

THE BLESSED DYING.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them." Rev. 14:13.

Uniformly throughout the Bible, except in this one instance death is represented as a dreadful disaster, a terrible enemy, a devouring monster, and the grave as a great prison, permitted of our loving Heavenly Father, only because men had become sinners and must be destroyed. And the great hope held out before the world has been, that Christ having given himself a ransom for the sinners – having "tasted death for every man – the just for the unjust, will soon commence the great work of destroying death by restoring all mankind to life. Thus will he "swallow up death victoriously." (1 Cor. 15:54.)

When he has exalted his church to the glory of kingdom (symbol, mountain,) power, then, he will spread before all people a great feast, and through this kingdom (mountain) he will destroy the veil of ignorance and the covering of death – i.e. "He will swallow up death in victory." Isa. 25:6-8. Then, he will break open and abolish the great prison house of death and set at liberty all the captives. Of this deliverance to the captives and opening of the prison doors to them that are bound Jesus preached, saying, "The day is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the son of man and come forth." (John 5:28.)

Paul recognizes death as the greatest of all enemies, and speaking of Christ's millennial reign he says, "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet: The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. 15:25,26.) It is the same apostle who, speaking of the object of Jesus coming into the world and dying for

our sins, says that he took the human nature that "through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil." (Heb. 2:14.) It is also affirmed that he will open the prison doors of them that are bound (captives of death) and proclaim liberty to the captives. (Isa. 61:1.)

In view of the general expression of enmity to death, in the Scriptures, the above solitary text speaking of it as a blessing, is rather peculiar until we notice, that the application is limited by the word "henceforth." Not always, but henceforth death may be a blessing. But notice another limitation; it will not henceforth be a blessing to all mankind, but only to those in the Lord – members in particular of the body of Christ, the little flock to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom – to all others death will continue to be an enemy until its final destruction in the Millennial reign. (Hos. 13:14.)

Again, it is unusual to speak of those already dead as dying; but the spirit uses this seemingly incongruous expression, evidently desiring to limit the application of the death blessing to a certain class "Blessed are the dead (dead to the world – crucified with Christ – "ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God,") who die in the Lord from henceforth."

Now, we are full of interest to know when, from what time forward, will it be blessed for the special class mentioned, to die. These words were written for our edification and we should be able to know when they apply: especially if we are in the Lord and dead to the world; for it was part of our Master's promise, that the spirit should guide us into an understanding of the truth and show us things to come. (John 16:13.) If as we believe the last members of the body of Christ are now living – "The feet of him" – it is time that we had an understanding of this passage which clearly refers to the feet.

[R304 : page 4]

We look backward at the context, to ascertain if possible when this blessing is due. The seven preceding verses give, we think, very clear testimony on the subject. They mention three specific messages which must be proclaimed in the church (symbol, heaven) which, we believe, have been in process, during the first seven years of harvest just ended, from 1874 to 1881. The first message embodies not only the age-lasting good news (Gospel) but also the time element. "The HOUR of his judgment is come." This is precisely what was preached by quite a goodly number of us, viz: that the glad tidings of great joy should yet be unto all people, and that the "harvest" or time of trial (judgment) commenced with 1874, and would last for forty years, the first seven years being specially devoted to the church for the harvesting of the first-fruits.

You will recall that up to 1878, though Restitution was the key note, and entire consecration was always urged, yet the time element was one of the most prominent features always. Since 1878, however, though the same time element is recognized in all our preaching and teaching, and is repeatedly referred to as a proof of our position, yet the direct teaching of time has almost stopped among all the preaching brethren – and this too, without any preconcerted arrangement, and without any other reason, than that other elements of truth came into greater prominence.

It was in the spring of 1879, that seeing clearly the parallelism between the nominal Jewish church and the nominal Gospel church, we were enabled to know just where the latter was finally rejected of the Lord and spewed out of His mouth (Rev. 3:16) no longer to be his mouthpiece. We saw that this was due in 1878, as the parallel of the rejection of the Jewish church, when Jesus just prior to his crucifixion, wept over them and said, "Your house is left unto you desolate" – The Jewish church was there likewise cast off, or spewed from his mouth.

We were led to see very clearly that the nominal church of the Gospel Age, is the Babylon (confused, mixed condition, of worldly-mindedness and luke warm christianity) described in Rev. 18:2-4.

This spewing out, or casting off, of **[R304 : page 5]** the nominal church, as an organization in 1878 – we then understood, and still proclaim to be the date of the commencement of Babylon's fall, as recorded there. And since then we feel ourselves led of the spirit, through the unfolding of this portion of the word of truth to say in the name of the Lord, to all God's true children in Babylon: "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and receive not of her plagues." (vs. 4.) This seems to accord wonderfully with the second message – "Babylon is fallen." (Rev. 14:8.)

The third message (vs. 9-11) concerning the worshipers of the Beast and his Image – showing the nominal church in the colors in which the Word of God paints it, pointing out, how all who remain in her either in spirit or name, in opposition to the word of God, saying, "Come out of her" will be subject to torment and vexation so long as they are worshiping creeds and doctrines and organizations of men. The remembrance of which distress (smoke of torment) will never be forgotten.

As with the preceding two, so with this third message – it could not have been more accurately fulfilled than it was. [And here we would remark, that the resemblance of the teachings of our company, to the descriptions now being considered, was only noticed about six months ago.] The meaning of the symbols of Rev. 13. The beasts and image we first published in the January 1880 number of this paper [We will republish it for the benefit of new readers – in our next number.] All three of these messages yet continue, and will doubtless continue to be repeated by others so long as they contain truth due to the Lord's children; but as special messages in the sense referred to in the prediction of the Revelator they have all been given, and we are

in the time of patient waiting for our "change" described in vs. 12 [vs. 13? - site Editor]. And here it is, just now – 1881, that for the first time we are able to read understandingly the words "Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord from henceforth." Evidently the blessing is to the members of the Christ now living.

But we inquire, in what respect will death be a blessing to us now, that it has not always been to other members of the body. We answer, the difference is that we shall not sleep, but we will be instantly invested with our heavenly – spiritual bodies, being changed in a moment dropping all that is human and earthly and being clothed upon with our heavenly condition. In the case of Jesus, there were nearly three days of sleep – the unclothed condition between the times when the earthly body was resigned and the heavenly body was received – Paul and others have been nearly two thousand years waiting "unclothed" or "asleep in Jesus" and this is one of the principle reasons why death was undesirable even to christians: We don't wish to be unclothed even for a moment, but we do desire to be clothed upon or to have the change an instantaneous one. (1 Cor. 15:52.)

Herein consists the blessing to those of the body now taken. Death of the human will be instantaneous with the perfecting of the divine nature, hence it will be a blessed "change." "Yea, saith the spirit that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

To the class thus "blessed," there will be no interruption of work. Already dead to the world and alive toward God, their work is in harmony with the kingdom work now going on, and they merely step to their higher plane of "divine" perfection and power and there continue the same work. It is only the labor (toil,) incident to the mortal body – the frail "earthen vessel" which ceases. Not so highly favored in this regard was the lot of any of the members of "the body"

which preceded us. Quite a period elapsed in Paul's case between sufferings and glory. When he had fought a good fight and finished his course he looked forward, not to a change in a moment, but to a sleep from which he would be wakened to receive his reward in the kingdom. So he expresses his hope, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life which the Lord, the Righteous Judge shall give me at that day." (2 Tim. 4:8.)

"How beautiful are the feet of Him," how many favors and blessings are for us. Truly, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works follow with them." Rejoice and be exceeding glad – but

"Ne'er think the victory one,
Nor once at ease sit down;
Thine arduous task will not be done,
'Til thou hast gained thy crown."

The human must be entirely sacrificed before the divine is perfected – "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life," are the words of our Lord and Forerunner in whose footsteps on the narrow way, we must follow to gain the prize of our high calling – "Glory Honor and Immortality."

What harmony there now appears in this text when thus explained in harmony with the article "Who can hear it?" in our last number.
