

[R2635 : page 154]

THE HARVEST PLENTEOUS – THE LABORERS FEW.

– *MATT. 9:35-10:8.* – *JUNE 3.* –

"It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." – Matt. 10:20.

IT IS A GREAT tribute to the spirit of liberty which prevailed amongst the Jews, that our Lord could and did preach the Gospel of the Kingdom from city to city in their synagogues without molestation. In contrast, we may feel sure that were he to attempt to teach in any of the churches of to-day, of any denomination, he would be refused the privilege – no matter how faithfully he should adhere to the Scriptural declarations, and the more explicit his teachings the more unsatisfactory would they be to those now in charge, who have a theory of their own respecting the Kingdom, which will not stand investigation, and whose weakness they would not wish to have exposed. And this loss of liberty amongst Christians, as compared with the Jews, in religious matters, is to their injury – making it that much the more difficult for them to hear the joyful sound of the present harvest message.

Notwithstanding all the healing of disease which our Lord accomplished, there were still multitudes of sick who flocked from various directions to him, in hope of relief, and when we read that he was moved with compassion for the distressed sheep of Israel, it gives us a deeper appreciation of his kindness, his love, his mercy, and we do not feel that it was strange that he who had left the glory of the Father and the holy angels, and had humbled himself to man's estate, should now feel compassion for the weak and sinful, the degraded, depraved and pained. Rather, we say, [R2635 : page 155] It was just like him! Without such a spirit of compassion how would he have become our Redeemer, how would he have left the heavenly glory on our behalf! And when we think of him as being still the same it gives us fresh confidence, that notwithstanding our weaknesses and

imperfections, and the imperfections and weaknesses of the whole world, "the groaning creation," this same Jesus has compassion, not only upon his people, but in a large sense in due time will have compassion upon all the families of the earth, and grant to all a full opportunity of recovery from the blights of sin, mental, moral and physical. Surely he only waits for the due time – the time appointed of the Father; then with his faithful, his Kingdom-class, as the Seed of Abraham, he shall indeed, in times of restitution, bless all the families of the earth with a full opportunity of reconciliation to God, and thus of the attainment of life eternal.

At the time of our lesson his work had not yet taken this broad sweep; nor has it yet, altho it has advanced beyond the confines of that time. Then his message of reconciliation and his help were extended only to the lost sheep of the household of natural Israel – not to the Samaritans nor to the Gentiles. Since then the blessing of reconciliation has been extended so that whosoever has an ear to hear, amongst the Gentiles or amongst the Samaritans, has the privilege of reconciliation during this Gospel age; but the great time of opening deaf ears and causing all to know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, will be in the Millennial age to follow this one.

Compassion, however, will be an element of the Lord's character so long as there are any who need help, and desire it; and this will be until the close of the Millennial age, when all willing to receive the help will have received it, and the only ones not blessed thereby will be those who shall have deliberately rejected his help. Then, and not until then, will his compassion cease to be exercised, for then there will be no need of compassion, that which is perfect having come through the grace of God in Christ.

Our Lord's compassion for the multitude suggested the sending forth of representatives, clothed with the power to heal the sick, etc., and in order to bring his disciples into line with his thought he told them that the harvest was plenteous, but the laborers were few, and

that they should offer prayer on this subject. The substance of their prayer would necessarily be, – Lord of the harvest, send forth me as a reaper in the harvest. Jesus himself was the Lord of the harvest; the whole matter was in his hands, and evidently the twelve apostles quickly caught his thought and spirit respecting the increase of the harvest work, and in consequence he sent them forth two and two; yet he restricted their going, even as he had restricted his own ministry, to fleshly Israel, because all of God's covenants and promises were still confined to that nation, and would not be open to others until a due time which the Father had fixed, and specified through the Prophet Daniel – viz., the end of Israel's seventy weeks of favor – three and a half years beyond our Lord's crucifixion.

"And he gave them power [authority] over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and sickness." This power was holy spirit power, the same and yet different from that which they received later on at Pentecost from the Father. It was the same, in that the holy spirit or power of God is always the same power even tho it have differences of manifestation. It was holy, in that it was the spirit of our Lord Jesus, the holy spirit or power which was granted without measure unto him, – which he at this time communicated to these apostles, that they might, as his representatives, do a work in his name.

Indeed, we may surmise that as the curing of disease caused vitality to go out of our Lord Jesus, to effect the cure, and that thus every cure meant the robbing of himself of his own life-powers, his own **[R2636 : page 155]** vitality, so in this case we should understand that the power for the healing of the sick was Jesus' power, that the disciples did not use their own vitality, but merely his, which he communicated to them, and authorized them to use, saying, "Freely ye have received, freely give." They were giving what cost them nothing, but which was costing Jesus much daily and hourly. It is when we get this thought of our Lord's yielding up his life daily in doing good to others that we can best appreciate how his perfect life was so thoroughly used up in the short space of three and a half years.

The healing of the sick and the casting out of devils were but parts and incidents of their mission. In connection with it they were to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom – the good news that the Kingdom of God was nigh at hand; and the influence of the miracles should properly attract attention to the message, and make the people ready, yea, anxious, for the Kingdom. But so far as the record shows, the people were anxious for the miracles, the healing, but very indifferent respecting the Kingdom. They would take the cures from Jesus and his disciples, but if they wanted information respecting how and when the Kingdom of God would come they would follow their blind guides as usual.

Nevertheless we may presume that the influence of this mission work throughout Israel was not entirely lost, and that after our Lord's crucifixion, and **[R2636 : page 156]** after the holy spirit had come upon the disciples at Pentecost, and they preached the Gospel of the Kingdom from a different standpoint, inviting all true Israelites to unite with Christ, and thus become joint-heirs of the Kingdom with him – then it was that many, no doubt, of these who had heard previously and witnessed the miracles, were that much better prepared to enter the embryotic Kingdom, the Church, through consecration of themselves to the Lord. And the conversion of several thousands within a few days after Pentecost corroborates this.

The harvest in the end of the Jewish age foreshadowed or typified the harvest of this Gospel age. And now, as then, Jesus is the Lord of the harvest, and his disciples, his messengers, are his agents in the gathering work. Now, as then, he seems to speak to these, saying that the harvest is great and that the laborers are few, and that if we have his spirit in the matter, and entreat him to send us forth in his service, he will be pleased to do so. And many are thus praying from day to day, and seeking to see what more their hands can find to do in the harvest work. And the Lord is graciously with such to guide their service and to bless the results to their own good as well as to the good of others. As all of the disciples then prayed this prayer, and got

opportunity to engage in some part of the harvest work, so now all true disciples should be praying this prayer and should be expecting and utilizing opportunities for service.

The methods of the harvest work then and now may be slightly different, and yet they are considerably alike. This is not the fleshly Israel, and the blessings sent at the hands of the harvest reapers are not temporal blessings – not the healings of physical disease; but they are better than these – the opening of eyes of understanding, a far greater blessing than the opening of natural eyes; the removal of deafness as respects the Lord's great plan, a far more precious boon than the restoration of natural hearing, etc. Likewise, the offering of the Kingdom now is much more tangible and can be demonstrated much more clearly than was possible then, for it is nigh, even at the doors, and even the world can see the shakings of the present institutions, preparatory to their removal, that those things of truth and grace which cannot be shaken may remain, may be established, under the Lord's reign of righteousness.

As the harvest laborers going forth now seek the ripe wheat of this Gospel age, each should remember the words addressed to the laborers in the Jewish harvest, "It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." Not that we are to expect to have miraculous powers of speech granted us, but that we are to be filled with the truth and its spirit; and then indeed it will be true that it will not be our own wisdom that we shall speak, nor our own plan that we shall declare, but the wisdom that cometh from above, and the plan of the Lord our God.
