

THE SHEEP AND GOATS.

(MATT. 25:31-46.)

The scene of this parable is laid after the time of trouble, and after the exaltation of the "little flock" to the throne, when the nations have been subdued, Satan bound and the authority of Christ's kingdom established. So we read: "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory...then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." The Bride of Christ before this time, has been seated with him in his throne, and has taken part in executing the judgments of the great day of wrath. Now, "the Son of Man appears" (is made manifest) to the world, "in his glory" – The glory of the husband is the wife (1 Cor. 11:7) and together Jesus and his Bride "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Here is the "New Jerusalem" as John saw it (Rev. 21) – "that holy city...coming down from God out of heaven." During all the time of trouble it was coming down, and now it has touched the earth. This is the stone cut out of the mountains (kingdoms of earth) without hands, (but by the power of God) and it has become a great mountain (kingdom) and has filled the whole earth. (Dan. 2:35.) Its coming has broken to pieces (Dan. 2:34-35) the evil kingdoms of the Prince of darkness. Here is that glorious city (government) prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, (Rev. 21:2) and the nations of them which are saved (restored – brought back from the Adamic death) are walking in the light of it. (Vs. 24.) These may "bring their glory and honor into it, but there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, etc." (Vs. 27.) Here from the midst of the throne, proceeds a pure river of water of life, (truth, unmixed with error) and the Spirit and the Bride say come and take it freely. (Rev. 22:17.) Here begins

the world's probation – the world's great judgment day – a thousand years.

But even in this glorious time of blessing and healing of the nations, when Satan is bound, evil restrained, mankind released from the grasp of death, and when the knowledge of the Lord fills the earth, two classes will be developed, which Jesus in this parable calls sheep and goats. These he tells us he will separate. Gradually throughout the age he gathers his sheep (those who know and obey his voice) to his right hand (place of favor) but the goats (the disobedient) to the left.

In the end of the Millennial age, at the final adjustment of human affairs, Jesus thus addresses his sheep: "Come ye blessed...inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." What kingdom? Is not the kingdom under the whole heavens given to the people of the saints of the Most High God to possess it forever? Yes, as we have already learned, a "little flock," "the saints," the "sheep" of the gospel age, having followed the Lamb (Jesus) whithersoever he went, through evil and through good report, even to the sacrificing of the human life, with him have been exalted to the divine nature and to the throne of the spiritual unseen kingdom, to possess it forever (for the age) – "He (the Christ, head and body) must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet." (1 Cor. 15:25.) – The saints shall reign with Christ a thousand years. Rev. 20:6.

Jesus calls believers of the gospel age, who know and obey his voice, his sheep. But he says – "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold (referring to those who should follow him in the millennial age) them also I must lead (into truth and righteousness during that age) and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." Jesus and the "little flock" – the bride – made one will be the good shepherd who will lead mankind into the one fold of safety – harmony with God.

This work of separating sheep and goats is a gradual one, requiring all [R195 : page 4] of the millennial age for its accomplishment. During that age each individual as he comes to a knowledge of God and his will, takes his place at the right hand of favor, or the left hand of disfavor according as he improves or misimproves the opportunities of that golden age. And by the end of that age, all the world of mankind (not the church of the gospel age) will have arranged themselves as shown in the parable, into two classes. In nature sheep are far more numerous than goats, and we do not doubt that with the perfect knowledge then possessed, the sheep company will far outnumber the goats. With the end of that age (1,000 years) is the end of the world's trial, or judgement, and final disposition is made of the two classes. The goats who have not developed the element of love – the law of God's being and kingdom – are not counted worthy of life and must be destroyed, while the sheep who have developed and by deeds exhibited Godlikeness (love) are to be installed as the rulers of earth for future ages.

The work of restitution will not be quite complete until the great mass of mankind, having been restored to the perfect condition, is again restored to the dominion of earth as given originally to Adam before sin entered. For God said: "After our likeness, let man have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, over the cattle and over all the earth...and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" – a ruler over earth, like as God is ruler over all things. And the Psalmist expresses the same idea saying: "Thou hast made man a little lower than the Angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor; thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." Not over each other; when the law of love controls human hearts, there will be no necessity for dominion over one another, though by mutual consent, prompted by mutual love, regulations may be made among themselves for the common good and blessing of all.

This then, is the kingdom that has been preparing for mankind from the foundation of the world. It was necessary that they should suffer 6,000 years under the dominion of evil, hatred and strife, to learn their certain results, misery and death, and in order by contrast to prove the justice, wisdom and goodness of God's law – love. Then it requires the seventh thousand years under the reign of Christ to restore him from ruin and death to the perfect condition, thereby fitting him wisely to exercise dominion over earth.

But why is man thus crowned with glory and honor, a king in all the earth? The Lord makes them answer – because "I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, in prison and you came unto me." But, they answer, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and ministered unto thee? Hear the reply – Ye have done it to each other; ye are all my Father's children; I also am his Son, though on a higher plane, and all we are brethren: (Christ and the saints of the gospel age – children of God on the spiritual plane; mankind in general will be sons of God on the restored, or fleshly plane as Adam was before sin.) The love you have shown to the least of my brethren, I count as shown to me. No great deeds are assigned as the ground for this honor and favor – they have simply come into harmony with God's law, love, and proved it by their works. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," (Rom. 13:10.) and "God is love," so when man is restored again to the image of God – "very good" – man also will be love.

Then the message to those on the left – "Depart from me ye cursed, (condemned as unfit vessels for the glory and honor of life, who would not yield to the moulding hand of the potter – the moulding and shaping influences of divine love). When these **[R196 : page 4]** my brethren were hungry and thirsty, naked, sick and in prison, ye ministered not to their necessities, thus continually proving to be out

of harmony with the law of the heavenly city (kingdom) and "there shall in no case enter into it anything that defileth." "Depart from me into everlasting fire (symbol of destruction) prepared for the Devil and his Angels." Satan is to be destroyed, as we read – "That old serpent which is the devil and Satan was cast into the lake of fire; this is the second death." Christ will "destroy...him that has the power of death, that is the Devil." "And these (the goats) go away into everlasting cutting-off (destruction) but the righteous into life eternal." (Never ending.) Diaglott.

Of the "sheep" it is said: "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But because God gave it to man at first and designs restoring it to him again, when he has prepared and repaired him for the great trust, we are not to suppose that God intends man to rule it except as under, or in harmony with His heavenly laws. "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven" will be the rule.

There could scarcely be a better illustration of Man's dominion under God, than that afforded in the government of this country. Each state is permitted to have dominion over its own territory, but all must be subject to the general government of the United States. And no one state may make a law which will conflict with any law of the United States. When in the late rebellion some of the states attempted so to do, the general government was obliged to reduce to subjection the refractory states, and when they were restored to harmony, they were again permitted to occupy their former position.

So we learn that God's government is a general government over all his works; that he rules in justice equity and love; that His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him; that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will" – but the kingdom of earth is sure to man after that he has learned that the heavens do rule. (Dan. 4:17-26.)

When the perfect man to whom it was first given, through sin lost his ability and right to reign, the dominion was taken away and given to his adversary whose reign of terror and death lasted 6,000 years. But a limit was set by the Almighty to his time and power to hurt mankind and while used for man's discipline and final good, the remainder of his wrath was restrained. When the powers of darkness have accomplished their part in God's purpose, the Son of God is sent to restore all things and to bring order and harmony out of confusion. When his work is finished he "gives up the kingdom to the Father that God may be all and in all." (1 Cor. 15:28.)

Man henceforth rules his dominion in harmony with the law of heaven – delighting continually to do his will, in whose favor is life, and at whose right hand (place of favor) there is fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore. O who would not say "Haste thee along ages of glory," and give glory and honor to him whose loving plans blossom out into such fullness of blessing.

This parable as we now understand it, is in complete harmony with the ideas advanced in article headed "The restored dominion." See WATCH TOWER, Dec. 1880. When the perfect man to whom it was first given, through sin lost his ability and right to reign, the dominion was taken away and given to his adversary whose reign of terror and death lasted 6,000 years. But a limit was set by the Almighty to his time and power to hurt mankind and while used for man's discipline and final good, the remainder of his wrath was restrained. When the powers of darkness have accomplished their part in God's purpose, the Son of God is sent to restore all things and to bring order and harmony out of confusion. When his work is finished he "gives up the kingdom to the Father that God may be all and in all." (1 Cor. 15:28.)

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