

"SOME BETTER THING" – "OUR HEAVENLY CALLING"

LIKE MANY of our Christian friends, for a long time we did not understand how to "rightly divide the Word of Truth." (2 Tim. 2:15.) We did not comprehend that God's Plan provides, first, a heavenly salvation for the Church, and then an earthly salvation for mankind in general. The study of the Bible along Dispensational lines clears away all of our difficulties. It shows us that the promise that the redeemed "shall sit every man under his own vine and fig tree," and "long enjoy the work of his hands" (Mic. 4:4; Isa. 65:22), is God's provision for Israel restored to Divine favor, and for all the families of the earth, but not for the Church. Of the true Church, the Bride of Christ, it is declared that her members shall, in the resurrection, be like unto the angels – heavenly or spirit beings.

St. Paul distinctly says of these, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." (I Cor. 15:50.) Jesus tells these that He has gone to prepare them a place in the Father's house on high. (John 14:2,3.) But the place for man, the earth, already provided from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34), is a very different one from ours, of which we read, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." – I Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:4.

THE CALL TO THE SPIRIT NATURE

Now we understand why it is that from Genesis to Malachi there is not one suggestion of a heavenly or spiritual hope for any natural man. Every promise is earthly. In Abraham's case, for instance, we read, "The Lord said unto Abram, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all this land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the

earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee." – Gen. 13:14-17.

St. Paul refers to this difference between the hopes of the spirit-begotten Church, founded at Pentecost, and those of all others. Pointing to the faithful of the past, he declares that although they had God's testimony to their faithfulness, nevertheless, they "received not the promise, God having *provided some better thing for us*, that they, *without us*, should not be made perfect." – Heb. 11:38-40.

As soon as we get our "better thing," our higher reward of "glory, honor, and immortality," in joint-heirship with our Lord as figuratively His Bride – then the worthy ones of ancient times will get their reward of resurrection to human perfection. Under Messiah's Kingdom, those perfect men will be "princes in all the earth." (Psa. 45:16.) Then from the spiritual to the perfected earthly ones the blessings and instruction will descend for the poor, ignorant, selfish and superstitious world to help them, to uplift the obedient to the perfections illustrated in the perfected Worthies.

We have heard of the Sunday School teacher who told her class about heaven, about its pianos, harps, organs, horses and carriages, fruits and flowers, etc. We see that she was merely thinking of the blessings God has provided for the faithful and obedient of the world – "in due time." She had no conception of the "heaven of heavens" promised to the faithful followers of Jesus in the "narrow way." The Great Teacher explains that it is impossible to describe heaven with its beauties and charms. He said to Nicodemus, "If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" – John 3:12.

In line with this, the Bible makes no attempt to describe heaven itself, nor its inhabitants. We are merely told that "God is a Spirit," "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see" – personally. (John 4:24; I Tim. 6:16.) Men

must discern God in His works – the noblest of which is the perfect man – made in His moral likeness, on the earthly plane, "a little lower than the angels" on the spirit plane. The most that His Word declares of our heavenly inheritance is that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." – I Cor. 2:9.

But while refusing to inform us of the heavenly condition, God gives us a soul-satisfying portion. Through the Apostle He declares (I John 3:2), "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He [the glorified Jesus] shall appear [at His second advent, in power and great glory] we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Others, not thus changed from human to spirit nature by the First Resurrection power, will not "see Him as He is," but only as He shall be revealed in His providences and judgments, which every eye shall recognize.

How satisfactory! Beyond all that we could have asked or thought! "***Like Him!***" – what more could we ask? "Like Him" whom God hath highly exalted "Far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named!" (Eph. 1:21.) We stand amazed at such grace! Moreover, we can realize that He who called us to become "partakers of the divine nature" and joint-heirs with the Redeemer in His Mediatorial Kingdom has provided for our every comfort and joy in that heavenly state, the details of which we may not now grasp. Prophetically of these it is written, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness." – Psa. 17:15.

It is the hope, the desire, the aim of every one of us to make our calling and election sure – to so run that we may obtain that great "prize" of participation in the First Resurrection. Of that resurrection we read, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the First [chief] Resurrection; on such the Second Death hath no power, but they shall be Priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6.) Let us have this in mind, dear friends, that our

participation with our Lord in the glories of the Kingdom is dependent upon our faithfulness here in following Him through evil report and through good report; through honor and through dishonor; in the bearing of the cross along the way of self-denial.

THE FIRST-BORNS PASSED OVER

When God would bring typical Israel out of Egypt, the first-borns had a peculiar salvation, or preservation, first. The night before the deliverance all the first-borns were [R4967 : page 48] in danger of death, and were saved only when under the blood of the passover lamb. We see the significance of this beautiful type. St. Paul tells us that Christ is our Passover Lamb, slain for us. We each have appropriated His flesh, His human nature, which He sacrificed on our behalf. We recognize His sacrifice, the blood of Atonement. We see that this entire Gospel Age is the antitype of that night. We are hoping to belong to the First-borns (begotten of the Holy Spirit) who, during this night-time of sin and death, will be passed over and, on account of the blood *without* and the lamb within, be accounted worthy of being passed over – accounted worthy of eternal life on the spirit plane as members of the Church of the First-born – participants in the First Resurrection, to glory, honor and immortality, with our Lord and like Him.

All of the first-borns of Israel passed over typified all of the Lord's people, in all denominations and outside of all denominations, who are now passing from death unto life. In the type, however, the first-borns of every tribe were exchanged for the one tribe of Levi – the priestly tribe – which thereafter typified the Church of the First-borns – the "Household of Faith." Further, the Lord divided that *tribe* into *two classes*. A little handful were made priests and occupied a special position of favor and relationship and nearness to God. The remainder of that tribe were honored in being used as the assistants or servants of the priests. This is an allegory, or type.

The Church of the First-borns will consist of two classes, a "little flock" of priests, and a "great company" of the "household of faith," antitypical Levites, who will serve. The "little flock" of priests do their sacrificing now and, if faithful, will shortly be made a Royal Priesthood, a reigning Priesthood, joint-heirs with the great King of Glory and High Priest of our profession – Jesus. The "great company," however, typed in the ordinary Levites, will not be *in* the Throne, but serve *before* the Throne. They will not be "living stones" of the Temple, but will serve God *in* the Temple. They will not wear crowns of glory, though they will be granted palms of victory.

Which place will you or I occupy in the resurrection, in the General Assembly of the Church of the First-borns? Shall we be of the Royal Priesthood, or of the less honorable, but still blessed servants? Shall we be of the Bride class, or of the less honored "virgins, her companions, that follow her"?

It is for us to make our calling and election sure by our zeal, our earnestness, our devotion to the great King and His cause. He has called us to the highest plane of existence. It rests with us, under His wonderful and gracious arrangements, to determine whether we shall be passed over or not passed over; and if passed over, to determine whether we shall accept the place to which we are called, or the inferior place, which will be granted to those who do not keep their garments unspotted from the world and who, therefore, must come through "great tribulation" in order to enter into the Kingdom at all.

We exhort, therefore, that we strive, not only to be present at the Great Convention, the "General Assembly of the Church of the First-borns," but to make our "calling and election sure," that we may be of the Bride class, the Royal Priesthood class, the members of the Body of the Great Prophet, Priest and King of Glory! Let us encourage each other and be encouraged to maintain the good fight of faith, and to gain the victory, so far as our hearts are concerned, over the world, the flesh and the Adversary. Let us be so filled with the spirit of the Truth, the

spirit of meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness and love, that we shall be a blessing to those in our homes, that they may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus and have learned of Him; and that this blessing may thus overflow and abound to many hearts.

BURNING AND SHINING LIGHTS

One of old was declared to be "a burning and a shining light." There is force in this expression. Some lights are cold, austere, unsympathetic; but the kind approved of the Master was the *burning* kind – warm, glowing, sympathetic, helpful, intensive! The Master Himself furnishes the best of all illustrations of the principle enunciated. He was the Light which came down from heaven – undimmed, resplendent, shining forth to the utmost the light of Divine Truth! Not a cold, forbidding recluse was He, holding Himself aloof from the people with a haughty and disdainful spirit, telling coldly "Wonderful words of life." On the contrary, His entire life was sympathetic, whole-souled. One of the charges brought against Him by the cold Pharisees was, "He receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Even His disciples were shocked that He should converse with a woman of Samaria. But the common people heard Him gladly. While recognizing that He was far above their plane – while beholding in Him the glories of the "Only-begotten of the Father," they nevertheless were drawn to Him because He was the burning as well as the shining light. And they declared, "Never man spake like this man." – John 7:46.

Bible students are all Christians; though, alas! all "Christians" are not Bible students. True, God's Book may even be read through by some who are unbelievers; and it may be scanned critically by opponents who seek to find fault with it and to entrap it, as they sought to find fault with the Master. These, however, are not Bible students in the proper sense of the word. Only those who have made a consecration of their lives to the Lord and are anxious to know the Divine will that they may conform their lives to it, and who, to attain this end, have

entered the School of Christ to be taught of Him – only these are Bible students from our standpoint, searchers after the secrets of the Lord, because they love Him, and are appreciative of His glorious Plans and desirous of understanding them fully.

Such Bible students should be burning and shining lights in the world and amongst our fellow-Christians of all denominations, many of whom, alas! have much of the spirit of the world and are lacking in the spirit of the Truth itself – because they are not sufficiently Bible students.

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." We are not enjoined to make a show of carrying our Bibles everywhere in an ostentatious manner. We are exhorted to show forth in our daily lives the lessons we learn from its precious pages. As the Bible is the Lamp provided by the Lord to all those who walk in His footsteps, so each of these in turn is a lamp which should shine forth upon others the light, the knowledge, the Spirit of the Truth, for their satisfaction. In other words, the Holy Spirit is not poured out upon the world of mankind, but merely upon the Lord's servants and handmaidens. It is an anointing for these, and upon these, evidencing to them that they have been begotten again, to the new nature, and making of them light-bearers for the benefit of others – burning and shining lights, sympathetic and helpful lights, "that they might show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light." [R4967 : page 49]

"THE LIGHT SHINETH IN DARKNESS"

While keeping the lamp trimmed and burning – while seeking to glorify God as burning and shining lights in the world, we must not forget that the Bible assures us that we shall be no more successful in converting the world than was our Master. His great light shone in darkness, "and the darkness comprehended it not." And the religionists of His day instigated His crucifixion.

The Master's prophecy concerning His followers will prove true to the end of the Age. The darkness hateth the light. "Marvel not, My brethren, if the world hate you"; "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." (I John 3:13; John 15:18.) It is altogether a mistake, therefore, to suppose that the Lord's consecrated people, letting their light shine faithfully before men, could convert the world. Such was not God's intention. It is the Church, not the world, that is being tested at the present time. The opposition of the world and all the powers of darkness serve to test us as New Creatures – to test our loyalty to God and to His Truth.

Whosoever receives the light of Truth intelligently must rejoice in it; and, rejoicing in it, he must let it shine out upon others, or, by covering his light with a bushel, he will demonstrate his lack of courage, lack of appreciation, lack of earnestness – qualities which the Lord is now specially seeking amongst those whom He has invited to be sharers with Jesus in the glories of the Mediatorial Kingdom about to be established amongst men. It is important, therefore, that we let our light shine before men; that we be willing, nay, glad, if need be, to suffer for our loyalty to the Lord and to His message. And we have His Word for it that whoever is ashamed of Him or of His Word now, of such He will be ashamed by and by. He will not own them as members of His Bride class, will not accept them as assistants with Him in His glorious Throne.

"The Light of the world is Jesus"; "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1:9.) Thus far Jesus has not been dealing with the world, but merely with the blessed ones who have the eye of faith and the ear of faith. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." (Matt. 13:16.) The time for the enlightenment of the world will be after the special call of the elect. Then the Church, as the Bride, will be with the heavenly Bridegroom in His Throne. Then all now found faithful in the matter of letting their light shine will be associated with the great Light, Jesus, as members of His Body. Altogether they will constitute the great Sun

of Righteousness, which will then arise with healing in its beams for the blessing of all the families of the earth; "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father; who hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Matt. 13:43.) He that hath a desire of heart, let him be obedient and thus make his "calling and election sure" to this glorious, chief salvation.

