

[R2433 : page 44]

"GREATER WORKS THAN THESE."

– FEB. 12 – JOHN 5:17-27. –

"This is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." – John 4:42.

JESUS was again in Judea, probably attending the Feast of the Passover, as was his custom, – these annual gatherings constituting the very best opportunities for reaching the devout Jews from all parts of the Holy Land, and from surrounding countries.

Our Lord, in his quiet Sabbath walk about Jerusalem, came to the Pool of Bethesda, which had a wonderful reputation for its healing qualities, on account of which its porches and sheds were crowded with sick people with divers ailments, waiting to take advantage of what was considered to be a miraculous action in its waters. What is to-day known as the "Pool of the Virgin" is supposed to be the one formerly known as the Pool of Bethesda, and a peculiar movement in the waters of the Pool of the Virgin is well known. Travelers whose word is reliable declare that they have seen this spring rise twelve inches in five minutes, and then subside about as quickly. There are other springs which have this same intermitting peculiarity. One of these is at Kissingen, Germany. Its flow is accompanied with an escape of gas, and its water is reputed to be more valuable at the time of its movements, and probably because surcharged with gas.

The intermittent movement of the water of the Bethesda Pool is referred to in vs. 7 of this chapter, but the explanation about the angel troubling the waters, etc., contained in the last seven words of the third verse, and all of the fourth verse, is omitted from the oldest Greek MSS. (the Sinaitic and Vatican). There was probably nothing whatever miraculous connected with the spring, but some peculiarity of the channel, [R2433 : page 45] which caused the water from one compartment to syphon out into the other at intervals; or possibly the action was caused by gas. The healings experienced were quite

probably what to-day would be termed mind cures, a beneficial action of the mind and will upon the physical organism.

We do not know that the Lord made any movement toward the general healing of the multitude who were waiting for the movement of the Pool, and hoping for relief; nor do we know that he extended his beneficence to any, except the one whose healing is the subject of this lesson, who was more helpless than the majority, and whose case was apparently hopeless, in that it was chronic, of thirty-eight years standing. Nor could the impotent one have had much ground for hope at the Pool, for, as he himself explained, others less feeble than himself availed themselves of the fountain before he could reach it. It was to this heart-sick and weary one, hopeless and helpless, that the Lord addressed himself, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He readily answered that he was anxious to be made whole, and our Lord did not even wait for him to manifest a previous faith in his power, but allowed the man's faith to be testified by his obedience: and exercising the faith, astonished and bewildered, he obeyed, taking up his couch, not even knowing his benefactor.

So it is with the greater miracles performed by our Lord throughout this Gospel age – some of the weakest and most hopelessly powerless for good are morally healed, strengthened, renewed, transformed, through the operation of *faith* and *obedience*. Yet such cases are but few compared to the world of mankind, similarly or even less diseased with sin, who are all eventually [R2434 : page 45] (during the Millennium) to be made acquainted with the Great Physician.

This miracle brought upon Jesus the opposition of the Pharisees, who, because of a wrong attitude of heart, mistook the real object and purpose of the Sabbath day, and tacking on to the divine command traditions of the elders, had made of it a mere outward form, robbing it of its true thought. We are not to consider that our Lord performed so many of his miracles on the Sabbath, apparently in preference to

other days, as signifying any disrespect to the day, nor as signifying a desire to provoke the Pharisees. Rather, we may suppose that the performance of the notable miracles on this day was largely in order to thus point out the great Seventh Day Sabbath, the Millennial Day, the seventh thousand year period of earth's history, when the anti-typical and far greater miracles and blessings will come to mankind. "These things [miracles] did Jesus, and manifested forth [beforehand] his [coming] glory." – John 2:11.

The conduct of the Jews, in wishing to kill one who, according to their own testimony, had done nothing amiss, but had done much good, simply because he differently interpreted the Law, and disregarded the "traditions of the elders," is a parallel to the opposition which is sometimes manifested by present-day Christians – sectarians of the strictest sort. They might not indeed seek literally to kill the one who would do violence to their theories and traditions, but many of them would have very little hesitancy in assassinating his character, if thereby they could defend the falsities of their systems.

Our Lord's reply respecting his authority angered them the more: not because he declared himself to be Jehovah, the Father, as many seem to think, but because he declared himself to be the Son of Jehovah, who had been given a work to do by the Father. Nor did the Jews misunderstand him in this; their anger was because, in claiming to be the Son of God, he was claiming an honor and place so much higher than themselves – a place which implied a closeness of relationship and of nature to Jehovah, a claim which they considered blasphemous. The successors of the Pharisees in our day go far beyond our Lord's claims, and claim for him what he never claimed for himself; viz., that he *is* the Father, and that he always has been the Father as well as the Son, and that the two are one in person, and not merely two persons of one harmonious mind, purpose, sentiment, will. These take great offence at any of the Lord's "brethren" of to-day who claim to be sons of God, and who apply that term in its Scriptural force and significance. As is well known to many, a prominent Doctor of

Divinity and Professor in a theological seminary in Ohio has published a scurrilous review of MILLENNIAL DAWN, the chief point of which is the holding up to ridicule the hope of the Church's "high calling," therein set forth, based upon and supported by the exceeding great and precious promises given to us in the Scriptures, the intention of which, the Apostle declares to be, "that we might become *partakers of the divine nature.*" – 2 Pet. 1:4.

The declaration that "the Son can do nothing of himself," if it were not backed up as it is by a score of other testimonies from the same interested and inspired Teacher, is a contradiction to the common thought of Trinitarians, that the Son *is* the Father: it is in direct conflict with the statement of the catechism, that they are "equal in power and in glory." Nevertheless the Father "loveth [*filio* – has affection for] the Son," and as a consequence of this affection has shown, is showing, and will show forth through him greater marvels, greater wonders. And our Lord Jesus has promised us that, as the Elder Brother (of the Gospel house of sons), whatsoever the Father shall make known to him he in turn will make known to us. This is brought forcibly [R2434 : page 46] to our attention in the Book of Revelation, which expressly declares that it is – "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which *God gave unto him*, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." (John 15:15; Rev. 1:1.) Our Elder Brother, our Bridegroom, our Captain, has promised further, that in due time we also shall share with him in doing greater works than any which he performed at his first advent. – John 14:12.

Amongst the greater works the Lord mentions the quickening of the dead – claiming that, as the Father has the power to raise the dead, so also this power is granted to the Son. Nor should we suppose that our Lord, in this statement, referred to the awakening of Lazarus, and the son of the widow of Nain, and the daughter of Jairus. These at most were awakenings, and not, in the full sense of the word, resurrections – these individuals were not lifted up completely out of death into the perfection of life. Rather, we may suppose that our Lord was looking

down into the future – to the resurrection of the Church in glory, honor and immortality, and to the subsequent resurrection (under trial or judgment) of the world during the Millennial age.

This thought is borne out by the statement of vs. 22, that all judgment has been transferred to the Son. The resurrection life is to be the reward of those who will successfully pass the judgment. The first resurrection will be the reward of those who are "overcomers" in the trial in progress during this Gospel age, under the conditions of the high calling, and its narrow way to glory, honor and immortality. The Church is on judgment, on trial, under the terms of this high calling, now, during this Gospel age. The Lord will also judge the world of mankind redeemed by his own sacrifice, – during the Millennial age: and in that judgment of the world he has promised to associate with himself the Bride class, whose judgment trial is now in progress. (1 Cor. 6:2.) Those of the world of mankind, awakened and brought to trial during the Millennial age, who shall develop characters in harmony with righteousness, and fully acceptable to the Judge, shall attain to full resurrection, and enter life, complete and everlasting, at the close of the Millennial age – at the close of their day of trial, while the residue will be cut off in the Second Death.

That this judgment of the world did not begin at our Lord's first advent, we have his own testimony: "I came not to judge the world." (John 12:47.) And again, his declaration, "My Word shall judge you *in the last day*" – the last thousand-year day of the seven, the Millennial Day. It is in full harmony with this that the Apostle declares, "God hath appointed a day [period – epoch] in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" – the Christ, Head and body. – John 12:48; Acts 17:31; 1 Cor. 6:2.

In harmony with this, also, is the statement in vs. 17 and Heb. 4:4,10. God rested from his work of creation when man became a transgressor, and instead of proceeding with the work, he abandoned it, placing a curse upon it, – a penalty of death upon his chief

handiwork. But altho he abandoned the matter, in one sense of the word, he did not abandon it in his purpose, but intended and foretold that he would raise up a seed of the woman which should eventually crush the Evil One, delivering the race from his power – implying incidentally the revocation of the death penalty, a resurrection. Our Lord Jesus was in person the promised Seed of the woman, but, as we have already seen, the divine plan included also the Church, "members of his body." The sufferings of Christ, Head and body, are mentioned in the promise of Eden, as the bruising of the heel by the serpent. This has been in progress throughout the Gospel age; Jesus was crucified by the forces of evil, yielding himself up a sin offering; and the members of his Body are suffering with him, "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." – Col. 1:24.

Soon the time will come when this great Seed, the Christ, shall be fully glorified, all the members sharing in the glory of the Head: and then, as the Apostle declares, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. 16:20.) And it is this great Deliverer, whose Head and Lord has redeemed the world with his own precious blood, that the Father has appointed to be the Judge of the redeemed race, when it shall be on trial during the Millennial age, while Satan is bound. The work of the Son will not be complete until all evil has been thoroughly subjugated, which will be at the close of the Millennial age. He will reclaim, by a knowledge of the truth, and chastisements and corrections in righteousness, so many as are willing, and the residue shall be destroyed from among the people. (Acts 3:23.) And when he shall thus have put down all opposing authority, rule and power, the Apostle assures us, he will deliver up the Kingdom to God even the Father. Thus the Father worked previously to man's fall, and has committed the work of reconciliation of man to the Son, and also the judgment of the race, and will receive it back again under divine jurisdiction, when, through the Son as his agent, he shall have made all things new. – 1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 21:5.

It is therefore a great mistake to say, as some do, "Jesus is our Judge, *like* the Father," for our Lord's own words assure us that the Father judgeth no man, having "committed *all* judgment unto the Son." The judgment of the Church, in progress during this Gospel [R2435 : page 47] age, is referred to in vs. 24: those who now *hear* and believe and obey to the extent of their ability have everlasting life guaranteed to them, as a result of thus favorably passing the present judgment or trial. These are assured that they will not need to come into the general judgment of the world during the Millennial age, because they pass from death unto life as the result of the judgment of this age. The word "condemnation," in this verse, signifies judgment, and is so rendered in the Revised Version. – Compare 1 Cor. 11:32.

In vs. 25 the general judgment of mankind during the Millennial age is specially referred to, when all the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, be brought to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), and when they that hear (obey that knowledge) shall live: shall be rescued not only from the tomb but also from all the imperfections, mental, moral and physical, which have come upon the world through sin – be raised up to perfection of life. The fact that this judgment work begins with a little flock during this Gospel age is suggested by the expression that the hour for the dead to hear the voice of the Son of Man has already commenced, "*now is.*" The whole world, from the divine standpoint, is spoken of as dead, because it is already nine-tenths dead and under sentence of death to the full. It was from this standpoint that our Lord said to one, "Let the dead bury their dead."

Our Lord realized that his hearers could not appreciate the possibility of his doing so great a work as a man, and hence he makes the explanation that the Father, who has life inherent (immortality), hath given (promised) the Son the same inherent life (immortality), as well as given commandment (authorization) that he, the Son of Man, to whom the work was committed, as declared in the prophets, should execute judgment – the divine will. And it is in view of this high honor

conferred upon the Son by the Father that we are told (vs. 23), "that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father." (Revised Version.) The explanation of this statement follows, and shows that the honor to the Son is as the Father's appointed representative and agent in the great work, saying, "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father *which sent him.*"
