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"IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE"

- JOHN 14:1-14. - MAY 3 -

Golden Text: – "In my Father's house are many mansions."

AFTER the Lord had washed the disciples' feet, and had given the sop to Judas, who then went out, and he had told the disciples that they all would be offended that night because of him, and had answered Peter that he would deny his Lord thrice before the cock crew, we may well suppose that the hearts of the eleven were heavy, disturbed, troubled with fearful forebodings. Had they indeed been deluded or had they misunderstood the Master when he told them that he was the Messiah, the heir of the Kingdom, and that they should sit with him in his throne? How could they interpret his language, seeing that only five days before he had received the hosannas of the multitude as the Son of David, the King of Israel, when riding on the ass? What could it mean that the Master was now "exceeding sorrowful" and spoke of betrayal, and of their dispersion and of his own death?

It was in answer to these their troubled thoughts that our Lord spoke to them the beautiful words of comfort and consolation recorded in the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th chapters of John's Gospel, beginning – "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."

The apostles were already consecrated to God as his servants, before they came in contact with Jesus; they already believed in God, trusted in him, were Israelites indeed without guile. This is testified to further by our Lord's prayer, in which he says, "Thine they were and thou gavest them me." The trouble in their hearts was not in respect to the foundations of their hopes, for these were all established. They not only knew and trusted God, but knew and trusted also the promises of God respecting

the Kingdom and the blessing that should come to all the families of the earth through it. The whole question before their minds was respecting Jesus: Was he indeed the Messiah, or had they built some false expectations upon his wonderful words and deeds? How should they understand it if now, after three and a half years of ministry, he should die at the hands of his enemies, instead [R4164 : page 133] of establishing his Kingdom and subduing all things to himself, as they had expected? He had said that he was going away, and that whither he would go they could not come. How could they understand these matters and harmonize them?

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN"

They had not yet learned the meaning of the words which, early in his ministry, our Lord had addressed to Nicodemus – "Except a man be born again, he cannot *see* the Kingdom of God"; "Except a man be born of water and of spirit he cannot *enter into* the Kingdom of God." (John 3:3,5.) But these were spiritual truths, and could not be appreciated until Pentecost would bring them the anointing of the holy Spirit, and permit them to "comprehend with all saints the lengths and breadths and heights and depths" of the divine plan. But they did need some comfort, and the Master proceeded to give them the best and the strongest spiritual food, instruction, that they were able to receive. He had many things to tell them, but they could not bear them then, could not understand them, until the anointing of the holy Spirit should prepare their hearts.

Our Lord began by reviving in them their faith in the Father and in his plan, saying, Ye believe in God, – believe also in me: recognize the fact that all of the Father's plan will be accomplished, and inasmuch as you have seen my loyalty to the Father in word and in deed, and inasmuch as you have seen the Father's power unto good works manifested in me, let faith's

anchor hold; continue to trust me, continue to have confidence, and you shall have a blessing; wait for the development of the divine plan, and it will more than satisfy your highest expectations. You are perplexed because I said that I am going away – going to the Father, but let me explain to you that my going is in your interest: I go to prepare a place for you in my Father's house of many apartments; and as surely as I do this I will come again and receive you unto myself, that we may henceforth be together forever.

Thus, in a few words, the Master declared the work of the Gospel Age, pointing to his second advent and the glorification of the Church at the end of the age. He did not here stop to give them detailed explanations of the trials of faith and of patience through which they must pass; this he had done on other occasions, warning and cautioning them (Matt. 24); now their hearts were troubled, and he would merely console them with the assurance that his going away was necessary, that his second coming would be certain, and that the gathering of all to everlasting fellowship with him in the mansions prepared was assured.

THE FATHER'S HOUSE IS REALLY THE UNIVERSE

Figuratively speaking, heaven is God's throne, the earth his footstool. Divine providence has made abundant arrangement for the everlasting blessedness of all the sons of God. In the divine arrangement a provision had been made for man when in harmony with God, before the fall, but by reason of sin all of man's rights to a place in the everlasting abode of the just had been forfeited, and at the time of our dear Redeemer's discourse he was in the world for the very purpose of redeeming man and all his forfeited rights and possessions. (Luke 19:10; Eph. 1:14.) The purchase had not yet been completed – our Lord intended to

finish the arrangements therefor at Calvary within a few hours. But this would cost the sacrifice of himself – the full surrender of the man Christ Jesus as a man, and he could be with them no longer as a man. The hope was that by his obedience to the divine will he should not only redeem Adam and his race by the sacrifice of himself, the man Christ Jesus, but that he should be raised from death to a new nature on a higher plane – the divine nature. Thus it was necessary that he should go away from them as the man Christ Jesus, and that they should see him no more as a man, but that in due time, at his second coming, they also should be "changed" from human conditions to spirit conditions, and "be like him and see him as he *is*." – I John 3:2.

It was necessary also that, after laying down his life, he should ascend to the Father and present his sacrifice on man's behalf – as man's ransom – and this he did: the Pentecostal blessing was the divine attestation that the sacrifice for sins was accepted of the Father on man's behalf, and that the blessings which came forth upon all who accepted Jesus as their Redeemer were the result.

The interim between our Lord's death and his second advent is not long from any standpoint of faith. (1) It is not long from God's standpoint, for, as the Apostle Peter declares, "A thousand years are as one day" with the Lord. (2 Pet. 3:8.) (2) It is not long from the standpoint of true believers, for to none of them is the average of life and waiting above fifty years. We are not to take the longest and most incongruous view of this period – not to feel as though we had been living for eighteen hundred years in expectancy: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and sufficient to each individual is his own share in the trials, polishings and preparations for the coming of the Bridegroom to receive him unto himself. While it is an affair of the Church as a whole in one sense of the word, it is an individual affair in the most important sense of the word to each of the Lord's followers.

THE NEW WAY OF LIFE

"And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." For three years our Lord had been making himself known to his disciples, and also making them acquainted with the Father's character; and hence, when he now informed them that he was going home to the Father, they were to feel that they knew the Father better than ever, and could better than ever appreciate such a home of righteousness and true happiness as he would provide and maintain. Moreover, their experience with the Lord, including his instructions and leading, had made them acquainted with the way to God, even though they did not recognize it as such. Hence our Lord's declaration, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life – no man cometh to the Father but by me."

Our Lord was the "Way" in that only through his [R4164 : page 134] sacrifice, the "ransom," imputing his merit to sinners, could they be made acceptable to the Father or be received back again into fellowship with him. He was the "Truth" in the sense that only through his words, his instructions, his guidance, could there be any hope of coming into harmony with the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth. He was the "Life" in that all the race was dead, under divine sentence – had forfeited the rights of life – and none could come again into life conditions except through him, through the life which he gave for ours. Thus he is our Ransom or Way; our Teacher or Instructor in righteousness, in the truth, and our Life-giver – "Neither is there salvation in any other." "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" – no man need hope for any place in any of the mansions of the Father's house by any other way, by any other truth, by any other life. – Acts 4:12; John 14:6.

And so also Christ will be the Way, the Truth and the Life to the world of mankind in the Millennial Age. And as the Lord, by his sacrifice and offering, opened for the Gospel Church, his

Bride, an abode in the heavenly division of God's mansion or house, so by the same sacrifice he redeemed and will restore and give to mankind (to as many as obey him – Acts 3:23) a home in the earthly divisions of the Father's house, which will then again become a Paradise of God.

Much as the apostles esteemed the Master, it was difficult for them to grasp the thought of his perfection – that he was the very image of God in the flesh. (I Tim. 3:16.) They had heard him tell, and indeed knew also from the Law, that "God is a spirit" – not flesh, and hence not visible. They had heard him declare previously, also, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son,...he hath *revealed* him." (John 1:18.) But they had never grasped the thought that in seeing Jesus they saw the most that was possible to be seen of the divine character – its likeness, its *perfect image* in flesh. It was therefore necessary that the Master should call their attention to this fact, saying, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He did not mean them to understand that he was the Father, for this he had distinctly disclaimed repeatedly, telling them that the Father was greater, and that the works which he did were done by the Father's power. (John 14:28,10.) Nor did he mean them to understand that in seeing him they had seen an invisible being, as God is invisible. He did mean them to understand that in seeing his character, his motives, his love, they had seen a true expression that most faithfully represented the Father in all these particulars.

He would have them understand the unity subsisting between the Father and himself; his will was buried into the Father's will, he would have no other: "Not my will but thine be done." He would have them understand that the Father, by his power, by his Spirit, dwelt in him also, so that his words and works fully and completely represented the Father. He declared to them that the works which they had witnessed during his ministry fully attested this power of the Highest resting upon him

and operating through him. And this seems to have fully satisfied the apostles, and to have brought rest to their hearts.

"GREATER WORKS SHALL YE DO"

As a further explanation of the necessity for his going to the Father, our Lord declares that as a result of his going his followers should do greater works than he had done. It may perhaps be proper to think that some of these "greater works" will occur after the Kingdom has been established – the great work of awakening the world of mankind from the sleep of death and restoring the willing and obedient to the full perfection of human life. That, truly, will be a greater work than our Lord Jesus accomplished at his first advent, for then his greatest work was the awakening of some sleeping ones without bringing them to the full perfection of human nature.

But in our opinion this is not the only sense in which the Lord's followers are to understand that their works shall be greater than those of the Master. The Lord's works were on a fleshly plane as a matter of necessity. The holy Spirit had not yet come – could not come until after he had given the *ransom price* and had presented it to the Father, and it had been accepted. Consequently, those to whom he ministered (even his disciples, not being begotten of the Spirit) could not be instructed from that standpoint. Their ears were heavy as respected earthly things, but in regard to heavenly things they could understand nothing; for, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It is since Pentecost that "God hath revealed them [spiritual things] unto us by his Spirit," which "searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." – I Cor. 2:10,14; John 3:12.

In the midst of the house of servants – none yet begotten of the Spirit, none yet granted the privilege of sonship (John 1:12) – our Lord could do and teach on no higher plane than the earthly,

except as he "spoke unto the people in parables and dark sayings," which in due time the Church should understand, under the leading of the holy Spirit. It was in consequence of this that our Lord's miracles were all physical, and that his plain, understandable teachings were all on a plane appreciable by the natural man.

But when the holy Spirit was come, after Pentecost, the Lord's people, in his name and as his representatives, began to do greater, more wonderful works than those which he himself had performed. Did the Lord open the eyes of the blind? His followers were privileged to open the eyes of men's understanding! Did the Lord heal the physically sick? His disciples were permitted to heal the spiritually diseased! Did the Lord cure physical leprosy? It was the privilege of his followers to heal spiritual leprosy, sin. Did our Lord revive the dead? It was the privilege of his followers to preach a Gospel by which many "passed from death unto life" in a much higher sense. And the privileges of these still greater works are yet with the **[R4164 : page 135]** Lord's people. Blessed are those who appreciate their great privileges, and are about the Father's business with energy, with zeal! But those who, having received a talent of the Lord, bury it in the earth – in business, in pleasure, in society – cannot expect to be received of the Master at his second coming, nor to hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

As indicating how fully he would still continue to be the active agent of the Father in all things relating to the Church, our Lord assures us that such things as we ask of the Father he (*Jesus*) ***will do for us***, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. The Father hath committed all things into the hands of the Son; nevertheless, in everything the Son acknowledges the Father and gives glory to his name.

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YEARLY REQUESTS FOR PILGRIM VISITS

WE request a careful consideration of the following suggestions by all who are desirous of securing the services of our "Pilgrim" brethren during the ensuing year. The "Pilgrim" branch of the work is increasing in importance each year, and we find it necessary to husband carefully our resources and use the best information obtainable in order that we may secure the best results.

The brethren chosen for this service are not sent forth as perfect, though the Society considers them worthy brethren in every way – ensamples to the flock in doctrine and practice. They travel continuously, as per announcement on last page of TOWER, all their expenses being met by the Society. They do not solicit money or anything else, either for themselves or for the Society. The service is free, the expenses being borne by the contributors to the Tract Fund. We seek divine guidance as to who shall be engaged in this service and where it shall be rendered.

The routine of the "Pilgrims" is in circuits arranged in harmony with the interest shown and requests received, and, since many changes occur during a year, we desire that requests for "Pilgrim" visits be made yearly in May. Please answer the following questions, or as many of them as apply in your case. These responses are filed for our information for twelve months. If you have already written us this year requesting "Pilgrim" visits, we should be pleased to have you repeat your request in harmony with the following questions. As new conditions arise we find it advisable to alter slightly the questions in order that we may be properly advised as to the condition of each locality as far as possible. You need not repeat the questions, but merely indicate them thus, *(a)*, *(b)*, etc. A postal-card will serve our every purpose and can be readily filed for reference. Please attend to

this matter at once, in order that there may be no disappointment should a "Pilgrim" be coming your way. All letters referring to "Pilgrim" work should be noted on envelope, thus, "Pilgrim Department."

- (a) How many Bible students reside in your vicinity?
- (b) Are weekly meetings held?
- (c) How many are usually in attendance?
- (d) Where do you now meet? (Give full street address.)
- (e) At what hours are the Sunday meetings held?
- (f) Was a vote taken on the "Pilgrim" invitation?
- (g) How many voted for the invitation to be sent?
- (h) How many, if any, voted against the invitation?
- (i) Would a suitable place be found for a public meeting?
- (j) What attendance do you think could be secured for the public session by such notification and advertising as your class would give?
- (k) Would a suitable place be found for semi-private meetings for the interested?
- (l) Have the members of your class chosen leaders in accordance with DAWN, VOL. VI., chaps. 5 and 6? If so, give names and full addresses of each.
- (m) Give full names and full addresses of the two (2) to whom notices of a coming "Pilgrim" should be sent, and notify us as to any change or removal.
- (n) If your town is not on a railroad give the name of proper railroad station at which to stop.
- (o) How many miles from station is meeting place, and which direction from station?
- (p) Would "Pilgrim" be met at station?
- (q) If not, how could "Pilgrim" get from said station?
- (r) Give writer's full name and address.
- (s) Any additional remarks.

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