had gone on to extol the One who has both saved us and made us kings and priests, and having concluded this greeting with a deepfelt "Amen" (vs.6), it is as if a new thought strikes him and he exclaims, "*Behold, he cometh...*," seeing the ultimate end of all that he had witnessed in vision on Patmos. We should take the verse as being, not a bald, sober statement of physical fact, but a rhapsody of praise for a forthcoming event expressed in familiar Scriptural terms. The words of this verse are repeated from the sayings of Jesus and the utterances of the prophets and it is to those origins that we should turn if we would rightly understand the text.

## John's Recollections

The immediate memory in John's mind must have been the reply of Jesus to the High Priest recorded in Matt. 26:64. John was present (John 18:15) and heard the words: "*Hereafter ye shall see (opsontai) the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.*"

That declaration was in turn a direct reference to Dan. 7:13:

One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven ... and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him.

That verse in Daniel, in common with the whole of the chapter, is quite clearly symbolic; we do not expect that the Most High will seat himself upon an earthly throne and superintend the burning of a literal ten-horned beast! Neither do we expect that the Lord Jesus will literally be brought before a throne of fire in order to receive his Kingdom. Jesus knew that this was symbolic when he alluded to this well-known belief before Caiaphas. John knew too when he quoted the words in Rev. 1:7. There was no doubt in his mind as to the reality of that Coming even though he knew himself to be describing it in terms that were symbolic.

## John's Other References

John's thoughts had ranged further than the time of Daniel. He had the golden visions of Isaiah in mind, visions in which the same word 'opsontai' is used for the same event. He was thinking of Isa. 40:5 -- "*And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see (opsontai) it together,*" and of Isa. 52:8 -- "*For they shall see (opsontai) eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.*" (This latter Scripture refers to the "Watchers" coming as it were "face to face" with the returning Lord, and not, as is sometimes suggested, to the harmony of believers on doctrinal matters at the "Time of the End." "*They shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion.*" is the way Margolis' translation has it, and this is the thought both of the Hebrew and the Greek of the Septuagint).

Quite instinctively John associated with these Scriptures another theme, that upon which the prophet Zechariah dwelt when he said (Zech. 10:10): *"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son. "*

John, previously, associated that scripture with a limited fulfillment at the time of the Crucifixion (John 19:37); now he associates it with a greater fulfillment. Not only would the "Watchers" (as in Isa. 52:8) see the Lord returning to Zion; not only would "all flesh," all the world, as in Isa. 40:5, see the glory of the Lord revealed; not only would the wicked who had risen up for judgment, as in Daniel 7, see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, but those who in John's sight were the furthest of all removed from God -- "they also which pierced him" would experience this same realization of his Return for judgment and conversion.

None can escape the Coming of the Son of Man! All are to be brought before him that he might separate them as a shepherd divides between his sheep and his goats (Matt. 25:32). Just as in Zechariah there is a worldwide mourning for an only son, in John's ecstasy he foresaw that *"all kindreds of the earth shall wail over him"* (not *"because of"*. The word is epi and the thought that of mourners wailing over a dead beloved one). The correspondence between Zech.10:10 and Rev. 1:7 on this point is exact.

It should be clear then that since the *"seeing"* in the Scriptures which gave John his inspiration for this verse in Revelation is not physical, but metaphorical, John is hardly likely to have intended his words here to be interpreted to mean physical sight. *"Behold, "* he says, in the language of his beloved Scriptures, *"he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him."* He knew that the *"seeing"* in those texts was with the mental sight and it is reasonable to conclude that in alluding to those texts he applied the same meaning to them.

A further confirmation of this viewpoint is the fact that if *"they have pierced him"* are literally to witness his coming in the clouds of heaven they must be resurrected before the Second Advent takes place. Such a thought is out of harmony with all that we know of God's Plan. The Lord comes, to raise his own faithful ones. After that, and after he has presented the risen church before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy, he will be revealed, with his Church, in glory to the world. And only after that will the General Resurrection commence and *"they that pierced him"* be awakened from the sleep of death to stand before the great White Throne. They will not, they can not, physically witness his return to earth; but they *will "see"* him then in exactly the same way that we, now, see, "eye to eye," the Lord returning to Zion.

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## **Our Lips Kept for Jesus**

*"Keep my lips that they may be, Filled with messages from Thee."*

The days are past forever when we said, "Our lips are our own." Now we know that they are not our own. Yet, how many often have the miserable consciousness that they have "spoken unadvisedly with their lips"! How many have prayed, "*Keep the door of my lips!*" when the very last thing they think of expecting is that they will be kept! As faith went no farther, the answer went no farther. And so the door was not kept.

Trust implies expectation that what we have entrusted will be kept. If you have not expected him to keep, you have not trusted. All who have heard the message of salvation for themselves are called to be his messengers.

It is an especially sweet part of his dealings with his messengers, that he always gives us the message for ourselves first. And so the more we sit at his feet and watch to see what he has to say to ourselves, the more we shall have to tell to others.

Then comes the prayer, "*O Lord, open thou my lips, " and its fulfillment. For then comes the promise, "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. "*

Then of course, "*the lips of the righteous feed many, "* for the food is the Lord's own giving.

- F.R. Havergal

## **Entered into Rest**

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