

"AGREE WITH THINE ADVERSARY QUICKLY."

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." – Matt. 5:25,26.

"When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite." – Luke 12:58,59.

WE are asked whether these Scriptures can be understood to teach that those who do not make peace with the Lord in the present life will be held under compulsion to make full payment for all their debts by purgatorial sufferings in the Millennial age, and then be released to everlasting life.

We reply that we cannot so understand them, because such a construction would be in contradiction of the Scripture teachings respecting the wages of sin. Since the penalty, or "wages of sin, is *death*," to pay that penalty to the uttermost farthing would mean everlasting death, – extinction. And if these Scriptures be so applied they would necessarily mean, Thou shalt *never come forth!*

But viewing these statements from the standpoint of their contexts, we regard them differently. In Matt. 5:17-20 the Law is held up as the great standard of authority, at that time the accuser of all; for it was the accuser of the Scribes and Pharisees, outwardly the most religious and devout Law-keepers. The attitude of every Jew should have been one of penitence. Realizing that they had all sinned and

come far short of the requirements of the Law Covenant, they all should have been in a very contrite state of heart, ready and anxious to confess their shortcomings and to compromise the matter, if possible, whilst yet in the way with their accuser (adversary), the Law, and before final sentence would be pronounced.

Had the Jewish Church realized their condition, thus, they would have been glad, yea, anxious, to hear the message which Christ had for them. Confessing their inability to comply with all the terms of the Law Covenant, they would have been pleading for mercy, and would have been prepared to hear of God's provision for them in "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world."

Those who did thus plead for mercy did receive Christ as the sent of God – the way, the truth and the life, – the deliverer from the condemnation of their Law Covenant. These were delivered into the liberty wherewith Christ makes free, and became sons of God under the New Covenant which Christ sealed with his blood – his death.

But those who did not realize the situation, who discerned not the time of their visitation (Luke 19:44) as a nation, were blinded. Only the "remnant" of that nation, which made peace quickly, in the way to judgment, were delivered. (Rom. 9:27-29; 11:5,7-11.) And upon that nation, except the remnant, which [R1713 : page 315] made peace in the way, the full weight of their judgment fell – they were blinded and cast off from divine favor for a "*double*," for a period of disfavor *equal* in length to their previous period of favor, 1845 years. Thus they were forced to pay the "uttermost farthing;" for, as the Apostle Paul states the matter, – "wrath is come upon them *to the uttermost*." – 1 Thes. 2:16.

The context in Luke's account (12:54-57) strongly supports the foregoing. There our Lord's words reported are, "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" – Why do you not know that you are living in the day of visitation and testing, and that you as a people are even now *en*

route to judgment. Why do you not confess that you are unable to keep the Law Covenant, and, instead of boasting in the Law, why do you not seek and obtain the mercy which is just at the door? It is because you are proud and hypocritical, and draw nigh to God with your lips while your hearts are far from him. It is because you are not Israelites indeed without guile or hypocrisy.

In this light the above texts may be briefly explained thus: – Addressing the Jewish nation, our Lord said, "Agree with thine adversary [the divine Law which condemned all to death (Rom. 7:10); *i.e.*, admit the justice of its condemnation, because you have come short of its righteous requirements] quickly, while thou art in the way with him [while the offer of mercy is made to you as a nation, through faith in Christ who by his sacrifice offers an atonement for you], lest at any time the adversary [the Law, whose demands you fail to meet, though you claim to meet them] deliver thee to the judge [to the just judgment of God], and the judge deliver thee to the officer [to some power that would execute the penalty], and thou be cast into prison [into a position of disfavor, – such as that nation has experienced ever since their rejection of Messiah. As a nation they have been cut off, blinded, and imprisoned ever since they rejected Christ and said, 'His blood be upon us and upon our children']. Verily,... Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing [until the privileges of the Gospel age, the high calling, first offered to Israel, shall have ceased, having been bestowed upon the worthy Gentiles, and the worthy remnant of Israel who heeded this counsel. Then their blindness will be turned away; but they will have paid the uttermost farthing in the forfeiture of the chief blessing, which was offered to them first, but which they rejected]."

THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT.

– MATT. 18:23-35. –

This parable has no relationship whatever to the foregoing: we treat it here merely because some of its expressions resemble expressions quoted in the above, and to avoid any confusion thereby.

The parable shows the conduct of an earthly king. He was generous temporarily, and forgave the debtor, allowing him time and opportunity to keep his word and pay the debt in full. But when he heard how ungenerously that debtor had unmercifully abused and refused compassion and extension of time to a still poorer man, who owed him a much less amount, the king was indignant and withdrew his mercy, cancelled the extension, and put the debtor into the hands of exactors until his debt in full should be paid.

This king's conduct does not in all respects represent our Heavenly Father's course; but in some respects it illustrates it. Our Heavenly Father does not forgive us our sins, nor grant us an extension of time in which to *pay* the price of our transgressions. He, on the contrary, "heareth not sinners;" but, having committed all judgment unto the Son, the Heavenly Father refers all supplicants to him – the way, the truth and the life. The only access and reconciliation to the Heavenly Father will be by the Son, who bought us with his own precious blood, and in whom alone we may have forgiveness, the remission of sins. Those who come unto the Father by him are already acceptable to the Father, in the beloved – *i.e.*, reckonedly – but they will not be fully and actually presented until the Son shall have cleansed and perfected them, that he may present them blameless and unreprouable in love before him. – See Col. 1:22; Phil. 2:15.

The parable does, however, express or illustrate the Heavenly Father's attitude on the point [R1713 : page 316] in question. He also would be indignant that one for whom he has in Christ provided complete *forgiveness*, and not merely an extension of time for payment, should be unmerciful to a fellow-servant; and he will do to such as did the king in the parable. He will exact the full debt from the unmerciful, showing him no mercy who showed no mercy toward others. – Matt. 7:1,2,12.

This will mean the *death-penalty* upon the unmerciful – the second death – "*everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."

Nor should we expect otherwise; for he who is not merciful and sympathetic has not the love of God – has not the spirit of Christ. And "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And only those in whom *love* instead of selfishness shall become the mastering sentiment have the promise of life everlasting on any plane of being. "Blessed are the merciful – they shall obtain mercy!"
