

EXPEDIENT FOR YOU.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Jno. 16:7.

The speaker is Jesus. The disciples are addressed. The circumstances are peculiar and interesting. They were sad, because He had said He was going away. "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you." Ch. 13:33. The time for His departure was drawing near. They were gathered to eat their last Passover. After the supper, He had broken the bread and poured the wine, for them to eat and drink, and had said "This is my body;" and "This is my blood;" and "Do this in remembrance of me." True, He had said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." He also had said, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Ch. 14:1-3. But while it remained to them an unsolved mystery, is it any wonder that sorrow filled their hearts? Ch. 16:6. Until after He had risen, they knew not, often as He had told them, what even the rising from the dead should mean. How then could they understand His going away and His coming again? He sought not needlessly to make them mourn, but as the time drew near, He sought to prepare them for the ordeal. Not only was He going away, but they were to suffer persecution and be put to death. Ch. 16:2. This was so much different from what they had expected, in a kingdom of earthly glory, no wonder they were despondent and silent. Vs. 5-6. "But," He says, "these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you." Ver. 4. What a blending of tenderness and wisdom, in His dealings with them!

There were, it will be seen, several very natural reasons for their sadness. They were to all human appearance about to lose by death, a friend whom they had learned to love. We can all, on account of our own experience, sympathize with them in this. But their grief was intensified by a terrible disappointment. "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." Luke 24:21. They expected earthly glory, and instead of this, He whom they loved and trusted now spoke to them of suffering and death. It was not merely the disappointment, as of those who bury their hopes in a premature grave, but there must have been coupled with it a terrible fear that He had deceived them; that they had loved and trusted an imposter. Most terrible of all fears! And while it remained unexplained, the language of our text only deepens the mystery. Not only going to die and leave us, they might have thought, but He goes so far as to say it is all for our good: "It is expedient for you that I go away." The Comforter will come. You will have Him, instead of me, says Jesus, and it is better for you. He had been their Teacher, and thus their Comforter, for He says, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth." Jno. 14:16-17. The Spirit is a Comforter, because He is a Teacher, as was Jesus Himself. Ch. 16:12-15. But Jesus gives them to understand that the other Comforter would be better for them than was He, and not merely a help, partly to make up their loss. Their loss of His presence and teaching was to be their gain. There were doubtless other reasons, not here expressed, why He should go away, but the reason He gives for its being better for them that He should go is: "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come." The disciples probably did not comprehend this until after the Spirit came, and it may not be understood by all yet, but it is only using our own words to express His statements, when we say that the church is better off under the teachings and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit than they could have been under the

instructions, and enjoying the presence of Jesus in the flesh. His going away included the fact of His entrance on the higher life. He was put to death in the flesh, and quickened by the Spirit, and "That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." 1 Pet. 3:18 and Jno. 3:6. The Holy Spirit is the representative of Himself and His power in that spiritual [R102 : page 8] life. Hence He could say "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28:20. He is absent in body yet present in Spirit.

The work of the Spirit is two-fold neither part of which could have been done as well by Jesus in the flesh. The two objects to be gained, were the teaching and comforting of the church, and the reproofing and enlightening of the world. Ch. 16:8-15.

He was limited, as a man in the flesh, to the ordinary means of travel, and could only be in one place at a time, but the Spirit can be everywhere, and with any number of people at once. However great the seeming loss, and the sorrow of the embryo church must have been, when He was taken from them, certainly the wants of the church in all succeeding generations have been far more fully met by the presence of the Spirit than they could have been by His presence in the flesh. Thousands upon thousands, all through these centuries, and all over the world, have been blessed according to the promise: "Where two or three are met in my name, there I am in the midst."

It was necessary that Christ, as our great High Priest, (having shed His own blood, as represented by the High Priest under the law shedding the blood of the beast – the lower nature,) should enter into the Holiest in virtue of what He had done, in order to secure the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But this is not the only reason that it was expedient that He should go away. What has been said above, shows the greater value of the Spirit as Teacher and Comforter, than He could have been. Here arises a question: If it was expedient that

He should go away, on account of the superiority of the Spirit as Teacher, Comforter and Guide, would the same law of expediency not require that He should remain away? This thought, based upon our text, has been urged by many against the doctrine of the return of Christ, and against the quite popular view, among those looking for the Lord, that He is coming the second time in the flesh. We regard the objection as unanswerable. Should He so come at Jerusalem, He would not be in Europe or in America. He would be limited as before. When the work in the Most Holy is done, it is true He comes into the Holy place, but not in the flesh. "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him (so) no more." 2 Cor. 5:16. The Sanctuary or holy place, represents the church, not in its fleshly phase, but in its spiritual state, in which we are counted on account of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us. Rom. 8:9. We are still actually in the flesh, however, (and hence the warfare,) and we can only discern the presence of Christ in the spiritual body, by faith. The only light in the typical holy place, was from the lamp; so we walk in the light of the lamp, by faith. This walking by faith must continue until we cease to be in the flesh actually, as we are now counted; or in other words, until we are changed, and made like Him, and then we shall see Him as He is. 1 Jno. 3:2. When He appears to the world, we shall appear with Him.

The prophetic argument based on the 2300 days (years,) of Dan. 8:14, and the parallelisms of the Two Dispensations, show that Christ was due to come from the Most Holy place in 1844. Some tell us when He comes through the inner vail, He will and must be visible to men in the flesh, and that He will so appear to them that look for Him in 1881. If the supposition that Christ will be visible to men in the flesh when He leaves the most Holy place be correct, and if the parallelisms are correct, then Christ should have **[R103 : page 8]** been visible from 1844. And if the parallelism is not correct, then there is certainly no ground for expecting anything in 1881

more than in any other year. The advocates of the 1881 point have never claimed any more in favor of that date than a parallel to the last half of the 70th week of Dan. 9. They know as well as we that there is no prophetic period that ends in 1881.

We do not say that the covenant week will not have a parallel here. As the gospel began to go to the Gentiles at the end of the 70th week or three and one-half years after the cross, so the advanced truth here may begin to reach Israel in 1881. There was no coming of Christ three and one-half years after the cross; why should we expect such an event in 1881, admitting the force of the parallelism? There was no change in the condition of believers three and one-half years after the cross; why then, on such ground, expect a change in the condition of believers here? The only change we can see as taking place three and one-half years after the cross, was in the condition of the nominal Jewish church and the gospel turning to the Gentiles. A corresponding change in 1881 would affect the condition of the nominal Christian church and the gospel turning in some special sense to the Jews again.

To claim that Christ will appear as a man in 1881, on the ground of His coming through the veil between the Holy Places, is to ignore the prophetic arguments and the parallelism on which the claim for 1881 is based. Such claims remind us of the illustration of a man using a ladder to reach an important eminence, and then, throwing the ladder down, exclaiming: "Here I am, and I can now go higher, but no thanks to the ladder."

We are quite well assured that those who wait until they see Christ in the flesh, will not be included among the little flock. He has already appeared to every one who is able to discern His presence, and answer to His knock, and open the door to Him. To such, the feast has been a great blessing. But did He not visibly appear on His way in, i.e., after His resurrection? Yes, He did,

because He wanted witnesses of His resurrection. We believe He could appear visibly now, if there were any such reason, but there is no promise that He will. But did He not wash His flesh in the Holy place on His way in, and will He, indeed, must He not do the same on His way out? We think it remains to be proved that there was any place or provision for washing in the typical Holy place. The laver was in the court and not in the sanctuary. Before Christ died, He said to His disciples: "Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you." Jno. 15:3. We do not assert that this was the washing of Christ's flesh. We would rather leave it to others to make reckless assertions. It may be that the washing of the typical high priest's flesh was to represent the purity of Him who knew no sin, and yet was made sin (a sin-offering) for us. We do not consider it a reckless assertion, when we say that Christ will never appear in the flesh, for the purpose of completing the education of His church. If He should, it would be a contradiction of His own promise that the Spirit would guide them into all truth. The Spirit's work for us will not be finished until we are born of the Spirit, and then we will be Spirit, (Jno. 3:6,) and being like Him, we shall see Him as He is.

Man says we must believe that He will appear as He did in the upper chamber, or we are foolish virgins, and will be shut out from the High Calling. Jesus says: "If they shall say unto you, behold, He is in the desert; go not forth; behold, in the secret chamber; believe it not." Matt. 24:26. We being forewarned, should not be deceived. We do not expect to see Him until we are like Him.

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