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Thieves in Paradise

Text:—"Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise."—Luke 23:43.

The theology which came down to us from the dark ages was wonderful in its extremes. It pictured Divine wrath as unsatisfied with anything short of an eternity of torture for the sinner, and in the next breath assured us of a Divine mercy which would take the vilest sinners to an eternity of glory without character development, merely at their request. One would suppose that neither of these doctrines could command support amongst reasoning, intelligent people, but they do; and the only explanation of the matter is that by reason of the fall the balance of human judgment, on moral questions particularly, is sadly undone. It is fair, however, to suppose that the majority of intelligent people have never so much as given these subjects consideration. Receiving them through the various creeds from childhood's hour, they have swallowed them without reflection, taught that to doubt them would bring the doubters under the ban of Divine displeasure, and make sure that Divine mercy should never reach them.

Bad Effects of Error.

It is difficult to measure the bad results which have flown from the misinterpretation of our text. (1) The Divine character and government have thereby been traduced and measurably brought into contempt as unphilosophical, unreasonable, arbitrary, instead of wise and just. Two vagabonds gambled and quarreled, drew their revolvers and shot each other. The more contemptible of the two killed his antagonist instantly, while he himself lingered in consciousness for a few minutes, during which he had opportunity to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The creeds of Protestantism tell us that the one who used the magical words was instantly ushered to heavenly glory and companionship with the pure and holy throughout eternity. The other, we are told, though less vile, went instantly to eternal torture and despair, without a single ray of hope.

Is it any wonder that such unreasonable conclusions have driven many of the brighter minds of Protestantism unto infidelity, and led others back to the teachings of the Church of Rome, which, to say the least, is more consistent, in that it would put both of the culprits into "Purgatory," where after centuries of torture and instruction in righteousness they might be prepared, either or both of them, for heavenly glory. We are not advocating either infidelity or Romanism; we are defending the Bible, but incidentally must admit that our Protestant views of some portions of Holy Writ have been very unsatisfactory and very baneful.

(2) Who can measure the evil effects of this doctrine upon thousands, leading them to believe that whatever their crime, a few magical words of repentance will straighten it all out? Can it be doubted that this wrong theory is accountable for much of the wickedness committed by those who know better, who reside in civilized lands? First of all they doubt the doctrine of eternal torment, being unable to imagine how any one could burn forever and yet not be destroyed.

Secondly, if there be such a place of eternal torment, they reason, it is quite improbable that they will die so suddenly as not to have time to offer a petition for mercy—a petition which, if offered, will surely be heard and answered, and bring them to the regions of the blest.

The further reasoning is, that while heaven is certainly desirable, it is useless to seek it *via* the strait gate and narrow way and self sacrificing experiences of Jesus and the Apostles and all the saints. The reasoning is, that these saintly ones may indeed occupy a higher position in heaven than those who are saved after a life of sin and carelessness by a momentary prayer in the dying hour; but the philosophizing is, that the pleasures of sin for a season more than compensate for the higher glory of the saints, since even the sinners are to get to paradise at the small cost of nine words—the supposed teaching of our text.

The True Interpretation.

Before proceeding to discuss the principles involved as between the right and the wrong interpretation of our Lord's words, let us notice what he really did say and really did mean, and how it happened the true meaning was lost sight of and the erroneous one adopted generally. The Bible teaching that "the dead know not anything," together with the doctrine that the resurrection of the dead is the Divine provision, has long been lost sight of. Our Lord's own words that "No man hath ascended up to heaven" have been overlooked, and so has his teaching respecting his Kingdom—that the blessing of the Church and of the world awaits his second coming, when he will establish his Kingdom under the whole heavens in power and great glory. Losing sight of these truths has led directly to the acceptance of the general error respecting our text.

Let us begin the investigation by noting what the dying thief requested. He had heard his companion berating our Lord, saying, If thou be Messiah, save thyself and us. He had sufficient character to realize the dishonesty of classifying our Lord with evil doers. He spoke up, reproving his companion; and then turned to Jesus, and, as a reward, asked, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom." He did not ask to be remembered in heaven, nor that day, but when our Lord, who was then being crucified, should attain to his Kingdom.

As the thief's request was a reasonable one, our Lord's answer was no less reasonable. He said, in the words of our text, Verily (truly) I say unto thee to-day [this day of my agony and rejection by Israel, and crucifixion by the Roman soldiers; this day, when I seem to be an imposter and not at all the Messiah; nevertheless, truly I tell you to-day] thou shalt be with me in Paradise. I do not tell you when you shall be with me, nor have you even asked me to tell you. You have asked to be remembered when I come into my Kingdom, when I shall have fully taken control of the Kingdom under the whole heavens, when the speedy result will be that the entire world will become a Paradise, and you have asked my assurance that you will be

there, and I will remember you as requested.

Punctuation Not Inspired.

It will be noticed that this different interpretation makes necessary the changing of the comma from before "to-day" to after it. We remark that the punctuation of our text was surely not inspired, for punctuation was not invented until centuries after our Bible was written. Our interpretation, with the comma after "to-day," makes this entire passage reasonable and harmonious—consistent with all the remainder of the Bible, and logical.

Further, be it remembered, that Jesus was not in Paradise on the day he died; nor has Paradise lost, yet been restored. Jesus was dead, and St. Peter declares he "arose from the dead on the third day." He then declared to Mary, "I have not yet ascended to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God" (John xx, 17).

As a matter of fact, the other thief also will be in Paradise. All mankind, redeemed by our Lord's sacrifice, will have the privilege of the Millennial blessings. As we read, "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth." The Church will come forth to the heavenly glory and condition, for which they have been prepared by the trials, the disciplines, the lessons, the chisellings, the polishings, of this present life. There will be the instantaneous change, or resurrection, from earthly to heavenly conditions. Those of the spirit-begotten ones, all who wilfully walk after the flesh and not after the Spirit, having had their trial in the present life, will be accounted worthy of the Second Death. All the remainder of mankind, not having come to a knowledge of the Truth, not having incurred, therefore, the responsibility of this age, will come forth during the Millennium when Messiah's Kingdom shall be established and his rule of righteousness shall have brought the earth to the condition of Paradise. Both of these thieves, and all other thieves and all other evil doers, all of the heathen, all who have not in the present life come to a clear knowledge of the truth, and sinned against light, against the holy Spirit, will be there—there to be blessed, to be enlightened, to be brought to a knowledge of the Truth, and if they will, to be helped out of ignorance, superstition, sin, weaknesses—mental, moral and physical.

No Luck, but Character.

The attaining of eternal life will not be a matter of luck, but a matter of character. It is true at the present time that chance, or luck, would seem to be associated with many of our affairs, except as we are able to view them in the light of Divine revelation. Some of us were fortunate to be better born than others—born of religious parents. Some are fortunate in being born in religious communities, and in a land of liberty and enlightenment. Some are unfortunate in being born in heathen lands, of heathen parentage, etc. But the Scripture shows that during this present time God is exercising his sovereign power in electing a special class of special characters, and assures us that a majority of these are being called from amongst the mixed peoples of Europe and America, and that proportionately few are being gathered from other nationalities.

If all of the non-elect were consigned to eternal torment, or even to Purgatory, a grave injustice would be

chargeable against the Almighty Elector. But this is not the case. The Lord is no respecter of persons, but is taking out from the world of mankind, from every nation, those with suitable characters, those upon whom his Truth and Grace exercise a transforming influence. The non-elect, not worthy of a blessing amongst the faithful of the first class now being selected, pass at death to the tomb, to the prison-house of *sheol*, *hades*, where there is no wisdom, knowledge nor device, as the Scriptures declare (Ecclesiastes ix, 10). Although unworthy of a share in the blessings now being dispensed, God's love and mercy pursue after these through Christ, and in their interest the Millennial Kingdom will be established. Under its domination Satan will be bound, every influence of evil will be restrained, and every good influence will be brought into captivity, to the intent that all those at present non-elect, and unworthy of the present salvation, may be brought to a savable condition through the rewards and punishments (judgments) of the Millennial Age. The result of the purifying influences of that time upon the willing and obedient will be full human perfection and the reward of everlasting life in Paradise restored—world-wide, under the whole heaven. The result to the unwilling who will resist God's grace and merciful provisions will be eternal death—extinction—the Second Death—Gehenna (revelation xx, 14, 15).

Character a Prerequisite.

The Bible, in harmony with sanctified common sense, teaches that character is a prerequisite of Divine favor and eternal life. Whoever is called during this Gospel Age and fails to develop character, will fail to attain the reward of life eternal. Similarly, in the world's trial time, or Day of Judgment, the Millennial Age, character will be the test. All the influences of the great Kingdom of Messiah will be exercised with a view to the development of character, and only those properly exercised thereby will get the reward of *earthly life eternal*.

The question properly arises here, What kind of character will meet with the Divine approval and be granted the reward of life everlasting? We answer that God has but one standard, which is fully set forth in the Scriptures. The Law of God is the standard. That Law standard is, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy being, with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." As our Redeemer testified, on these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets; all the divine blessings and promises and covenants are to those who develop the character here described.

World Actually Attains.

The Scriptures show a difference as between God's dealings with the Church in this age and the world in the next age, even though there be but the one Law or standard of character for both. During the Millennium, when everything will be favorable to human uplift, during the "times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began," actual obedience to the Divine Law, and actual attainment of this standard of character, will be required. Not all at once, however. The poor world "born in sin and shapen in iniquity"—in sin did their mothers conceive them—are "prone to sin as the sparks to fly upward." Steeped in degradation they

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“Christ Our Passover is Sacrificed for Us”

*Text.—“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither
 with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened
 bread of sincerity and truth.”—1 Cor. 5:7, 8.*

will require years, if not centuries, of determined resistance of sin and cultivation of the principles of righteousness to develop in them absolutely the character required by the Divine Law—Love supreme for God and Love for the neighbor as for oneself.

During the Millennium the weaknesses and imperfections of the race will be conceded by the great Teacher, Christ and the Church—Jesus the Head and the Church his members. The more degraded the will, the more undermined the character, the more perverted the conscience and judgment, the more difficult will be the ascent of humanity from the horrible pit of sin and death, even with the assistance of the Redeemer. The less degraded the mind, the less perverted the conscience, the stronger the will for righteousness, the easier will be the ascent along the Highway of Holiness, of which it is written, “The redeemed shall walk thereon” (Isaiah xxxv, 9). The laggards will receive the “stripes” of correction for their assistance; the zealous will receive the smiles and blessings of the great High Priest, the great Teacher and Mediator like unto Moses, of whom it is written, “And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear (obey) that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts iii, 23). All the reformation must be made during the allotted time—the thousand years of Christ’s reign. Sin must be put down—not only outward sin, but inward sin, even in the very thoughts and intents of the heart. Sin must be eradicated, even to the extent of the destruction of the wilful sinner in the Second Death.

If the thieves and Hars and evil doers in general would realize that they are either making character or undermining character every day, what a helpful influence it would have upon the social and political and financial life of the world! The effect would be the very reverse of that which is now made by the false interpretation of our Lord’s words to the thief, which we are seeking to correct.

If every pernicious word uttered were realized to be so much of an undermining influence, if every pernicious thought were similarly recognized, with what carefulness would mankind come to guard their thoughts and their words, as well as their deeds. They would attentively learn the great general lesson set forth in the Scriptures, and also in the book of nature, namely, “*Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.*” Who shall say that there would not be less “sowing of wild oats” if all were assured that a proportionate crop would be *unavoidably reaped*, and that no mere prayer of repentance would constitute an “*open sesame*” to heavenly glory to the one who had lived a life deserving reprobation and punishment.

The Passover ceremonies, the first institution of Divine favor with the nation of Israel, prefigured the first institution of Divine favor toward Spiritual Israel inaugurated by our Lord Jesus in the Eucharist or Holy Communion. As the Apostle indicated in our text, the Jewish Passover was a foreshadowing or typifying of the better things, the real passover, with which we have to do. While we are not wholly dependent upon the Jewish type for our information, but have clear, Divine statements by our Lord and the apostles respecting the relationship between our Lord and the Church and the special salvation of the “elect” class, nevertheless we find in the Passover type many details which assist us greatly in the understanding of the antitype.

We should notice first of all that the passover directly affected only the first-borns of Israel, although it indirectly affected all the remainder of Israel. That is to say, the last plague upon Egypt was the death of their first-borns only, and the Passover celebrates the fact that the first-borns of Israel were spared or passed over by the destroying angel in that night. As the younger of the Egyptians were not endangered, neither were the younger children of the Israelites endangered; hence the latter were not passed over. Yet they were certainly interested in the passing over or sparing of the first-borns, not merely because of their relationship, but because in the Lord’s providence those first-borns became leaders and deliverers of the people on the next day, as they went forth from Egypt. Those first-borns of Israel, exchanged by Divine direction for the entire tribe of Levi, were thereafter represented in them, and they, as the sacrificing Priests and teaching Levites, became the ministers of the Law Covenant for that nation. The antitype of this was distinctly pointed out by the Apostle, namely, that the “elect” Church of this Gospel Age is the “Church of the First-Born, which are written in heaven.” (Heb. 12:23.) These are to be the “able ministers of the New (Law) Covenant.”

These first-borns alone are being dealt with during this Gospel Age or “night.” These alone are in danger of a death penalty. As the Apostle declares, if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for our sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour us as the adversaries of God and righteousness. (Heb. 10:26, 27.) Nevertheless, the whole world of mankind is certainly interested in this Church of the First-Born, in its successful passing over, its attainment of everlasting life, because these are the Royal Priesthood and instructors of the New Covenant, shortly to be sealed, by the terms of which all the families of the earth will receive the blessing of reconciliation to God through the knowledge of the Truth and through the blessing of the Millennial Kingdom, associated with the New Covenant.

Jesus the Passover Lamb.

Having noted the first-born class we should discern clearly also the Passover lamb, through the merit of whose blood the passing over of the first-borns was effected. The lamb is a peculiarly innocent animal, wholly unprepared for defense or resistance, and thus a suitable picture or type of our Lord, who was non-resistant and fully and freely surrendered his rights and earthly interests on our behalf—on behalf of the First-Born. True, others than the First-Born will ultimately be profited by his sacrifice, but these specially and peculiarly so. Thus far God’s only dealings during this Gospel Age are with this class. These alone have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. These alone thus far are reconciled to God. All of God’s blessings to the unbelievers must come in the future under the New Covenant, because only believers

tares; that in the end of this age he would gather the wheat into the barn; and then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” Alas, that so few have “an ear to hear” and accept the wonderful teachings of the Divine Plan!

The Blood on the Door-Posts All Night.

The Israelites were instructed that the blood of the lamb must be sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels of their houses that night. This indicated that all who would belong to the Household of Faith must believe in the precious blood of Christ, and be thus “justified by faith” irrespective of denomination. To believe thus would make us members of the Household of Faith, but it would not determine whether or not we should be of the First-Born ones. The Very Elect, the Saints, the Royal Priesthood, have this place of seniority in the Household of Faith—not by reason of natural years, but by reason of spiritual development. They are priests, elders in the sense of their primacy of development in the character-likeness of their Redeemer, which also indicates their faith and their obedience.

We are not emphasizing too strongly that this is the Scriptural teaching: that we are not merely to believe in Jesus—that he lived, that he died—but specially to believe that he died sacrificially, the just for the unjust; and to accept our share of the redemption which he secured by his precious blood. The sprinkling of the blood on the door-posts implied public confession of the precious blood of the Lamb of God, in his death and its efficacy for us which is thus signified.

It will be remembered that the Israelites were enjoined against going out of the house during the night, because when the Lord would pass through and see the blood on the lintel and door-posts, he would pass over and not suffer the destroyer to come into the house. The injunction that those under the door sprinkled with blood should not go out from under it during that night has special application and force with respect to the first-borns, and antitypically signified that if any of us who are of the First-Born should go out from under the blood, in the sense of denying the merit, the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, the penalty of such a course would be death—Second Death—hopeless extinction.

Eating the Lamb.

As the blood of the lamb marked the Household of Faith, not merely the first-borns of that household, so the eating of the lamb was not merely for the first-borns, but for all of the household. So our Lord said, “My flesh is meat indeed.” (John 6:55.) And again, “This is that Bread which came down from heaven; he that eateth of this Bread shall live forever.” (John 6:58.) In other words, it was not only necessary that Jesus should die, a meritorious sacrifice, but it is necessary additionally that all who would have profit through his sacrifice must feed upon him—must appropriate the merit of his sacrifice.

What did he lay down? What did he surrender on our behalf? We answer, He sacrificed the human nature and all of its rights and interests. He made this sacrifice for us—both human rights and privileges. As a perfect man, holy, harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners, he possessed the full rights and privileges of the perfect Adam, lost through disobedience. The man Christ Jesus gave himself a sacrifice to redeem or buy back the human nature, the human rights lost by father Adam. This price he paid when he surrendered all and “died, the just for the unjust.” The eating of the lamb pictured or typified the appropriation by the Household of Faith of those earthly rights and earthly interests which were forfeited by Adam’s disobedience and redeemed by Jesus’ death. In other words, the eating of the lamb signifies our appropriating Justification from sin. We eat by faith and are, therefore, said to be “justified by

can be justified by faith and receive the blessings of the Faith Covenant—the Abrahamic Covenant. “The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” first saves or passes over the Church of the first-borns and later in the Millennium will bless all who will become Abraham’s seed.

There are pictures in the Church which represent her as participating with the Lord in his sacrifice, but this Passover type is not one of these. The Passover lamb represented our Lord Jesus as “The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29.) But the sin of the world has not yet been taken away. He has not yet applied his merit for the world, but only and expressly for the Household of Faith. In another sacrifice, which represents our Lord and the Church conjointly sacrificing, as Head and members, the members were cut into various pieces and laid with the Head on the altar, thus typifying Christ, as the Head and the Church as his members. But provision was made that the Passover sacrifice was not to be divided. It was to be eaten whole—not a bone was to be broken. It represented not Christ and the Church, but Christ alone in his sacrifice.

“In That Night.”

Be it remembered that the passing over took place in the night, not in the daylight. When the morning arrived the Israelites went forth out of the land of Egypt to liberty, to freedom from bondage. But during the night they were still in bondage and waiting for the deliverance which could come only after the passing of the first-borns. That night of the type represented this Gospel Age. The same thought is given by our Lord when he says, “Let your light shine before men.” (Matt. 5:16.) Again, “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.” (Matt. 5:15.) The Apostle Peter expresses the same thought, saying, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” (2 Pet. 1:19.) Again, the Prophet, speaking of the Church, says, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Psa. 119:105.) And numerous Scriptures refer to the new Millennial dispensation as the morning in which the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in his beams, in which the shadows of superstition and works of darkness shall all be driven away. The appropriateness must be evident to every reasonable mind. God’s people are children of the day in the sense that their hopes and sentiments belong not to the darkness of sin and to the night-time, but to the reign of the Sun of Righteousness, for which they are praying, “Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”—Matt. 6:10.

Eighteen centuries ago our Lord said that he came as a light into the world, but that men loved darkness rather than light. Only a few yet recognize him as “the True Light.” But eventually he will “light every man that cometh into the world.” Indeed, his Church are invited to become associated with him as lamp-bearers and, if faithful in permitting their light to shine now, they will by and by be parts of that great Sun of Righteousness which shall heal the world with its beams. Our Lord pointed this out in the parable of the wheat and the

THE BLOOD-BUGHT ROBE

The blood-bought robe I gladly wear.
 ‘Tis one my neighbors, all, may share,
 A robe so perfect, pure and white,
 Its very folds reflect the light.

‘Twill also fit each form and size,
 Such wondrous virtue in it lies;
 Every deformity ‘twill hide,
 And deck the wearer like a bride.

This robe cannot with gold be bought,
 However much it may be sought;
 Titles of earth, genius, or fame,
 No share in it can ever claim.

But those who, counting all but dross,
 Bow low before the Saviour’s cross,
 Believing he will hear their cry,
 And on his promises rely;

Who claim no merit of their own,
 Trusting in Jesus’ name alone,
 This robe will cover, comfort, bless,
 For ‘tis Christ’s robe of Righteousness.

“WHERE ARE THE DEAD?”

This sermon was published in a recent issue of “PEOPLES PULPIT.” The interest aroused and the great demand for copies of this sermon has been remarkable. A sample copy will be mailed to any one free.

faith." By faith we are permitted to count ourselves as fully reinstated in God's favor through the merit of Christ's sacrifice, even as we were barred from Divine favor through the demerit of Adam's sin. The eating signifies the appreciation of these things and the appropriation of them to ourselves. The more we eat the more we appreciate and the greater is our feeling of satisfaction in respect to our freedom from condemnation and our reinstatement in Divine favor through the merit of our Passover Lamb.

The First-Borns of the Household of Faith, stronger, more rugged, more advanced, naturally appropriated the more of the Lamb. Besides this, bitter herbs were provided for sharpening of the appetite, and these herbs represented the bitter trials and experiences of the saints, which more and more show us our imperfection, and cultivate in us an appreciation of the merit of our Lord as fully covering our blemishes and fully satisfying our every craving, and making us fully acceptable to our Heavenly Father.

The Blood of the New Covenant.

Year by year for more than sixteen centuries the Jews by Divine direction had kept the Passover—not merely emblematically representing the sacrifice of the lamb and the eating of it on the same night and the sprinkling of the door-posts with the blood, but additionally they kept a feast of seven days following. That feast represented the joys and rejoicings, the blessings and favors of relationship to God, based upon the merit of the Passover lamb, and its sacrifice and the eating thereof.

Yet the Jews understood not the meaning of what they did. It was not necessary that they should understand it. When God's due time should come the key would be granted. And that time came on the night in which our Lord was betrayed, the night of the fourteenth day of the first month, the very night of the typical killing of the passover lamb, of which this evening is the anniversary. Jesus said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22:15.) He gathered about him his twelve apostles. They had their usual Passover supper of roast lamb, and afterward our Lord introduced what we familiarly term "The Lord's Supper," or a new symbolization of the Passover—antitypical.

What he introduced with his followers was to take the place of the Jewish ceremony with them, to carry out the same thought, but on a higher plane, as representing a clearer and better understanding of the matter. Instead of the lamb would be the unleavened bread representing our Lord's flesh. This he distributed to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19.) The eating of that unleavened bread represented justification, their appropriating to themselves of the merit of Christ's sacrifice. Then our Lord added a new feature; for awhile all believers might partake of the bread and realize justification through the merit of his sacrifice; only a certain class of believers were invited to partake of the

blood—"the cup." The cup represented death. Ordinarily under the Jewish Law the partaking of blood would represent blood-guiltiness or responsibility for the death, but our Lord gave his disciples fruit of the vine as symbolic of his blood, and urged upon them its appropriation, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you"; and "for many." "Drink ye all of it."—Luke 22:20; Matt. 26:27, 28.

This invitation to drink of his blood signifies a participation with Christ as his members, in a sacrifice of earthly life, earthly interests, hopes, aims, ambitions, everything. All who accept this invitation to drink of his blood thereby pledge their lives in the same service for which he gave his life. It will thus be seen that these undertake a great contract. This thought is entirely additional to anything in the Jewish Passover type. There is no intimation that any of the "household" were to partake of the blood of the slain lamb. Nevertheless we who now accept our Lord's proposition to share in his blood and lay down our lives with him in defense of the Truth, thereby mark ourselves as elder brothers in the Household of Faith and members of the First-Born with our Lord, our Redeemer and prospectively the "royal priesthood."

"As Ye Are Unleavened."

The Apostle points out these items to which we have called attention, saying that the Lord's consecrated followers are counted as members of the Body of Christ, the Church, under Jesus the Head. He indicates that the broken loaf represents primarily our Lord Jesus broken for us, and that secondarily the Church of Christ are of those who willingly and joyfully yield themselves for the sake of and in the Lord's cause. He points out also that the cup of Christ's blood, in which we are invited to partake, signifies to us a "common union in the sufferings and afflictions of Christ, so that whoever intelligently partakes of the Memorial Supper represents two things, namely (1) his faith in Jesus as the Passover Lamb and the eating of it as his appreciation and participation in the merits of Jesus, by which he is justified. (2) He intimates that he is a member of the Body of Christ, all the members of which agree to be broken, a member in that "little flock" whose faithfulness is manifested by drinking of the Master's cup—sharing with him in his sacrifice. Note his words, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."—1 Cor. 10:16, 17.

Everywhere throughout the Scriptures the word leaven stands for corruption, as in contrast with purity. And so in our text, the Apostle exhorts the Church that the old leaven, the leaven of wickedness, the leaven of hypocrisy, the leaven of malice and pride, be thoroughly purged out of the Church, that we all together might be a new lump, a new class of purified ones, representing Messiah in the world as his members.

"The Risen Christ, Head and Members"

Text:—"If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."—Col. 3:1.

Notwithstanding the fact that our word Easter is of heathen origin and was originally applied to the queen of heaven, we may perhaps do well to remember that this need not banish the thought of Easter as it has now developed before the Christian mind in commemoration of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. With the word Easter let us pray and seek to understand the full importance of the great resurrection event. Our Lord's resurrection may be viewed from three different standpoints, all of them interesting.

First.—His resurrection from the dead meant that he finished the work which he undertook to do on our behalf—the great work for which he left the heavenly glory and humbled himself from the spirit nature to the human plane when he was born of a woman. He undertook to do the Father's will and to give his life a ransom price in offset of original sin and its death penalty, which passed upon Father Adam and by heredity upon all of his race. The Scriptures inform us that a reward or joy was set before our Lord—the joy of doing the Heavenly Father's will, the joy of redeeming mankind and the joy of attaining thus to the great reward offered—namely, glory, honor and immortality at the right hand of the majesty on high, far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named. Our Lord's resurrection from the dead implies that his work met with the Father's approval and that all of that reward promised to him had been legitimately secured as his high reward.

Meaning of the Resurrection.

Second.—His resurrection meant much to the world, for the mere giving of his life did not finish the work of redemption. It remained for him to make application of the merit of that sacrifice, and before he could present it before the Father on our behalf he must need be himself raised from the dead. So, then, our Lord's resurrection means that he who has undertaken the reconciliation of the world by his blood has taken the first great step and merely awaits the Father's time for the second great step, the inauguration of the reign of righteousness and the blessing of Israel and all the families of the earth. This importance of Christ's resurrection the apostle emphasized, saying: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain. Ye are yet in your sins. But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. xv, 14-20). He himself "slept" for parts of three days and is declared to have been "the first that should rise from the dead"—"the firstborn amongst many brethren." Others had been awakened to a revival of their perishing condition—Lazarus, the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter and others. Christ alone up to that time experienced resurrection—a full rising up out of death in every sense and degree.

Third.—Our Lord's resurrection has a special significance to the church because we are informed that as he was raised from the dead he experienced a change of nature, being put to death in the flesh and quickened in spirit, so the church is promised that she shall have a share in his resurrection—his kind of resurrection, a resurrection to a new nature, a new spirit. As further evidence of this the apostle points out that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," hence the necessary "change" in resurrection of all those who would be "heirs of God and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ," their Lord, in his heavenly

kingdom. He emphasizes this still further in describing the resurrection of the "elect" church. He calls it "the resurrection of the dead," saying: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is an animal body, and there is a spiritual body. As we (the church, the members of his body) have borne the image of the earthy one (Adam), we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (Christ)" (1 Cor. xv, 42-49).

Glorified Together.

This resurrection of the church the apostle styles his resurrection because all of the "elect" members of the body of Christ are counted as participating with their Lord in the glorious things of his resurrection, which is so different from the resurrection which will come to the remainder of mankind. Of his resurrection the apostle says, "I count all things loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dross; that I may win Christ and be found in him, a member of the body of Christ, the 'elect' church; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. iii, 8-10). In these words the apostle shows that the "elect" church shares in "Christ's death" and shares also in "his resurrection." They are thus separate and distinct from the world in both of these particulars, which are indeed made interdependent one upon the other. The apostle says, "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and, if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii, 16, 17).

The World's Resurrection.

Incidentally let us notice the world's resurrection, not because it is a part of our topic, but because it is so misunderstood that some clarifying of the subject may assist us in understanding more particularly the difference between it and our resurrection and its—the church's.

The Greek word "anastasis," rendered "resurrection," signifies to lift up again, to lift up completely, with the implication that the something lifted up has previously fallen down. Father Adam, from harmony with God, perfection of being and lasting life, fell down into a condition of sin, dying, death. He had not the power to restore himself to divine favor nor to raise himself up out of the condemnation. His entire race shares in the fall from perfection; hence the Saviour, the Deliverer provided by God, we are assured, is "able to save to the uttermost," able to deliver not only from sin, but from death; not only from the tomb, but from all the weaknesses of heredity, all the sin, the blemishes, which rest upon our race. Christ has already "died, the just for the unjust," to accomplish this end. True, he has applied the merit of his sacrifice only to the household of faith, only to the believer. No one else is properly prepared to receive or appreciate it. But the provision of the divine plan is that the Christ (Jesus, the head, and the "elect" church, his bride) at the close of this age shall become the mediator between God and the world of rebels and shall seal, ratify, make firm the new covenant between God and Israel. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Ju-

THE LORD WILL PROVIDE

Though troubles assail and dangers affright,
Though friends should all fail and foes all unite,
Yet one thing secures us, whatever betide;
The promise assures us, "The Lord will provide."

The birds, without barn or store-house, are fed;
From them let us learn to trust for our bread;
His saints what is fitting shall ne'er be denied,
So long as 'tis written, "The Lord will provide."

When Satan appears to stop up our path,
And fills us with fears, we triumph by faith;
He cannot take from us, though oft he has tried,
The heart-cheering promise, "The Lord will provide."

He tells us we're weak, our hope is in vain;
The good that we seek we ne'er shall obtain.
But when such suggestions our grace have tried,
This answers all questions, "The Lord will provide."

No strength of our own, nor goodness we claim;
Our trust is all thrown on Jesus' dear name:
In this, our Strong Tower, for safety we hide;
The Lord is our power, "The Lord will provide."

When life sinks apace, and death is in view,
The word of his grace shall comfort us through;
Not fearing nor doubting with Christ on our side,
We're sure to die feeling, "The Lord will provide."

dah" (Jer. xxxi, 31). Under this new covenant the blessing of forgiveness and reconciliation shall be most favorably arranged for Israel, Satan shall be bound, and all the families of the earth shall have the privilege of becoming "Israelites indeed."

That will be the world's resurrection opportunity. The living of the nations will be dealt with first. By promises, instructions, punishments and rewards they will be raised up, resurrected out of their sin and death condition, and if they be obedient will attain to a full deliverance from death—to everlasting life, in harmony with God. The ministrations of the Great Mediator will extend also to those who sleep in Jesus—to the dead world, redeemed by the precious blood, and will grant them not only an awakening from the tomb, but subsequently an uplifting blessing and power, with all the privileges and opportunities of attaining everlasting life and perfection. In the past we have had too small, too narrow a view of the divine purpose as expressed in the word "anastasis" (resurrection). The Apostle Peter refers to this resurrection and calls it restitution in Acts iii, 19-21.

"If Ye Be Risen With Christ."

We have seen that the world's resurrection will be a gradual one during the thousand years (millennial period) of Christ's reign. Notice now that the church's resurrection is also a gradual one. Each believer after making a full consecration of his earthly powers and talents to the Lord and after being begotten of the Holy Spirit is counted a new creature in Christ Jesus, and he is said to have arisen from the dead state to which our Lord referred when he said, "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. viii, 22). These new creatures are reckoned as dead in respect to their fleshly, earthly interests, etc., but alive in the sense that they have new hopes, new ambitions, new purposes and prospects.

However, these are not dealt with in the same manner as the world—in a period of a thousand years in which they will be required to rise to actual perfection. On the contrary, their human bodies, being devoted to death, must not be restored, must not be perfected, but must go down into death as their sacrifice, even as Jesus' body laid down its vitality and finally expired. But as Jesus the new creature was developing, the while his earthly na-

ture was perishing, so must it be with the church, the "members in particular of his body." While the "outward man perisheth, the inward man is renewed day by day." Indeed, we have the assurances of the Scriptures that the new creature can triumph, become strong in the new, the resurrected life only in proportion as the old body is kept dead—mortified. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth" (Col. iii, 5). So, then, the Scriptural suggestion is that from time of the begetting of the Holy Spirit the Christian, as the new creature, begins the new or resurrected life and that his "change" to spirit body at the second coming of the Lord is dependent upon the maintenance of this resurrected life. If it perishes he will have no share in the "first resurrection," no share in "his resurrection," to glory, honor and immortality.

The apostle's words imply a query, "If, then, ye be risen with Christ." It is for you to decide. None is able to read the heart of another thoroughly. God is calling out a church and exhorts them to make their calling and election sure. He has laid down the terms and conditions, and it is for the favored ones who have heard of the grace of God to allow that grace to operate in their hearts, moving them to will aright and to do aright the Lord's good pleasure. Seeing that there are to be some who will share in Christ's resurrection, seeing that we know about it and have this heavenly hope and calling before our minds, the responsibility is ours, and the apostle was doing a faithful service to us in calling the matter to our attention.

"Seek Those Things Above."

If the begetting to the new nature, the heavenly nature, is in us, there should be correspondingly an interest in and a longing for the heavenly

things, the things above.

It means, moreover, that in the flowers and birds and everything that is beautiful the awakened, the quickened soul finds a hint and suggestion of the still grander, still nobler things which God hath in reservation for those that love him, "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. ii, 9). The new creature must live more than ever along the higher lines mentioned by the apostle, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever

things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. iv, 8). It means, contrariwise, that the new creature will disesteem more and more whatsoever things are vile, impure, ignoble, slanderous and all evil speaking. By our progress along these lines we may know something respecting our resurrection progress. If we be without love for righteousness and truth and without hatred of iniquity it would be a sure evidence that we were not new creatures at all; that we had not passed from death into life; that we were not risen with Christ.

We seek the things above with our new minds; with the eyes of our spiritual understanding, with our ears of faith. This means the searching for information along these heavenly lines

Set Your Affections Above.

Some of our fallen race have very little affection of any kind by nature. It will be very difficult for such to enter the kingdom, the very basis of which is "love out of a pure heart." However, those who have strong affections sometimes find themselves sorely distressed, because there is a conflict of interests between the earthly and the heavenly. The two are at warfare. Our Heavenly Bridegroom demands that if we love him as his bride we must first demonstrate that we love him supremely—more than we love parents or children, houses or lands or even life itself. The Lord does not fault us for affection, strong affection, but it is a reasonable demand that we should appreciate most of all him who has redeemed and "called" us, not only in respect to the things of this present life, but also as to things in the future.

The apostle's statement, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth," implies a repeated setting, as though the affections might slip from the heavenly things or had already done so. The intimation is that we are to have before our minds the proper standards or things of the kingdom first and are to keep seeking and keep setting our affections upon the heavenly things. This might reasonably call forth the question, Why should such an exhortation be necessary? Seeing the danger and importance of those things, why should it not become second nature to us to think chiefly of the heavenly things?

We reply that this is because we are by nature earthly and must do our thinking through the natural brain and because we are continually surrounded by earthly attractions which draw us earthward and make bids for our time and interest. Furthermore, our great adversary seeks to attract us from the great prize, from loyalty to the heavenly kingdom.

The lessons and experiences of the church in her own progress along the lines of the resurrection life will enable her to have sympathy with the world during the millennium, when, as the bride, the Lamb's wife, she will be privileged as his mouthpiece to grant the world the riches of God's blessing in and through Christ Jesus our Lord. Then shall "the spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii, 17).

Dear friends, are we settled upon this matter? Having believed in the Lord Jesus and turned away from sin, have we made a full consecration of ourselves to him and his service unto death? Have we received of his holy spirit, begetting us to the new nature? Are we thus dead to the world and to self and to earthly interests, good and bad, and risen as new creatures to have interests in the higher, the heavenly things? Are we setting our affections daily on things above? Are we mentally keeping account of our progress and making right with the Lord by prayer and the merit of our Redeemer for any imperfection? Are we thus seeking in the proper way the heavenly things, so that eventually the Lord will say to us: "Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many" (Matt. xxv, 23).

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