

THE CONSUMMATION OF OUR HOPE.

Some of the Lord's dear children, sorely pressed by the adversary and longing for the glorious consummation of our hope, anxiously inquire how long must we tarry here, and in what manner shall we go? For these, and for refreshing the memory of all, we briefly review what the Scriptures teach on this subject.

It has been an old and cherished idea with Christian people, and ourselves among others, based on a misunderstanding of some scriptures, and an overlooking of others, that those who remain unto the coming of the Lord should not pass through the ordeal of physical death. We took more interest in this thought than other Christians, because we had learned that we were living in the day of the Lord's presence. We never claimed this as new truth, however; it was simply an old idea applied to the time in which we learned we were living, which idea we had not discovered to be erroneous until a little over a year ago.

The scriptures upon which that idea has been based, when critically considered, do not (in our judgment) support the thought; and other scriptures seem to teach positively that all who will be members of the body – Christ – must like their head, example, forerunner, die physically. Carefully examine the subject in the light of the following remarks on texts usually regarded as the basis of the idea that some will be exempted from physical death:

In 1 Thes. 4:15,17, we read: "That we which are alive and remain unto the coming (parousia – presence) of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord... shall descend...and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together [or also] with [or to] them, &c."

Now we do not claim that anything here mentioned indicates that the saints, as new creatures, who remain over to this time of the Lord's presence will die; but we do claim that nothing in this text teaches that their human bodies will not die. This scripture does not mention what change they will undergo before being joined to the Lord; in fact the change is not mentioned here at all. But the same apostle elsewhere informs us that a change must take place, because "flesh and blood" cannot inherit the kingdom of God – we must all be "changed" to spiritual bodies.

Let us next look at 1 Cor. 15:51, for it mentions the change particularly, and let us notice carefully whether Paul says we shall be changed without dying, as we have always supposed he does. We read: "Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye;...the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." We received the impression that our earthly body would not die, from the above statement regarding sleep, but the human body might be dissolved and we – the new creatures – be delivered from it so quickly, clothed upon with our spiritual body, that not a moment for sleep would intervene. If time should intervene between the dissolution of our earthly house (human nature) and the receiving of our spiritual body, we should be obliged to sleep, as the apostles and "all who sleep in Jesus." But that sleep has always been an undesirable thing; therefore with the Apostle we can say that we are anxious, not to be unclothed (asleep without either human or spiritual body), but we prefer, if the will of God be such, that we should be of the class alive when the Lord has come, so that, instead of being even for a moment in the unclothed (or sleep) condition, we might be clothed upon, or receive the spiritual at the same moment we part with the old human house. And this in substance Paul here states – all will not sleep, for to some the change will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

One thing is sure, we must leave the flesh sometime, and whenever or however it may be, it will be the death or dissolution and end of the human to all who become full recipients of the divine nature.

Now, notice the words of Jesus concerning John. John, we have long since seen to be a type or representative of the last part of the church – those who are alive and remain unto the presence of the Lord and who shall be changed. Jesus said of our representative, John: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee, Peter? Then went that saying abroad among the disciples, that that disciple should not die; howbeit, Jesus said not that he should not die, but if I will that he tarry till I come," &c. (John 21:22). Just so, dear brethren, it has been with the company typified by John; the saying has gone abroad and has been generally received that this part of the church will not die. Howbeit, when we examine the evidences, we find that neither Jesus nor the apostles said we should not die, but that we would tarry till the Master's presence and be changed in a moment and not sleep.

Now, notice the positive teaching that all of "the body" will die, and then mark the necessity of death. It was no less an authority than Paul who said: If we be dead with him we shall also live with him; and if we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection, therefore we are to be made conformable unto his death.

Does some one object that these words are applicable to the daily life of Paul and of us and suggest that we are to be "living sacrifices?" Very true, but while our dying commences at our consecration, it does not end there. As in the case of our "Captain," it does not end until the human is dead. While we begin, as "living sacrifices," yet, when the sacrifice is finished, all that is human is dead. The thing that dies at once is the human will, and when this is

accomplished we reckon ourselves dead; but the death actually is in progress day by day until the sacrifice is complete. We cannot receive the spiritual mind unless we surrender the human mind or will, so also we cannot receive our spiritual body unless the earthly body is surrendered. Remember that Jesus said to all the churches: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

It is in harmony with these thoughts that we understand the words of Jesus (John 11:26): "Whosoever liveth (at this time) and believeth in me [or is one of the faith-ful] shall never die." The class referred to are reckoned dead to the human will, nature, hope, etc., and are alive toward God as new creatures. Such new creatures who are now living will not sleep – will not die – but immediately, in the twinkling of an eye, will be transferred to their new body like unto Christ's spiritual body. What matters it to us, if the earthly house of this building be dissolved in death, we shall not be unclothed but clothed upon with an heavenly one.

Now, as we have seen, that in Jesus' case the human was surrendered to death forever, (He was "put to death in the flesh but quickened in spirit"), and that, had he taken back the human nature, it would have been taking back our ransom price, so we have seen that it is a privilege granted to us as his body, to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ – to share in the world's redemption, with him who loved us and bought us with his own precious blood – to suffer with him, being made conformable unto his death. In a word, if Jesus must needs be obedient even unto death, and if he says to us: "Be thou faithful unto death," then it is clear that the dissolution or death of the human being is necessary.

But we find still more positive teaching on this point. Turning to Psa. 82:6, we read: "I – I (Jehovah) have said God's ye are, and sons of the Most High all of you; but as man ye die, and as one of the heads ye fall" (Young's Trans).

Our high calling is so great, so much above the comprehension of men, that they think we are guilty of blasphemy [R474 : page 7] when we speak of being "new creatures" – "partakers of the divine nature." When we claim, on the scriptural warrant, that we are begotten to a divine nature and that Jehovah is thus our father, it is claiming that we are divine beings – hence all such are Gods. True, we are only in the embryo condition, now spiritually minded, but by-and-by we shall be perfected. Thus there is a family of Gods, Jehovah being our father, and all his sons on the divine plane, being brethren and joint-heirs: Jesus being the chief or first-born.

Nor should we wonder that so few discern this grand relationship, into the full membership of which we so soon hope to come. The apostle tells us that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Just so it was when our great Head and Lord was among men. Having consecrated the human at 30 years of age, he was begotten of the spirit, and became a part-taker of the divine nature. When Jesus said he was a son of God the Jews were about to stone him, reasoning thus, that if a son of God, he was making himself to be also a God, or of the God family. [Just what we claim: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" – "The God and father of our Lord Jesus hath begotten us."] (1 John 3:2 and 1 Pet. 1:3.)

Jesus does not deny that when he said he was a son, he implied that he was of the divine nature, but he quotes to them the above passage from the Psalms as being good authority, and it seems as though it satisfied them, for they did not stone him. Jesus said, "Is it not written in your law, I said ye are Gods?" Then he proceeds to show that the "Gods" there mentioned, are the ones who receive obediently his words and example, and concludes his argument by asking whether if God calls such ones as receive his (Jesus')

teachings, Gods, whether they think that he, the teacher, whom the Father had specially set apart as the head of those Gods, could be properly said to blaspheme, when he claimed the same relationship as a son of God (John 10:35).

These sons of God, like him from whom they heard the word of truth by which they are begotten, are yet in disguise; the world knoweth us not for the same reason that it knew him not. Our Father puts no outward badge or mark of our high relationship, but leaves each to walk by faith and not by sight all through the earthly pilgrimage – down into death. His favor and love and the glory and honor which belong to our station, we can now see by the eye of faith; but soon it will be realized in fact. Now we appear like men, and as men all die, even as others; but in the resurrection we will rise in our true character as Gods – partakers of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

"It doth not yet appear
How great we shall be made;
But when we see him as he is,
We shall be like our Head."

How forcibly this is expressed by the prophet, and how sure it is, too! Jesus says – it cannot be broken.

Then the whole Christ – head and body – are addressed as one, as they **[R474 : page 8]** will be under Christ their head, saying: "Arise, O God, judge [rule, bless] the earth; for thou shalt inherit all nations."

We, as new creatures, who are living in this favored time of the Lord's presence, expect to be translated, or changed to our own spiritual condition, but we expect the change to take place at the moment of the death of the "earthen vessel" – we will not be obliged to sleep as did the new creature Paul and others, but will be "changed in a moment."

Of this favored time Jesus told us in words never understood until due, saying: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; but their works follow with them" (Rev. 14:13 – E.D.).

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 in victory." (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 vail 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 [those dead to the world – crucified with Christ – "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God,"] henceforth who die in the Lord."

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.

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 spued out of his mouth (Rev. 3:10), 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 spued from his mouth.

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

This spuing out, or casting off, of the nominal church as an organization [R475 : page 8] 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" (verse 4). This seems to accord wonderfully with the second message, "Babylon is fallen" (Rev. 14:8).

The third message (14:9-11), was that 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 messages here given, was only noticed after they had been proclaimed]. 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 had all been given before the fall of 1881, and this was the time which corresponded with the end of the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy. Since then we are in the time of patient waiting for our

"change" described in verse 12. And here it was in the fall of 1881 that, for the first time, we were 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? We answer, that now 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, unconscious, dead 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 principal 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 to 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; but 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 awakened 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 won,
Nor once at ease sit down;
Thine arduous task will not be done,
Till 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."
