

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Gather My Saints Together

"Gather My saints together unto Me" (Psalms 50:5).

This Psalm is a Psalm of judgment. It opens with a proclamation.

Verse 1: "The Mighty One, God, Jehovah, hath spoken, And called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof."

The various names of God here are impressive. He is called "Yaweh El Elohim," or Jehovah the mighty one of mighty ones, or Yaweh, the God of Gods. Clearly, we understand the powerful God we are dealing with here.

The Psalm proclaims that this mighty One "hath spoken." How does Jehovah speak? The answer is, almost always through intermediaries. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds [ages]" (Hebrews 1:1,2).

Paul explains here that in the times before Christ the mighty Jehovah spoke by the prophets, but in the first century, he spoke by His Son, Jesus.

This first verse reports Jehovah calling the "earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof." This is an interesting expression, as it also used to mark the beginning of the Millennial Age. It occurs twice in Malachi. "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 1:11).

This is a clear reference to the Millennial Kingdom. Only in that Kingdom will the name of Jehovah be "great among the Gentiles," and only in that Kingdom will incense be offered "in every place."¹

This application is even clearer in chapter 4. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise

with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall" (Malachi 4:2).

Who would deny that this beautiful metaphor is a reference to Jesus himself? Our Lord Jesus, with Kingly power and love, will heal the nations in the Millennium.

A text in Psalms speaks of the same thing. Note the link between "sun" and "bridegroom." "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race" (Psalms 19:4,5).

Here the line or rule of God's glory goes out through all the earth. This describes the sun in a tent which is opening up, and compares it to a bridegroom coming out of his chamber. This is powerful imagery that harmonizes with our understanding of the Millennial Kingdom.

If the rising of the sun refers to the setting up of the Kingdom, then the going down may refer to the end of the Kingdom. But does the Kingdom end?

In a restricted sense, yes. The work of the Mediatorial Kingdom is to raise mankind to perfection — to re-stand them where Adam once stood — to resurrect them! Having achieved that and put down all enemies, Jesus surrenders his oversight back to the Heavenly Father. "When all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

This idea is further advanced with an observation about Hebrew 7:17, "He testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever

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(1) To further reinforce this thought, consider the following additional scriptures: Psalm 113:1-3, Isaiah 45:6, Isaiah 59:19, and Isaiah 60:3.

after the order of Melchisedec.” The word “forever” is from the Greek *eis ton aiona* (Strong’s #165). It means “for the age” (“unto the age” in Marshall’s Interlinear). In other words, Jesus functions as a Priest for the world only during the Millennium. Once mankind is made perfect, they need no intercessory Priest, they need no Mediator.² They can stand holy and pure before God without fear.

So in looking at the word construction of this first verse, we see plainly an application to the Millennial Age.

ZION, THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY

Verse 2: “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined forth.” The literal location of “Zion” was in Jerusalem. It was the location of David’s throne. So there is a strong connection between Zion and government.

Looking in God’s word for uses of this word, “Zion,” we find several references to the heavenly government of Christ, the heavenly phase of the Kingdom. Here are a few:

- “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psalms 2:6). The second Psalm is prophetic of the conflict in the earth when the Kingdom is being set up. Jehovah himself installs Jesus as King, “upon my holy hill of Zion.” The Heavenly Kingdom — God’s holy hill — is said to be of Zion. This is a compelling connection.

- Similarly, “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psalms 48:1,2).

- “The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah” (Psalms 87:2,3).³ The connection in this verse between Zion and the city of God is interesting. Yet more interesting is verse 5, “Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her” (Psalms 87:5). This clearly refers to the faithful followers of Jesus, who, like Jesus, will be born in Zion and comprise part of that Heavenly government.

- The Apostle John refers to this same class in the book of Revelation. “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2).

(2) Note however that the eternal blessing of the priesthood continues. Leviticus 9:22-23 show Aaron blessing the people (Millennium), followed by Moses and Aaron going into the tent of meeting and coming out to bless the people (Eternity). After the sacrificial and intercessory phases are finished, the priesthood blessing the people continues to the ages of ages. In Psalms 110:4 it is *l’ghowlam*, or *l’olam*, meaning without fixed end, whether eternity or not.

(3) Again, note the similar language in Psalm 78:67,68.

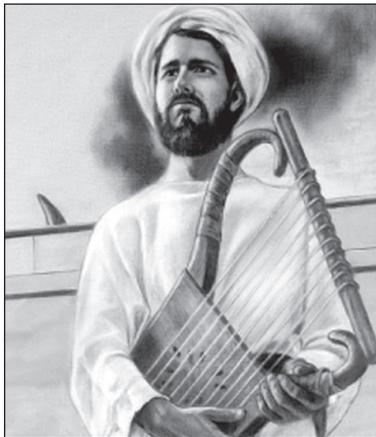
- They are mentioned again with emphasis in chapter 14: “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion [Zion], and with him 144,000, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads” (Revelation 14:1).

We observed earlier God’s speaking forth. Here He also shining forth out of Zion. Since Zion is the Heavenly Government, the light of Jehovah shines out through this government. And this shining is done through Christ!

Verse 3: “Our God cometh, and doth not keep silence: A fire devoureth before him, And it is very tempestuous round about him.” The fire of verse three reminds one of Sinai where the Law was given. Fire also is a general symbol of discerning judgment and purification.

The implication in this verse is that God has, for some time before he comes, kept silence. In fact this is the case. It has puzzled God’s servants probably since the time of Abel. Even the Psalmist wrestled with this.

“O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? ... Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. Forget not the voice of thine enemies ... that rise up against thee” (Psalms 74:10,22,23).



Asaph, the Psalmist

God has kept silence during the permission of evil. It is necessary for man to learn about the exceeding sinfulness of sin. But the time for judgment eventually comes. The symbol of fire is often connected with judgment, both positive and negative. When Israel came to Mount Sinai to receive the Law, Jehovah “came down” upon the mountain. Fire is included in the manifestations of the presence of the Lawgiver (Exodus 19:18).

The picture of Israel receiving the Law and standing before the great Judge foreshadows the same activity for the world at the setting up of the Kingdom. But in this period of judgment, the judgment begins with the house of God (1 Peter 4:17).

Malachi provides a positive example where judgment begins with the servants of God. “Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi ... as gold and silver; that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness” (Malachi 3:2-3).

The fire of judgment reveals the true character of each one. Paul used a similar expression. “Every man’s work shall be made manifest ... the day shall declare it ... it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

GATHERING OF THE SAINTS

Verse 4: “He calleth to the heavens above, And to the earth, that he may judge people.”

The twin symbols of “heavens” and earth” often refer to the religious and civil powers in the world during the reign of sin and death. Since the fall of Adam, the servants of God have lived in this sinful world, resisting its evil influences and carrying out the will of God as much as they are able. (Compare Matthew 24:35, where Jesus speaks of heaven and earth passing away.)

This judgment is of God’s true and professed people, both. Christendom at this time comes under intense judgment revealing their true nature. Recall that the tares of Jesus’ parable are burned (Matthew 13:40). The individuals who are the tares are not necessarily destroyed, their professions are exposed as false. Following this begins the process of making the new heavens and new earth. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away” (Revelation 21:1).⁴

Through this judgment comes what is the hope and joy of all of the consecrated at the end of the age, namely, their gathering to Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:1).

Verse 5: “Gather my saints together unto me, Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” This gathering occurs simultaneously on two fronts.

(1) The gathering of the saints out of Christendom during the Harvest. “Then shall he send his angels, and ... gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven” (Mark 13:27). Gathering the saints is a feature of the concluding period of the Gospel Age, the Harvest. This is a tremendous blessing for the saints, for it is a time of spiritual feasting. The following two texts show this:

(a) “Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed ... And they ... said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said ... Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together” (Luke 17:30,37).⁵ This speaks of the spiritual feeding that we have been privileged to share in this Harvest period.

(b) Similarly in our second text, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). This is a straightforward promise to the truly consecrated during the Laodicean stage of the church that Jesus would feast with them. How wonderful to be gathered unto this grand meal!

Even our conversations are being gathered and recorded. This evidence is compiled to determine who will eventually make up the Kingdom, the “jewels” of Jehovah.

(2) There is a second way in which the gathering of the saints to Jesus occurs: the gathering of the saints beyond the veil to their heavenly home. “This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming [*parousia*, presence] of the Lord shall not



We should be living sacrifices, as Jesus was.

prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

This is the gathering in glory, the ultimate recognition and reward for faithfulness. This brings us to the remainder of verse five, “Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” In view of Romans 12:1, the fact that church makes some kind of sacrifice is undeniable. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”⁶

OUR “LIVING SACRIFICE”

Paul distinctly brings into the equation our bodies. We may wonder how our bodies, imperfect, sinful, and of no value to God, could be a holy sacrifice. The obvious answer is that the gift of justification by the blood makes us acceptable and holy. With this gift we are given something that we can offer to the Father — our justified human lives. We present something of value to the Father **only** because He valued it in the first place.

Presenting ourselves in sacrifice is our vow or covenant of consecration. This verb “present” is a specific act, as indicated by its use in Luke 2:22. There, the baby Jesus is presented before the high priest, as prescribed in Leviticus 12:1-4,6: “And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.”

Our “living sacrifice” is a consecration unto death, just as was the sacrifice of Jesus. Most of the sacrifices under the Law foreshadowed the activities of Jesus and the church in their sacrifice unto death.

(4) Compare Hosea 2:21,22.

(5) See also Matthew 24:28, “For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

(6) The reader will find it instructive to look up in Paul’s writings every occurrence of this expression, “I beseech you.” What one will end up with is a short list of things that the Apostle Paul considered especially important!

That our “covenant by sacrifice” is a sacrificial death of the flesh is seen in Romans 6:3-6: “So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death ... we are buried with him by baptism into death ... If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Note the following parallels that Paul makes:

Verse 3: Jesus’ death → Our Death • Verse 4: Jesus’ flesh buried → We are buried (in baptism, but later in reality) • Verse 5: Jesus planted → We are planted • Verse 6: Jesus crucified → We are crucified with him.

Verse 6: “The heavens shall declare his righteousness; For God is judge himself. Selah.” These heavens are the new heavens, for the old heavens seldom honored God for His righteousness. As in Psalm 19, here the heavens make a declaration. Here, they declare His righteousness.

In Psalm 19 there are other witnesses to the glory of God. Verses 7 through 11 tell us what these witnesses are. (7) “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. (8) The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart ... pure, enlightening the eyes. (9) The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (10) More to be desired are they than gold ... sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (11) Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward:”

The heavens in this passage represent Christ and the church. These verses describe instructions to mankind in the Kingdom. There are six proclamations. Six is the number of man. Of course it is an encapsulation of all of the instruction that the human family will receive. But what a beautiful and concise summary it is! The lessons of the 6000 years of sin and death will be magnified and understood as the Kingdom work progresses.

The verse ends with the word “Selah,” a musical pause, but also a pause to reflect soberly upon what was just read.

DISTINCTIONS IN THE SERVICE OF GOD

Verse 7: “Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.”

Who are God’s people? Ancient Israelites certainly were. But even with Israel, there was a distinction between those truly dedicated to God and those who were not. There were true and nominal Israelites. The testimony of God is against such as do not fully worship him.

Jesus made this distinction also. “Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile” (John 1:47). What does it mean to be an “Israelite indeed?” Nathanael was an Israelite who lived, breathed, and thought in terms of Jehovah’s will under the terms of the Mosaic Law. There was nothing superficial or nominal about this man.

In the Gospel Age we have something similar. Jesus said there would be true, devoted, faithful followers, as well as nominal followers for whom Christianity exerted no real power in their lives.

We also have those among the truly spirit begotten that lose their way and lose their focus. These, while accepted of God, nevertheless fail as respects that highest reward due to a dilution of their consecrations.

In this regard, we might enumerate the classes of Christians that exist during the Gospel Age: **(1)** The Little Flock, faithful and zealous to the end (Luke 12:32). **(2)** The Great Company, ultimately faithful, but lost focus and zeal during their walk (Revelation 7:9-17). **(3)** The Second Death Class (Hebrews 10:26-30). **(4)** Nominal Christians, Christians in name only. They believe they have some sort of relationship with Christ, but have nothing of the sort in reality (Matthew 7:21-23).

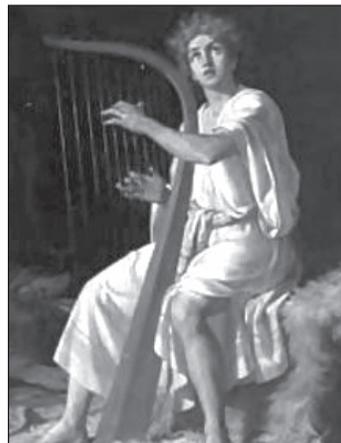
God, through Christ, deals with all of these classes in one way or another. Remembering that the Psalm is about judgment, we see in this verse a return of attention to nominally Christian organizations for judgment, just as in ancient times. The testimony now is against those who claim to be God’s people but do not behave accordingly, as seen the texts above.

Verse 8: “I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.”

Burnt offerings bring to mind the law for free-will offerings. “Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto the LORD for a burnt offering; Ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats. But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you. And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein” (Leviticus 22:18-21).

God does not criticize or “reprove” free-will offerings, that is, good works. But “good works” are not sufficient in the Day of Judgment. Many nominal Christians view their service to God as if it were a monetary exchange, where God owes them something for their good works to Him. But God does not. He sees no obligation when an offering is made. The next two verses make this clear.

Verses 9-11: “I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of



Offer thanks, praise, and service.

thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls ... and the wild beasts of the field are mine."

God is not interested merely in things. Anything that they design to give Him, He already owns! All of the animals offered on the altars of ancient Israel were the property of Jehovah — the assets of God! Furthermore, He is in complete control of His inventory on the earth.

In addition, when someone makes an offering to God with the expectation of reward, they exhibit an ignorance of what God really looks for. This can be tragic.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22,23).

Is this not sad? How careful we must be not to imbibe of the spirit of nominalism. God owes us nothing. He blesses us out of His own love. We are creatures of grace who have the privilege of knowing him and worshipping him.

Verses 12, 13: "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?"

Recall that this Psalm began with a majestic introduction of God — El Elohim Yahweh! This is the Grand Creator, the source of all energy and life. God is not intimate with any nominal believer. He does not share with such His needs for they have no resource to meet His requirements. On the contrary, it is their needs that require God's resources!

OUR THANKSGIVING TO GOD

Verse 14: "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High." Those who worship God with "spirit and truth" (John 4:23) must offer "thanksgiving" and pay their "vows." The two Hebrew words here call forth some wonderful lessons.

The Hebrew word for "thanksgiving" is *todah* (Strong's #8426) and it means "a thank offering or praise." It is interesting to see the various meal offerings that were to be offered with "thank-offerings."

"If he offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice ... unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour, fried. Besides the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving" (Leviticus 7:12,13). Four types of bread were to be provided with a "thank-offering":

- (1) Unleavened cakes mingled with oil,
- (2) Unleavened wafers anointed with oil,
- (3) Fried cakes mingled with oil,
- (4) Leavened bread.



Meal offerings accompanied sacrifice.

These four types of bread correspond to four items for which our thanksgiving to God must be made:

(1) Unleavened cakes mingled with oil: Our Justification and Sanctification. Unleavened bread is a symbol of purity, of sinlessness, and brings our minds to the state of justification, being declared righteous through the blood of Christ. The mingling with oil brings to mind our spirit-begetting, as olive oil is often used to signify the holy Spirit, as in the holy anointing oil.

(2) Unleavened wafers anointed with oil: Our hope of glorification: A wafer is translucent. Light passes through it but not with clarity, though one can discern shadows and shapes. This suggests our hope of glory. It is not yet seen clearly, but it is an anchor for the soul which purifies us (1 John 3:2,3, 1 Corinthians 13:12, Hebrews 6:19).

(3) Fried cakes mingled with oil: Our Fiery Experiences. The church must be severely tried. Without such experiences, no one can expect to receive the divine nature. As Jesus had to endure, so must each one of his followers. These trials are like refining fire. They purge and purify!

(4) Leavened bread: Thankfulness in spite of our sinful flesh. God justifies us, but does not make our flesh perfect. We must serve under difficult conditions of sin in our flesh and in the world. We must not allow these conditions to break our thankfulness! They are important in our development and allow us to show how much we love our God.

The second key Hebrew word in verse 14 is "vows." It is from the Hebrew word *nedar* (Strong's #5088) and it simply means vow. Vows under the law were associated with blood sacrifices.

"Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto the LORD for a burnt offering; Ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats. But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you. And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein" (Leviticus 22:18-21).

A true consecration during the Gospel age involves vows unto death and "dying daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31). This association with sacrificial death is even stronger in Psalm 116: "I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant ... thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people" (Psalms 116:14-18).

Nested between the two references to paying vows is the thought that “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” Also notice the particular details mentioned in these verses:

• “In the presence of all his people” — this is a public display of loyalty and faithfulness! • “Precious” — this is how God values our consecrations.⁷ • “Death of his saints” — death in the service of God is the fate of the consecrated, the called ones, the “saints.” • “Sacrifice of thanksgiving” — this connects the concepts of “thanksgiving” and “vows,” the same elements that we are considering in verse fourteen.⁸

FINAL DELIVERANCE AND BLESSINGS

Verse 15: “And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

Making vows unto God and giving him daily thanksgiving will often result in persecution. Our loving heavenly Father promises deliverance from these. He is with the church at all times and will strengthen us in times of trouble. Although the deliverance may be through death, there will be a final deliverance and blessings. What a deliverance that will be!

“Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). We may only come into “the presence of his glory” through death. But awakening in the first resurrection will certainly be with exceeding joy!

In verses 16 through 22, the Psalmist considers those who do not have the spirit of consecrated sacrifice unto death. As mentioned earlier, this is a judgment Psalm, and the judgment against the wicked and those who falsely take on the mantle of God’s servants is severe. Particularly, Christians who are but nominally so need to take heed. Their pretensions will be unmasked in the sight of all.⁹

Verse 23: “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.” This final verse shows the value of praising God. It is not that Jehovah needs our praise. Rather, our God understands from our makeup that praising Him will not only bring us the greatest joy in life, but will also develop an attitude and character that will preserve us for all eternity. Praising God is good for us!

(7) From a study of what is precious to Jehovah, here are five items:

- Psalm 49:8; 72:14 — The Ransom Price
- Psalm 116:15 — The Death of his Saints
- Psalm 126:6 — Seed, representing the freeing of captivity
- Psalm 133:2 — Ointment, representing the holy Spirit
- Psalm 139:17 — The thoughts of God

(8) It is of interest to note the connection between thanksgiving and sacrifice in Hosea 14:2, “calves of our lips.”

(9) Perhaps the most notable parable that teaches this is the parable of the wheat and the tares. Tares are nominal Christians. Their professions will be exposed as false, i.e., “burned” in the time of judgment (Matthew 13:24-30).

The word “conversation” here is from the Hebrew *derek* (Strong’s #1870). It means “way, journey, habit, course of life.” This verse speaks of our conduct as worshippers of God. We must “order” our lives to be in harmony with the divine will. Doing so will bring us to “the salvation of God.”

SUMMARY

Among the many lessons from this Psalm we may make three important observations:

(1) The 50th Psalm is a prophetic Psalm that shows the judgments of God and the setting up of Christ’s Kingdom. (2) We must make sure that our “covenant by sacrifice” defines our lives so that we may be gathered with the saints to our heavenly home. (3) We must not fail to pay our vows and die a precious death. — *Br. David Stein*

The Bigger Picture of the Memorial Supper and Its Preparation

Let us consider as a suggestion an inspiring interpretation of the events surrounding the Memorial Supper. Too often we seem to become bogged down in annual debates of things like, “Did Jesus and his disciples eat the Passover?” It is not that these questions are illegitimate, but their omnipresence on an annual basis would seem to detract from more important considerations.

This question was prominent in Bro. Russell’s day. While his own solutions for the question may not satisfy us, it is interesting to note that there seems to be at least a slight doubt in his own mind as to the answer — “room for wiggle.”

For instance, in R2771 Bro. Russell states that there is “no doubt ... [that they] ate on the day preceding the one in which the Jews in general ate it.” This in itself should have alarm bells ringing. Jesus was not one to do things in a way *not* prescribed by the Law. Bro. Russell later offers (R2953) an article entitled “Between the Evenings — A Jewish View.” He did not *endorse* this article, but he did offer it for our consideration. To this author it seems very accurate.

To put it briefly, there are many scriptural evidences that could be gone into which show that *it is most unlikely* that the Memorial Supper was a Passover supper. But that is not the purpose of this article. In fact, what we wish to do is to avoid that discussion in order for us to recognize something *much grander* about that evening.

THINK ANTITYPICALLY

The kind of detail present in passages like Luke 22:7-23 makes us quite positive that the passage has more meaning than a simple preparation for eating of the meal. As Bible students we should be acutely aware that Scripture does

not waste space on unnecessary detail. And the detail of preparing for the Passover which is mentioned in this Luke text is far too intriguing to assign no significance to it other than what the disciples did that day.

The true point, of course, is that Jesus **is** the Passover lamb. We keep the “feast” for the whole Gospel Age (1 Corinthians 5:7,8). Therefore, as we read Luke, if we can keep in mind this *antitypical significance*, the entire passage becomes not about that evening, but about the Gospel Age.

The antitype of the Passover began on the 10th of the month when the people were to select a lamb. That is the day that Jesus presented himself to them as that lamb. There was, therefore, *no obligation* for Jesus or his disciples to keep any part of the typical Passover celebration that year. The antitype had begun. Keeping the type would actually be inappropriate. Let us consider the bigger picture for its great blessings.

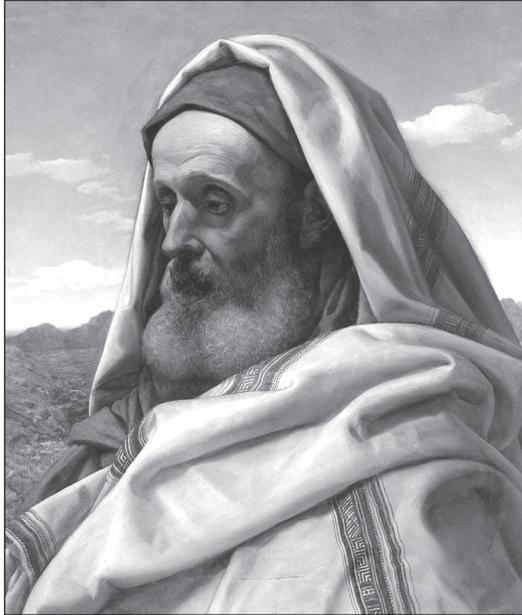
In Luke 22:7 we begin this account with a reference to “the first day of unleavened bread.” But we *know* from the Law’s instructions that the “unleavened bread *feast*” was the 15th through the 21st of the month. What we tend to forget is that the “day of preparation” was the day that all leaven was to be removed from the house. Thus, it also was a day of unleavened bread. It was not a day of the “feast,” but it was (as Luke here points out) a “day of unleavened bread.” There can be no mistake about Luke’s record because he also states that it was the day “on which the Passover Lamb had to be sacrificed.” That day, by Law, was the 14th — not the 15th which was the first day of the feast.

What is happening here, *antitypically*, is that Jesus’ days in the flesh were a *day of preparation* for the Gospel-Age feasting on unleavened bread (1 Corinthians 5).

Think antitypically again as we read verse 8. Jesus asked the disciples to “Go and prepare the Passover that we may eat it.” Typically this makes no sense. The *antitype* had begun. What Jesus *seems* to be saying (antitypically) is, “Go and prepare for the last events which will make our Gospel-Age eating possible.”

Verse 9 is a simple question: “Where do you want us to prepare it?” Antitypically, the door is now open for great truths. Jesus will use the question to explain to them **where** they will eat the feast for the next 2000 years.

Verse 10 is full of symbolic gems. “Behold.” This word always (like Selah in the Psalms) means “Pause and consider in depth.” In other words, the sentence that follows is more than it appears. “When you have entered



Eliezer, by William Dyce

the city” becomes a reference to the embryo New Jerusalem — the condition of the saints during the Gospel Age. So, to the disciples, Jesus is saying, “Consider carefully; when the new age has opened.”

What happens when the new age opens? First, for the disciples, it opens at Pentecost. Recall how the bride for Isaac was sought. Abraham’s servant (Eliezer, representing the holy Spirit) sought Rebekah by dealing with her about water. So, when the new age begins, they will find a “man” (the antitypical servant) with the pitcher of water, the truths for the new age. “Follow Him!” That is, of course, the objective for all of us during the entire age. And what does the holy

Spirit and its water **do** for us? First, it leads us “into the house that he enters.” “House” in the New Testament seems to symbolize covenants. So, we follow the holy Spirit into our new “covenant by sacrifice.” We then must “say to the owner of the house.”

That would be God, Himself. Jesus is thus informing us that we will have a direct access to the owner of this covenant relationship. But we did not do it without Jesus having become our advocate. The next sentence establishes that. We say to the owner, “The *Teacher* says to you.” In other words, we approach God in the name and merit of our Teacher.

What do we ask? (Or, rather, what does the Teacher ask?) Where is the “guest room in which I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” In the Parable of the Wedding Guests (Matthew 22:1-14) it is the same symbol. The spirit-begotten are assembled as “guests.” Jesus is here showing that he will spend the “Passover Night” (the night in which the firstborns are being judged) — the Gospel Age — “eating with us.” Actually, in his case, he will be serving us the meal: the Lamb, the herbs, the unleavened bread — all while dressed as pilgrims.

Verse 12 expands our delights about our Gospel-Age night in the room with Jesus. The holy Spirit will show the disciples a room. But note: it is large! No more is a relationship with God small and confining as it was under the Jewish Law. Our room is **large**. The relationship we gain with God is the largest and most satisfying accommodation ever conceived. But the room is also **furnished**. What is there that we do not have? God has “furnished” this age and our relationship with every kind of furnishing that can be imagined. It is the “holy” of the tabernacle, furnished with light, food, and a prayer altar. And, finally, it is an **upper** room. It is no longer an earthly (or lower) relationship. It is a spiritual (or upper) dwelling.



Jesus at the Last Supper

The verse then concludes: “Prepare it there.” Jesus is telling us that **that** is where the final acts of the old age would end so that the blessings for the disciples could really begin.

Are we still concerned about whether or not they ate the Passover? This is so much grander in its scope and in its appeal to our new creatures!

Verse 13. They departed the Jewish Age and found everything just as Jesus had predicted. Have we not found it so? So “they prepared the Passover.” This phrase, if we are yet thinking *typically*, at the very least causes *some* difficulty. It was too early to slay the lamb according to the Law. They did, however, probably think they were about to eat the Passover with Jesus — but not until the appointed time — the 15th. So, their “preparations” would have been in the nature of super-cleaning the room and making ready for the next night. *That* was the *very purpose* of the Jewish “Day of Preparation.”

When verse 14 begins, Jesus has joined them in the room. They were about to eat — but not to eat the Passover (which would be the next night). They were simply enjoying, as a family, the meal of the “Day of Preparation.” (They were eating with unleavened bread because the day of preparation insisted that no leaven be left in the house.) But Jesus used the occasion to comment on the meaning of the up-coming celebration. “When the hour had come” can now be taken also as an antitypical expression. Its meaning would be, “When the hour had come in the Jewish Age when the transition into the Gospel Age Lamb and Feast were about to begin (1 Corinthians 5).” This is, indeed, when Jesus “reclined at the table, and the Apostles with him.”

The words of verse 15 continue the antitypical significance. Jesus expresses how he has awaited this moment when the Gospel-Age feast would begin. When he used the words “before I suffer,” he shows that long before his crucifixion he had awaited the **result**. Indeed, it was his “suffering” that was going to open the door for the antitypical upper room.

The words of verse 16 need correction. They should read, “for I say unto you, I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.” (The “never again” in the NAS implies that he **WOULD** eat it with them. But the true text does **not** imply this. As the matter of fact, the spurious words spoil the antitypical significance.)

The connection between verses 15 and 16 is difficult, but they are imperative for a correct understanding. Note carefully that verse 16 begins with “for,” which means “because.” A paraphrase of the connection between the two verses would be something like:

“Before my suffering I have had this intense desire to see my suffering’s result — the passing over (elimination of death) of all of us who are ‘first-born.’ [But this cannot quickly happen, of course, because the antitypical eating will take the whole age.]

Because of this, I will **not** eat of its results until the establishment of the Kingdom sees its completion.”

Thus, reading this passage as an antitype takes most of the mystery out of it. More importantly, it makes it so much more meaningful than the parochial approach which seems only to have caused prolonged discussion to not much avail.

THE MEAL

In and following verse 17, we see how Jesus instituted a memorial of the antitype of his fleshly sufferings.

He shared the cup which represents the blood which would seal the covenant which would deliver Israel when the morning of the Millennium arrives. Jesus’ part in the blood (verse 18) was about to be concluded. The disciples’ part was not. They would both “drink of it new” (with changed meaning) once the Kingdom comes.

He shared the bread which showed how the ransom would apply earlier for the justification of his Church so that they could share in spilling their blood for the sealing of the New Covenant.

When we get to verses 21-23, Jesus shares an intelligence with us regarding how long the intervening age would be. By his reference to Judas, he was showing that betrayers would sit with the disciples during the coming age. (Wheat and Tares would be assembled together.) Only Judas and the “Man of Sin” are called “The Son of Perdition” — showing that the one was a type of the other. They both betray the Lord with a “kiss” — with a feigned sign that they were faithful to him. Thus, in type, Jesus here prophesies the development of the apostasy.

Thus we have seen how all of these events (bread, and wine, and Judas, included) are so much larger than the actual events themselves. The whole episode is to teach us **big** things — not to have us squabble about who ate what. The typical age was over once the 10th day of the month had arrived. Everything was now antitypical.

— Br. David Doran