



“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of

nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. Luke 21:25-28

The events announced by these verses actually cover the complete week of tribulation outlined in Daniel 9:27. Jesus declares that we are to lift up our heads when these thing “begin to come to pass,” and then, as we read earlier in this text, all these things will culminate with the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” This very obvious and spectacular “coming” will include a “cloud” of glorified humanity, and must not be confused with the catching away of the Bride of Christ, wherein Jesus coming is portrayed as a “thief in the night.” I Thess. 5:2 Note also that there are many signs and wonders that will take place between these two events as the throes of tribulation become more intense in very short periods of time. Jesus described even the days preceding the tribulation as the “beginning” of sorrows (Matt. 24:8) and we have been witnessing the harbingers of this devastating period for some time. Such a beginning simply means that these difficulties are going to intensify and indeed they are happening both in the heavens and the earth at this present time.

One major sign of these end times is “distress of nations with perplexity,” the emphasis being on, “perplexity.” (“at a loss for a way,” being at one’s wit’s end, at a loss how to proceed, without resources.” Vines Expository Dictionary.) Nations have been in distress (strait, compressed, anguish) for centuries, but perplexity seems to be the identifying mark of

our day and we see it on two major fronts. First such nations are at a loss as to what to do with one another. Secondly, there is much consternation due to “Acts of God” that are completely beyond their control, though they will not any wise admit it.

The above verses liken this tumultuous perplexity to “the sea and waves roaring.” That turmoil will continue until Jesus finally ushers in His Kingdom as King of kings, and Lord of lords, and no nation on earth today is freed from the frustration and straits imposed on them by other nations. America along with the entire United Nations conglomerate, have no idea what to do with North Korea who, despite adamant denials, most assuredly sunk the South Korean warship Cheonan. This world community of nations is also completely baffled as to how to handle the North Korean nuclear program. Iran can also be added to that mix and despite all Iranian assertions that such a program is not being used to create nuclear warheads, none of the nations trust Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Some nations, believe sanctions against both Iran and North Korea are the answer, while others like China and Russia, seem to think that sanctions would only make things worse. Indeed, Israel National News reports “Iran has threatened it could close the waterway, (the Persian Gulf) where 40 percent of the world’s oil flows in tankers, if the United Nations or the United States by itself carry out harsh energy sanctions against the Islamic Republic. An Israeli ship has also reportedly joined the U.S. armada.” Thus it goes in so many areas and complete stalemates ensue often leaving these distressed nations wondering what course of action to take next.

Israel also has been confronted with tremendous pressure from the national community because she sent the commandos aboard a Turkish ship that defied her order to be inspected. That operation did not go well and there was much loss of life. Mr. Netanyahu appeared before the international community trying to defend the actions of Israel, venting his frustration, concluding his remarks to those present with the question, “what would you do?” Of course none of them had an answer, but we marveled at those who still blamed Israel for this incident, which some have stated was a calculated tactic on

the part of Turkey from the very beginning, and achieved the desired results.

The U.S., in addition to dealing with all the confusing developments surrounding Israel, Iran, Turkey and Russia, is also deeply involved with complex and perplexing issues in Afghanistan. General Stanley McChrystal let his own frustration “boil over” recently as he very wrongfully, both according to scripture and political protocol, denounced his superior saying that he was “disengaged” in the Afghanistan problem. The very term would describe one who is indeed “perplexed” or “at a loss” or “at one’s wit’s end,” in deciding what course of action to take. Others were a bit perplexed by General Stanley’s replacement, Gen. David Petraeus, the man dubbed “General Betrayus” because they did not like his policies in Iraq. It seems doubtful that those policies have changed from that time to this, but we see once again, how men simply do whatever is necessary, to get what they want. This reminds of us of Jephathah, during the time of the Judges. He too was a man ousted by his brethren, but when they needed him to fight against Ammon, they had no trouble asking him to return as their “head.” We have heard of no demands made by General Petraeus, and only time will tell whether or not he can solve the great difficulties in Afghanistan. It has been said that, “for the second time in recent years, Petraeus has been sent to take direct command of a war that seems to be going badly.”

The second cause of perplexity especially deals with the environmental woes facing all the nations of the world. Global warming has occupied the headlines for months and has been a great political tool in recent years as men use it to grapple for power, and assume control over so many areas of life. Recent reports out of England declaring that “scientific evidence” had been altered or completely falsified to promote the global warming agenda, has in no wise taken this issue off the radar screen. A Canadian Newspaper ‘The Globe’ recently reported a great number of phenomenal high temperatures that “scorched much of Russia, as Muscovites have taken to the streets in bikinis and more than 1000 Russians have drowned in the last month trying to escape record temperatures.” ‘The Globe’

further asserts that “a zone of low pressure northwest of the British Isles and high pressure around the Mediterranean is pushing hot air into Europe. Monsoon rains have been plentiful over the Indian Ocean, but they have not continued on to land leaving South Asia scorched.” The majority of conclusions reached in regard to global warming are that man has caused it and thus man must fix it. However, the above quoted article concludes with this most perplexing statement: “International climate experts are at a loss to explain why these local phenomena are happening all at once, even when they factor in multi-decade cycles caused by shifts in ocean currents and El Nino’s heat factor. ‘What is causing that is very difficult to answer,’ said Annamalai Hariharasubramanian, a meteorologist with the University of Hawaii.”

Scripture most assuredly confirms global warming. Peter declares that “...the elements shall melt with fervent heat,” (II Pet. 3:10,12) and Rev. 16:9 is very clear that “...men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of **God, which hath power over these plagues:** and they repented not to give him glory.” The problem of our day is that men think they can reverse this or any other dilemma they face **WITHOUT GOD**, and there are more perplexing obstacles being put before them daily.

The BP oil spill, was finally capped after 86 days, but the difficulties are by no means over. Some have even speculated, due to the high methane gas content, and extremely high pressures present, (100,00 psi.) that though BP is being blamed and has taken responsibility for this spill, there is the possibility that the whole disaster may have been triggered by a “mud volcano” akin to the Mt. St. Helens eruption, only this one was under water. Such a scenario would be equivalent to “an Act of God” but we have heard none of the main stream media use such a term. Chemicals used to disperse the oil are also feared to cause “toxic rain,” with that contamination being carried for thousands of miles even into other countries. It has been reported that Russia, undoubtedly seeking to protect their own interests, recommended using the “nuclear option” to stop the oil, meaning that a nuclear explosion would seal the well. Former President Bill Clinton also thought this might be

the only solution, but of course BP resisted it because that would eliminate the possibility of continuing to use the well. Many businesses along the gulf coast, and fisherman whose livelihood depends on these fishing waters, are still greatly perplexed as to how they can make a living, some wondering if they will ever recover.

Thus far the flow of oil has been for the most part contained but according to these excerpts from 'The New York Times' perplexity and uncertainty following this disaster may continue for a long, long time. "The dissolution of the slick should reduce the risk of oil killing more animals or hitting shorelines. But it does not end the many problems and scientific uncertainties associated with the spill and federal leaders emphasized this week that they had no intention of walking away from those problems any time soon.

The effect on sea life of large amounts of oil that dissolved below the surface is still a mystery.....the reports left many questions, especially about an apparent decline in oxygen levels in the water. And understanding the effects on shorelines.....is expected to occupy scientists for years. After 86 days of oil gushing...the leak was stopped.....Still the well has not been permanently sealed.....Less oil on the surface does not mean that there isn't oil beneath the surface....We are extremely concerned about the short-term and long-term impacts to the gulf ecosystem."

Other catastrophes, which men recognize only as "Nature's Oddities" include a list of earthquakes that have happened just since January 2010 to the present time. There are actually a total of 18 ranging in intensity from 3.6 in Washington D.C. to 8.0 in Chile. Just a few others include Haiti, Turkey, Mexico, Spain, China, and the Philippines, meaning that they are indeed global. Other "oddities," are all time record winter snowfall in the Eastern U.S., Icelandic volcanic ash cloud that closed airports for weeks across Europe. Fargo N.D reported a 100 year flood for the second consecutive year while there was a two hundred year flood in Rhode Island.

At this writing, in addition to her many conflicts with terrorist organizations, Pakistan is now confronted with what is

reported as being the worst flood in their history. In addition to the immediate devastation, they also fear outbreaks of cholera after the waters recede. So it is that every sector of this little earth ball is experiencing devastating difficulties quite beyond their own control, and it is quite apparent that men will continue to be faced with the impossible circumstances, listed in our opening text, as they look “after those things which are coming on the earth.” However, we do not hear any of them calling on the Name of The Lord to solve them.

As Christians, it is high time that we follow Jesus’ admonition: “...when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” Now is not the time to become discouraged and wring our hands over the uncontrollable politics and daunting circumstances of this world. It is rather a time for our own joyous faces to reflect the message that we are looking up and that we truly do know that our redemption (our exit from this world) draweth nigh. Though the time has been long and many, even in the Christian Community proclaim, “Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation,” (II Pet. 3:4) true first rank overcomers will resolve in their own hearts “...that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Rom. 13:11

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**A CERTAINTY**

***Through times of afflictions and uncertainty***

***Thou has brought me low before Thee:***

***Through times of trials Thou hast guided me:***

***Through times of troubles Thou hast unraveled***

***My tangled skein of uncertainty into Thy love.***

***Through love Thou hast lifted me up again***

***To dwell with Thee anew in a higher realm,***

***For all things work together for good***

***To them that love Thee,***

***To the Called according to Thy purpose.***

- Ruth Merritt Reynolds

# THE GREAT BANQUET

A.S. Copley

**“YE HAVE COME TO MOUNT ZION, AND A CITY OF A LIVING GOD, A HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, AND TO MYRIADS OF ANGELS, TO A UNIVERSAL FESTIVE GATHERING, AND TO AN ASSEMBLY OF FIRSTBORN ONES ENROLLED IN THE HEAVENS, AND TO GOD THE JUDGE OF ALL, AND TO SPIRITS OF JUST MEN WHO HAVE BEEN PERFECTED, AND TO JESUS THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT, AND TO BLOOD OF SPRINKLING WHICH SPEAKETH BETTER THINGS THAN THAT OF ABEL.” Hebrews 12:22-24 Greek**

This letter was written by the Apostle Paul to Hebrew or Jewish Christians. It teaches the difference between the shadowy things of the Old Covenant and the real things of the New covenant. In the former, we read of typical priests and worship. In Hebrews, we learn their true interpretation as referring to Christ - the real High Priest and His Priesthood.

Therefore, in this epistle, we find the word “better” fourteen times - a better Man, a better persuasion, a better hope, a better testament, better promises, better sacrifices, a better resurrection, etc. In the verses to which I call your special attention, we have a summing up of the better results of all these better things. We are introduced to the unspeakable climax of the wondrous word of grace, the message of the New Covenant, as distinguished from the ministry of the law.

Let us suppose that we are all Hebrews now, that we may understand from what they were delivered. The apostle begins by first painting a picture of burning, blazing, quaking, thundering Mount Sinai where the law was given. His pen-picture is a graphic setting forth of the nature of the law. It shows how stern is law, how unfeeling, unrelenting, unbending. Law shows no pity, has no mercy, does not give another chance.

Consider Paul’s words. Israel came that day to “a mountain that burned with fire, and to obscurity and to darkness” - law brings conviction, not light; “and to a tempest

and a trumpet's sound" - law gives neither peace nor quiet; "and to a voice of words, which they that heard entreated that not a word should be addressed to them; for they could not bear that which was commanded" - law is cold, hard, exacting, terrible. "And if a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or with a dart shot through" - even the flesh of innocent animals, being corrupted by the sinfulness of man, cannot come into God's Presence." "And so fearful was the spectacle, that Moses said, I am greatly afraid and trembling" - Hebrews 12:18-21. However safe we are in the folds of grace, the very sight of law produces a feeling of terror. Law is the fixed and relentless expression of Divine justice against sin. Therefore, if Moses as a mediator and Aaron as representing the basis of mediation (both figuring Christ) had not stood between God and the people that day, they would all have been slain by that fiery law.

But God be praised eternally! Jesus Christ stood in the breach; for, there was another Mount Sinai, if I may so say. The vengeance that quivered and shook, leaped and flashed, surged and rolled, shouted and roared, all with just impatience (Exodus 19) - God's righteous indignation against sin, displayed with such flaming majesty that day - was wreaked out upon the holy Son of Man fifteen hundred years later on Mount Calvary. There the voice of the law was hushed forever, for the demands of justice were met. "Christ died for the ungodly." and "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" - Romans 5:6; Hebrews 9:26. Therefore, the apostle exclaimed to those Hebrew believers and, of course, to us also - "Ye are not come unto the mount that might not be touched, and that burned with fire, not unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest" - but to the mount of grace.

### **OUR TEXT UNFOLDED**

Let us study Paul's eight wonderful words here in detail. First, observe the meanings of several names. "Sinai" means, "my thorns, a bush, a cliff," and it was near a wilderness. Israel was congregated there when the law was given to them. How expressive of religious experience. Law-keepers have more or less a wilderness experience - rugged, or cliff-like, and thorny. They have a bushy thorny message. If they seem to have victory, it is by force of their own will and not by resting on Another Arm.

But "Zion" means, "a fortress, a projection, a monument." Just outside Jerusalem, which is situated on Mount Zion, Jesus was crucified. Thus, Zion has become the mount of grace, a fortress against sin and sickness. From thence is projected the glorious Gospel of grace. And Zion stands as a monument of redemption through grace. Hence, David exclaimed, "The joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion" - Psalm 48:2. Of course, that was prophetic.

"Jerusalem" means "vision of peace, founded in peace, possession of peace"; and, finally, it means "double peace shall be taught there." Peace is the first conscious result of faith in salvation by grace - "peace with God." We see it, we have it, we are planted in it, and we abound in peace. War is over; peace is declared. No thorns here, no dangerous cliff, no wilderness, because it is all of grace. All Paul's epistles, save this one, are introduced by "grace" and "peace." Paul says to Israel:

"Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" - Hebrews 12:22. From the city on earth where Christ was crucified, the apostle swings quickly upward to the "Jerusalem which is above.....which is the mother of us all" - Galatians 4:26. For redemption originated in Heaven, and all who believe are born from above. The earthly Jerusalem was not to be despised; but Paul would have his kindred see that they are called to a higher, a greater city, than that - not simply to the city of David, but to that of the living God - even where His throne is which, through redemption, has become a "throne of grace" - Hebrews 4:16. When he wrote to them, David's city was in bondage; but the heavenly Jerusalem is free. The heavenly Jerusalem, our Mother Grace, is free; hence, we are free also, being free born. "Sin shall not have dominion over you (neither shall law): for ye are not under the law, but under grace" - Romans 6:14. "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee." - Psalm 84:12.

The Scriptures speak of three Jerusalems: The heavenly Jerusalem, where God's present throne is, from whence all blessings now flow. The earthy Jerusalem, the headquarters for the Divine government of God's Kingdom on earth. And the "new Jerusalem," which will be our Lord's headquarters in Heaven during the Millennium, and where the heavenly saints will dwell with Him in glory. Therefore, Paul

sought to show to his Hebrew friends that they were not under law, but under grace; and that they might see unto what great privileges and wealth redemption had brought them, as well as us.

“And to myriads of angels” - Hebrews 12:22. This indicates how near we are brought by redemption to the inhabitants of Heaven. Concerning angels, the apostle asks, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” - Hebrews 1:14. That is, God causes the angels to guard those whom He knows will believe, even before they do believe. Wondrous grace!

This age was introduced by angels. Gabriel announced the coming of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ. When the angel of the Lord declared that the newborn Babe was the “Saviour...Christ the Lord” - “Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to god in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men” - Luke 2:11-14.

During this age, angels continue to serve the saints of God in various ways. As truly as demon forces are present some times in the gathering together of God’s people, just so truly are angels set to protect and defend His people. Saints are kept from many dangers, pitfalls, and sorrows, by the intervention of these unseen messengers. God does not allow us to know them, lest we should idolize them.

“To a universal festive gathering.” The phrase in our version, “to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn,” is an unfortunate translation. There are two facts expressed, differing widely from each other. Our version states but one fact. The Greek word “panegueri,” here translated “the general assembly,” properly means “a gathering of a whole nation, a high festival, a solemn assembly.” It is from two words - “pas” meaning “all” and “aguris” meaning “gathering.”

The apostle uses it here to express the nature and glory of the meeting to which saints are called under the New Covenant. This is the only place where it is used in the New Testament. It means a universal banquet, where angels from Heaven and redeemed people from the earth of every age are met in a holy festival. It describes the universal festive character of this Gospel Age. Jesus called it “a great supper.”

For two thousand years this Gospel supper has been spread, to which the Lord has been inviting people from

everywhere. In God's reckoning, Heaven and earth are brought nigh. We are brought into His very Presence. We are fanned with the breath of angels. We could not know this but for this blessed Word. This is not spirit-ism; we have no communication with departed sprits. We pray to God, the Father, in Jesus' Name. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" - I John 1:3. Nevertheless, these words of the apostle indicate the high altitude and spiritual atmosphere into which faith lifts us because of the provision of grace - in the heavenlies.

"And to an assembly of firstborn" ("firstborn ones," Greek), means believers of this present Church Age. Here, again, is a contrast. "Ephriam is My firstborn" (Jeremiah 31:9); that is, Israel was God's firstborn on earth, but believers (the Church) are His firstborn ones registered in Heaven. Thank God, our enrollment is in the city from which we were born and to which we are going. These firstborn ones are not yet in Heaven with their glorified bodies; though the spirits of some of them are there. Jesus was "the firstborn from the dead" - Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5. Doubtless, this refers to a special company of believers whom God sees in the same rank with Jesus Christ. They will be the "firstborn ones from among the dead"; that is, they will enjoy "the out-resurrection" - Philippians 3:11. If Jesus was the "firstborn from among the dead," there will be others born from among the dead also. And, if some are called "the firstborn ones," certainly some others are not firstborn ones. That is, some saints will be raised from the grave after these are raised.

The Holy Spirit employs the identical Greek word "prototokos," in Hebrews 1:6, as referring to Christ in resurrection - "And when again He bringeth the firstborn into the habitable world, He says, And let all the angels of God worship Him." But before Christ is thus worshipped there will be a company of saints with Him, in and around His throne, whose resurrection will be counted as in the same order with Him. Therefore, here they are called "firstborn ones." This is solemnly wonderful!

Revelation five, is positive proof of this interpretation. The angels are silent in Heaven until the Lord is on His throne and the full overcomers are with Him. He is found worthy to open the book of God's final purposes and loose the seals thereof.

The full overcomes (no doubt the “firstborn ones” of our text) break forth in exultant praise. They sing a new song, saying, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on (over) the earth” - Revelation 5:9,10. Then the angels obey Hebrews 1:6, and give full acknowledgment of Christ’s supreme authority, by singing their sevenfold anthem - “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: - Revelation 5:12.

Observe that the apostle’s auditors are not expected to be a part of the “firstborn ones”; but they are come to the great festive banquet in which the “firstborn ones” have such an honored place. He had cited this difference in explaining the tabernacle furniture - Hebrews 9:1-5. But he passed by “the cherubims of glory,” which figure the four living ones and twenty-four elders of Revelation four. He could only say, “The cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.” As long as they did not understand the simpler shadows, they could not understand this one. They who are in any measure under law or, on the other hand, are lawless or lascivious will not be part of the “firstborn ones.”

“And to God the judge of all.” Yes, God is present in His own city. He is Judge of all. He grades His people. His decisions are righteous. No one can make-believe himself into the highest rank; and, no one need be hindered by another, from being in it. “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” - Rev. 3:11. Let us yield to the judgment of God upon the old creation, and judge ourselves continually (I Cor. 11:31,32), trusting in Christ only and always; then “the Lord, the righteous Judge” will give us our due portion and place in “that day.”

“And to spirits of just ones made perfect.” “Just ones” here means Old Testament believers. It is in the Old Testament that we read, “The just shall live by his faith” - Habakkuk 2:4. Lot was called, “just Lot” or “righteous Lot.” The perfection here refers to the resurrection. We read these words of Jesus, “Go ye, and tell that fox (Herod), Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the

third day I shall be perfected” - Luke 13:32. This speaks of the Lord’s three years’ ministry and of His death and resurrection.

Also, we have a sidelight in Phil. 3:12 - “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Paul means to say, “I have not yet received my resurrection and glorified body. I am still running in view of the resurrection, and expect to be perfected; that is, have a glorified body.” These “just ones made perfect” are Old Testament saints who are now in Heaven and have their glorified bodies.

Matthew 27:52,53 “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.” That was the day Jesus was raised from the dead. Do you suppose they went back into the graves again? What became of them?

Hebrews 11:35 - “Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Oh, the suffering that some of those Old Testament saints endured; yet they were victorious. They took the Lord for their strength. For example, David shouted - “The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” - Psalm 27:1. When they were persecuted, they went right on, refusing deliverance out of God’s perfect will. Why? “That they might obtain a better resurrection.” What resurrection could be better than to be raised the day on which Christ arose? Otherwise, they would have had to wait until the end of this age, when the house of Israel will be raised from the dead. Daniel 12:1,2 - “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

I take it that those saints of Matthew 27 are the “just ones made perfect” of our text - those Old Testament saints who suffered to the uttermost. By the Spirit of God, they were made to see that there was a better resurrection for those who would endure in advance with Christ; for suffering in God’s will is the price of glory. Here the apostle says to his kindred in

the flesh, "Ye are come....to the spirits of just men made perfect" - Hebrews 12:22,23. What an expression of God's wondrous grace! How vastly different from the covenant of law.

"And to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant" - Hebrews 12:24. Their fathers came to Moses; but they have come to Jesus. Moses was a prophet and a great leader; but he could not save. He was only a type of Christ. He was a typical mediator. Jesus is the real Savior, the real Mediator. "He is the Mediator of a better covenant," even the covenant of grace. "For the law was given to Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ" - John 1:17. The fathers of Israel were "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," that they might follow him - I Cor. 10:2. We have been baptized into Christ, that we may be partakers of His life, that we may dwell in Him and He in us.

"And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" - Hebrews 12:24. Abel shed the blood of a lamb, which was accepted of God for him; not because there was any merit in the lamb's blood, but because it pointed to the blood of Jesus - "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" - Rev. 13:8. Behold the wisdom given to the apostle. He points out all the attractive items comprising this great festive gathering; but mentions the foundation item last. Jesus Christ, through His death, burial and resurrection, is the necessary channel through which all this could come to pass. His death, the pouring out of His life, his mediation, were absolutely essential to prepare such a banquet.

Thank God! We have not come to a mountain trembling and burning, but to the mount of grace. We have come to a banquet - a great universal, festive convention. - "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need: - Hebrews 4:16. It is a day of gladness, a day of feasting, a time of plenty.

#### CONCLUDING EXHORTATION

"See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven: Whose voice than shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" - Hebrews 12:25,26. That is, Moses

spoke on earth as God's mouthpiece. God shook those typical things. He shook Israel and showed to them that there was no life in law, and no blessing could come from legality and self-effort. He shook the earth of Mount Sinai. He is going to shake heaven, and shake the devil out of heaven - everything that is shakable in heaven and on earth; so that nothing will remain except Christ and His people. Oh, what a day that will be!

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" - Hebrews 12:28. Paul is speaking here to Israel they had a kingdom; but it was removed. The nations took it. But they will receive a kingdom over which Christ will reign for one thousand years and it cannot be removed. We, too, have a heavenly kingdom that cannot be removed. He removes our sins and sicknesses now. He will remove the Christ-rejector after while - "For our God is a consuming fire." The same God who gave the law to Israel through Moses; is today revealing His wondrous grace through Christ Jesus.

Hence, it follows that - "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," at this festive gathering - Rev. 22:17. This is the banquet invitation. "Whosoever will, let him come." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" - II Cor. 6:2. "Harden not your hearts" - Hebrews 3:8.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" is almost the last word of this epistle to the Hebrews - 13:8. He is the Minister of love and grace. He brings to us the food for this new creation. He brings the wine in His goblet, and makes us drunk with Himself when we are filled with Him. Thank God! He is the Chief Servant at this great banquet. "He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love" - Song of Solomon 2:4.

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***"My spirit is dancing
Within my soul;
My spirit is dancing
Because Jesus makes me whole.
When I received the anointing
It flowed out of me --
Dancing, anointing,
Setting others free."***
-- W. R. Jones

REFLECTIONS

. . . From the Editor

“...Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.” II Chron. 20:15

There are a number of things in scripture that are described as specifically belonging to The Lord. Among them are glory, honor, vengeance, the tithe, the firstborn, and we are surely robbing God if we take any of them to ourselves. God used the very term rob in Mal. 3:8 when Israel withheld the tithe. The above text declares that the battle also, is His, and if we pursue such a fight on our own, there will be consequences.

The truth of this glorious subject is expressed a number of ways in scripture. The Children of Israel were instructed in Exodus 14:13 “...Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD,...” meaning the battle is the Lord’s. “Standing still,” it is a direct proof we have acknowledged that the fight is His and not ours. Psalm 3:8 boldly announces “Salvation belongeth unto the LORD:” and Israel discovered that, in no uncertain terms, when they walked across the Red Sea on dry ground and then saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore, all without their own help and expertise.

There is one question we must ask ourselves in any given conflict: “Did God bring me to the battle as He brought Israel to the Red Sea, or is it a battle of my own making?” If indeed He has designed it, ours is to stand still and see the salvation of The Lord,” thus relinquishing our deliverance and the battle unto Him.

The Lord also deliberately brings us into impossible situations for the very purpose of teaching us that the battle does belong to Him. One consequence of failing to acknowledge that fact is that men refuse to go to the battle at all, even as Israel did when they came up to the borders of Canaan. Deut. 1:27, 28 says they murmured in their tents, accused God of hatred, of bringing them out of Egypt to destroy them. When they would not recognize that the battle

was The Lord's, they also became obsessed with the size of the enemy, and all but Joshua and Caleb simply refused to fight.

Deuteronomy 20:1,2 gives us valuable instruction for our own lives in this matter. "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies..." Note it is "when" and not "if" for taking our place in the Promised Land, DEMANDS a battle orchestrated by God. "... and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou," means that we must face reality and know that the enemy is much greater than our own expertise and power. Thus we are exhorted: ".. be not afraid of them:" the reason being, "for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," which means He had already proven Himself. The power for such a battle is ours when the priest, the one who will declare God's Word, loudly asserts: "For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you." V. 4 The battle truly is "not yours, but God's." GH

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

We were greatly embarrassed and disappointed due to the very inferior quality of printing in the July issue of Grace & Glory. Though it was something beyond our own control, we do apologize for any inconvenience caused to our readers. Parts of some articles were almost unreadable and thus if you would desire clear copies of them, let us know either by e-mail or at P.O. Box 831, Grandview, Missouri 64030.

SONG BOOKS:

It seems that some thought we were sending out "frayed and worn books" that we no longer needed. Such is not the case. The offer is for new books to replace the old ones, and we would especially like for various meetings to take advantage of this offer.

BIBLE SCHOOL:

Classes will begin in our new building in Belton September 20, 2010. We would love to see many young people take advantage of this opportunity to learn the depths of God's Word before they embark on a rather precarious journey in the world.

PAUL'S GOSPEL

IN THE SONG OF SOLOMON

THE DISPENSATIONAL ASPECT

2:8 - 2:17

This second canticle corresponds with I and II Corinthians. It contains dispensational truth, and is the first inspection tour that Christ makes.

In 606 B.C. God gave the rulership of the world into the hands of the Gentiles for a specific time. Bible teachers believe this to be a period of 2520 years, and should have ended in 1914. What happened in 1914? The first World War began that year.

The Lord is interested in three groups of people: The Church, Israel, and the nations. The completion of the Church, the dispersion of Israel and the Times of the Gentiles will end at the same time. It seems that 1914 might have been that time, but when He came on His inspection tour, the Church was not ready to be caught away. She did not respond to His call. Israel was just beginning to show signs of life, but the nations were oppressing her, and still had dominion over her.

2:8 "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." This verse indicates the way in which the Inspector came, and for what purpose. This reminds us of John Six where Jesus came walking upon the water to the help of His disciples. They were in a boat, the storm was raging, and they were afraid. Suddenly He came, walking upon the sea. This is a picture of Israel's supernatural deliverance after the battle of Armageddon, and figures their final deliverance. Verse 8 figures the first step of their deliverance which began in 1914. He was "leaping upon the mountains." Mountains in Scripture speak of nations or kingdoms, and the hills of smaller countries. As a result of the first World War, some of the nations were set aside, that Israel might be liberated to some degree.

2:9-12. "My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, He standeth behind our wall, He looketh forth at the windows, showing Himself through the lattice. My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up My love, My fair one, and

come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle (dove) is heard in our land." In 1906 there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in various parts of the world, accompanied by signs and miracles as were manifested in the beginning of the Church Age. This was a Holy Ghost revival, the sovereign act of God, and was meant to prepare the Church for translation. Many believers were filled with the Holy Spirit as on the Day of Pentecost. Verse nine seems to imply that the Church was aware of the imminent coming of the Lord. Verses 10-12 show the wooing by the Holy Spirit of the Church, seeking to separate her from earthly things and drawing her attention to heavenly things. But the Church did not heed that call; she was not ready for translation.

2:13. "The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away." In Isaiah 5:1-7, we have a parable showing that Israel is called the vineyard of the Lord. Because of her disobedience, she has been scattered among the nations for centuries. In Matthew 24, there is a parable of the fig tree, which figures the revival of the Jewish nation.

Let us take a look at the results of the first World War concerning Israel, which the One who is the "Head of all principality and power came to see. We quote: "On Palm Sunday in 1917, the Jews met in New York to appoint a 'congress' to regain possession of Palestine. Five days later, President Wilson declared war on Germany. On that same day, Good Friday, the Jewish and Christian calendars coincided -- being the first day of the Jewish Passover, the 14th day of the month. Both of those set times commemorate Christ's death: one, the type, the other the fulfillment. On November 2 of that year, the British government issued the famous Balfour declaration, stating that Britain 'viewed with favor the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish people, and would use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of that object.' On December 8, 1917, General Allenby captured Jerusalem from the Turks. That date was the Feast of Lights (or dedication). The release of the Jews was the Divine purpose of that war, which, soon after, suddenly ceased.....in 1922 the British Mandate over Palestine was officially proclaimed, which recognized the

rights of the Jewish people to return to Palestine and reconstruct their National Home there. Sir Herbert Samuel was appointed first High Commissioner of Palestine on September 11, 1922. That presaged the reversal of the smiting and treading down of Jerusalem.....in 1929 the Jews took steps to form a Sanhedrin of 70 men. One of its first acts was to review the life and trial of Jesus Christ, as if to inquire of Jehovah.”

World War II resulted in Britain giving up her mandate over Palestine in 1946. In 1948 Israel declared themselves to be a nation, and were recognized by the United Nations -- the United States being the first of the participating nations to recognize Israel's sovereignty.

2:14. “O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” This was addressed to the Church, inspiring them, urging them to yield to the Lord.

2:15. “Take us the foxes the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.” This verse reveals the cause of the failure of the Church to heed the call of her Beloved. The foxes speak of the lusts of the flesh which would hinder our spiritual growth and fruit. The church at Corinth was a sample of all Christendom. In Paul's letters to them, he called them carnal and babes; not able to digest spiritual meat. that is the condition of the Church as a whole today. As the foxes spoil the vines, so the desires of the flesh, if not judged, would rob believers of their heavenly inheritance.....”they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” - Galatians 5:21.

2:16-17. “My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadow flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” There is another failure implied here and that is the divisions of Christendom. In I Corinthians 1, Paul said: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you.” But the Church has not heeded the Word of God; instead of the fivefold unity expressed in this verse, there have been divisions and more divisions. The word Bether means “divisions.” These conditions hinder the Church from

becoming the Bride of Christ. The entire Church was espoused to Christ according to Paul's teaching. Not all the Church is heeding the instructions necessary to prepare them for that high place. In Verse 16, she had said, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." That is true of the whole Church, because Christ is the Head of the Church which is His body. Nevertheless, the saints who will qualify as the Bride company will be only a part of the Body of Christ.

The Lord is never surprised in the failure of humanity. When one group fails, He simply reveals a little more of His infinite grace. Although the Church was not ready for translation in 1914, God was not defeated. Soon after the outpouring of the Spirit in these latter days, the Lord revived Paul's Gospel of the Grace of God, and especially the truth concerning the Bride of Christ. He has raised up teachers who still proclaim the whole counsel of God by expounding the epistles of Paul. It is only through the truth revealed to the Apostle Paul that this group will be called out, trained, qualified, and eventually be presented to the Lord, "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" - Ephesians 5:27.

In the last few verses of Chapter Two, we see the indifference of the Church to the call of her Lord. We see also the carnal conditions illustrated by the little foxes. Finally, she urges Him to give His attention to the divisions in Christendom, which is suggested by the mountains of "Bethel."

(To Be Continued)

GOD IS THERE

***When cherished hopes all crumble,
And prospects fade or fall;
Once sure feet slip and stumble,
Still God rules over all.
He lifts the heart of sorrow,
And wipes our tears away --
He sees the glad tomorrow
Beyond the sad today.
All things are for a reason --
Though set-backs pain us now,
They last but for a season;
For God will not allow
His loved ones to be tested
For more than they can bear -
In faith and trust be rested --
Where you are, God is there!***

-- Frank Roberts

GOD'S SUPERLATIVE GRACE

Lois Bannister

There are three degrees of comparison in the English language: positive, comparative and superlative, or as is often expressed: good, better and best. The dictionary gives these meanings for the word "superlative": supreme, paramount, preeminent, superior, transcendent, uppermost, best, greatest, finest, prime, choicest, unexcelled, matchless, unequalled, unrivaled, perfect. We can sum it up by just saying, God is inexpressible!

The New Testament was written in Greek, and the Greek language is much more descriptive, than our English tongue. Many times it helps us to understand things of the Scriptures. We thank God for dedicated scholars, men of God, who compiled the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and other Word Study Dictionaries. These are a great help to those of us who are not Greek scholars, and they enlighten us and give a better comprehension of the magnitude of God's plan and purpose for humanity.

God is the God of Redemption, which was planned in the past ages. His desire was to have many sons (Hebrews 2:10), and from them He purposed a Bride for His Son, as we learn from the writings of the Apostle Paul. "I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ" - II Corinthians 11:2. What a superlative plan!

"As it is written. Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them (or, took the cover off) to us through His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, yea the deep things of God. The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. Nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"- I Corinthians 2:10 -11, 14. Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, that you have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes (or those uncomplicated in mind)" Matthew 11:25.

John 3:34 tells us "God has not given the Spirit by measure (portion or degree)." There is no limit to what the Holy Spirit will reveal to us when we search the Scriptures with faith and open hearts to receive from Him. The unlimited God reveals

things to limited humans who are reaching out for more of Him.

“Much more the grace of God and the gift by grace has abounded unto many by one Man, Jesus Christ” - Romans 5:15. The root word in Greek for “Abounded” is “huper, or Huperballo,” meaning “over, above, more than, superior to, to super abound in quantity or quality; a throwing beyond others, highest possible degree.”

There are many kindred words expressing these thoughts in the following Scriptures: “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” - Romans 5:20. We can never begin to comprehend the horrendous weight of sin that Jesus bore that day at Calvary, the weight of sins of all mankind who ever lived or would live. How could anything be much more than that weight of sin He was bearing? Only God could provide the much more grace that enabled Him to endure the cross and finish the work He came to do. It was that abounding grace that brought Him out of the grave, the Eternal Head of the New Creation. Atonement was complete. God’s Plan was complete and nothing of His abundance of Grace will be lost. Grace did much more abound, meaning to “super abound, much more, a greater degree, exceed, superior to, for the sake of, over and above, more than, excel, indicating a surplus, above and beyond all calculations, abundant in quantity, superior in quality.”

What is Grace? I Peter 5:10 declares that He is the God of all Grace. The word “Grace” is mentioned over 100 times in the New Testament. It is “favor, good will, benefit, gift. Divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life.” It is a favor done without expectation of return; absolute free expression of the loving kindness of God to humanity. It is unearned and unmerited favor; it also means to pardon, rescue or deliver. When received by faith, grace transforms man and causes him to love and seek after the righteousness of God. God’s Grace is not only sufficient to provide forgiveness of sin and take away the guilt of sin, but also to take away the desire to sin. This is our sanctification, to deliver from a state of commonness and put us into a state corresponding to the very nature of God! “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory

of God” - Romans 5:1-2. Grace is our platform. This is where we stand.

Ephesians contains many wonderful Scriptures expressing some of the superlatives of God’s Grace. “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure (no limit) of the gift of Christ” - 4:7. How can we measure the Gift of Christ? “That in the ages to come He might show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” - 2:7. This verse is proof that we do not exhaust the learning experience in this life. God is too Great to be seen in His fullness in this life on earth. Our minds could not comprehend the vast Divine Nature of God. Who knows how far reaching His Power and Holiness are? We will continually learn more of Him as He reveals Himself throughout the ages. what glories await us! “He is able to do exceeding abundantly more than we ask or think (exceeding a number or measure which marks fullness, indicating excess)” 3:20. “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” - 4:13.

“We have this treasure (Christ) in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” - II Corinthians 4:7. “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” - II Corinthians 9:8. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich (a personal enrichment by appropriating Christ's principle of sacrifice)” (II Corinthians 8:9).

The Apostle Paul expressed so perfectly the power of Grace when He said, “My Grace is sufficient for you” (II Corinthians 12:7). He had experienced God’s grace so wonderfully that he begins and ends his epistles with blessings of God’s grace for all who believe. He said in his letter to Timothy, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief, and the Grace of our Lord was exceedingly

abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:12-14).

God paid the ultimate cost when He gave His Son to redeem humanity. Redemption cost Him everything - all that He wanted rested on Jesus that day on the Cross. God held back nothing in order to redeem us for His glory and honor. Through that cost He purchased the ultimate gift of the highest quality, a bride for His Son! Redemption is free to us, how then can we neglect so great salvation? "Great" here indicates magnitude, so vast, so great, so mighty, as He is. Titus 2:11 loudly proclaims "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Though all will not believe and appropriate the redemption provided, that does not lessen the efficacy of the shed blood and the super-abundant grace of God's all-inclusive provision. Not one little detail was left out of God's magnificent, superlative plan!

**When powers of sin assail, and enemies prevail,
And you long for peace and liberty;
Then look unto the Lord, 'tis written in His Word,
"His grace is sufficient for thee."
When the race is well-nigh run
When basking in the sun,
The effulgent light of heaven to see;
Then Jesus will praise, thru everlasting days,
"His Grace is sufficient for thee."
Grace wonderful grace
Great boundless and free
How its riches thrill my soul
And its glories o'er me roll
O, I'll shout from pole to pole
His grace is sufficient for thee.**

--Mary M Bodie

Happiness is the perfume you can't give to others without spilling on yourself.

The Bible should do more than inform us, it should transform us!

HEAVENLY GARMENTS

Robert Devost

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God: for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." —Isaiah 61:10

Most people like to be well-dressed. There used to be articles about the ten best dressed people in the U.S. There is an old saying that "clothes makes the man." There was a story about a struggling pastor, whose wife was addicted to buying new dresses, and as soon as she could scrape up a few dollars, she would go and put a down payment on a new dress, and since the pastor had a small church, he was on a tight budget. When he was dunned for the new dress, he would become furious with his wife, and reprimand her, and show her that her closet was full of dresses. She would tell him that she was really sorry, but that the devil knew her weakness and whenever she saw a new dress on display, she felt compelled to buy it. Her pastor-husband advised her that the next time she felt tempted, to tell the devil to "get thee behind me." A few days later, she saw a gorgeous dress in the store window and thought there would be no harm in just trying it on, and lo, and behold, she ended up charging it. When her husband got the bill for it, he almost had a stroke. He confronted her about it and her answer, again, was that the devil made her do it. He replied, "Didn't I tell you to rebuke the devil?" She said, "When I tried it on, it fit like a glove and I knew I shouldn't buy it, so I told the devil to "get thee behind me." He answered back and told me that it fitted me perfect in the back also; so I just had to get it."

It's all right to be well-dressed if we can afford it, but our goal should be to become a well-dressed citizen of heaven. As we begin our Christian walk, there is a taking off and a putting on. In Mark 10:46-52, there is the narrative of blind Bartimaeus, sitting along the highway begging. When he heard that Jesus was coming along the way, he cried out, "Thou son of David have mercy upon me." Jesus stood still, and the reason that He did, I believe, is that Jesus recognized

a cry of faith. Bartimaeus must have believed Him to be the Messiah, as he called Him the Son of David. When Jesus bade him to come to him, Verse 50 states that he threw away his garment. That seems to be strange, but that particular garment was one worn by the blind to signify their blindness. It would be equivalent to the white canes that the blind use today. This did not go unnoticed by Jesus, who said, "Thy faith has made thee whole." That garment also represented his old life, as Paul explains in II Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

In Luke 5:36, Jesus speaking a parable said, "No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old, if otherwise, then both the new make a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old." Then, He used an illustration of putting new wine into old bottles. Jesus was speaking of the old and new covenants, and that the new covenant of grace was going to replace the covenant of law. He knew that not many to whom He was speaking would respond to the new covenant of grace, replacing the law. He ends His parable by saying, "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith. The old is better." But, what is surprising is that in the light of Paul's epistles, many believers are still mixing the old wine with the new.

In Matthew 23:5, Jesus spoke to the scribes (the theologians of that day) and to the Pharisees about them enlarging the borders of their garments, in order to be noticed as religious men. Jesus also warned His disciples to beware of the scribes that liked to parade around in long robes. The scribes and Pharisees had their own dress code and to be dressed as they were, was not only a mark of religious piety, but one of prestige. How unlike Bartimaeus they were! They refused to shed their showy garments so they could come to Jesus.

In Colossians 3:12-14, Paul lists some of the heavenly garments that we should put on and wear: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity (LOVE), which is the bond of perfectness." Romans 13:14 exhorts us to

"put on Jesus Christ." Notice some prophetic Messianic verses in Isaiah 61:1-3. Note Verse 3: "to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Most of us could use some of these garments. Paul and Silas put on these garments while they were prisoners in a Philippian jail, and it worked wonders for them!

At the beginning of my Christian walk, Matthew 5:20 was somewhat frightening to me: "For I say unto you. That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." I had not yet learned the difference between man's holiness versus God's holiness. I read that these religious people fasted, paid tithes, said long prayers, abstained from worldly pleasures, washed their hands many times a day, kept the Sabbaths and feast days. Even their name, Pharisee, meant separated. They were the very holiest of Jesus' day. All this would have been an impossibility for me to keep. But Paul, who was himself a radical Pharisee, gave a personal list of these works, and called them all "dung" that he might win Christ. Philippians 3:4-9.

Isaiah was a mighty prophet of God. After one glimpse God's holiness, he called himself a man of unclean lips, and that all his righteousness was as filthy rags (64:6). There is an interesting story in Zechariah 3, concerning Joshua the high priest. Evidently he had been bound by Satan at one time, because the Lord rebuked the devil and pointing to Joshua, said, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" He instructed those who stood by Joshua to "Take away the filthy garments from him . . . and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Verse 5 states that he was given a complete change of raiment. The old garments of Joshua were filthy because they were fleshly ones. Paul states the same thing about himself in Romans 7:18. "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing." Solomon had the best that this world could offer, but the Lord said that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as the lilies were.

God gave instructions to Israel about their garments, which gave birth to teaching concerning heavenly garments. "thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and linen together." When I first read that, I was puzzled for some time. I went to bed still pondering, but when I awoke the

next morning the Scripture came to mind - "But the anointing which ye have received of me abideth in you, and ye need not that any man should teach you, but the same anointing teaches you all things, and is truth, and is no lie." (1 John 2:27). Exodus 28 gives the wardrobe of the high priest. In Leviticus 16:4, they are referred to as holy garments, and were designed by the Lord Himself. They were all linen. Now, why linen? For the answer, read Ezekiel 44:17-18: "And it shall come to pass that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments, and no wool shall come upon them, while they minister in the gate of the inner court, and within they shall have linen bonnets upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat." An illustration of this is found in Genesis 4. Cain was offering that he had labored for and had harvested, but God rejected it. To the natural man, this doesn't seem fair. His offering was the result of a lot of back-breaking labor, but remember that the ground had been cursed. He had probably been working all day, causing a lot of sweating, and brought the offering without being clean. Of course, Cain and Abel represent the offering of works and that of faith.

The first hymn I sang in church was "Rock of Ages." One of the verses says, "Nothing in my hands I bring - but simply to Thy Cross I cling." Another verse has, "Not the labors of my hands, can fulfill thy law's demands." Paul sums it all up in Ephesians 2:7-8: For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the Gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Wearing wool causes sweating. Wool is the product of sheep, and Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray." Sheep have no sense of direction, that is why they need a shepherd. Natural man has no sense of spiritual direction and needs the Holy Spirit. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God." Wool speaks of man's holiness, while linen speaks of God's holiness.

Jesus often spoke in parables because it was so that his disciples would know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. What gets to me is how some people take parables and make facts out of them, while on the other hand, they take plain facts and make parables out of them. I would classify a parable as a story with a heavenly meaning. With this in mind, read the parable in Matthew 22, which is about a king who

gave out marriage invitations for his son's wedding. There was one guest who came, not properly dressed for the occasion, and was thrown out. Notice how the king addressed him: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." Remember, this is only a parable, because in reality no one who is not dressed in wedding garments will even be at the heavenly marriage of the Lamb. "Friend," signifies the one who has been favorable to the Gospel, but as Paul states in Hebrews, "How shall we escape, if we neglect - not "reject" - so great salvation?" This one had never really accepted the Lord, but thought his "clothes" were all right. Satan is an expert wool clothier. He can dress you up as sharp as a tack, so that every dead and lukewarm church would be proud to have you as a member.

When can we know if we are wearing true holiness? Listen to Paul: "That ye put off concerning the former manner of life, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness...." - Ephesians 4:22-32.

THE PEACE OF GOD

*May the peace of God which comes from Christ,
Rule in your hearts today;
May it act as umpire in our minds,
Taking all our doubts away.
World events are still in His control,
Though well beyond our ken,
When the nations publish their own rules
Based on the thoughts of men.*

*In these desperate days, when problems arise,
And questions will not cease,
If our thoughts turn often to the Lord,
He will answer and give peace;
And if minds are stayed or fixed on God,
We need not trust in chance,
For the peace of God is our portion still
In the darkest circumstance.*

-- Frank Roberts

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From the book of Ephesians

Dave Albrecht

Consider a personalized look at what God has provided for believers. He has blessed me with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Ch. 1:3 He chose me in Him before the foundation of the world. Ch. 1:4 He predestined me to adoption to Himself by Jesus Christ. Ch. 1:5 He made me accepted in the Beloved. Ch. 1:6 I am redeemed through Jesus blood. Ch. 1:7 He forgave my sins. Ch.1:7 He has made known to me the mystery of His will. Ch. 1:9 He promised me an inheritance. Ch. 1:13&14 My heavenly Father gives me the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Ch. 1: 17 He opens the eyes of my understanding - He enlightens me. Ch. 1:18 He gives me knowledge of the hope of His calling. Ch. 1:18 He gives me knowledge of the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Ch. 1:18 And He gives me knowledge of the exceeding greatness of His power toward me as a believer. Ch. 1:19 When I was dead in trespasses and sins - He made me alive. Ch. 2:1 His mercy toward me was rich. Ch. 2:4 His love toward me is great. Ch. 2:4 Even though I was dead, He made me alive together with Christ. Ch. 2:5 He raised me up together with Jesus. Ch. 2:6 And He has seated me with Christ Jesus in the heavenly places. Ch. 2:6 In the ages to come He will continue to exhibit His grace and His kindness toward me in Christ Jesus. Ch. 2:7 He saved me by His grace. Ch. 2:8 And He gave me the faith to receive it. Ch. 2:8 I am His workmanship! Ch. 2:10 He created good works for me to walk in. Ch. 2:10 When I was helpless and hopeless, He gave me hope - He made a way where there was no way. Ch. 2:12 When I was far from God, He brought me near to Himself by the blood of Jesus. Ch. 2:13 Jesus, Himself, is my source of peace. Ch. 2:14 I am no longer a stranger and foreigner; He made me a citizen and a saint. Ch. 2: 19 He made me a member of His own household. Ch. 2: 19 Through faith in Christ Jesus, I have boldness and access with confidence to my heavenly Father. Ch. 3:11&12 He has granted that I would be strengthened with might through His

Spirit in the inner man. Ch. 3:16 He enables me to understand the dimensions and experience the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Ch. 3:18,19 God's power is working in me. Ch. 3:20 Jesus descended to earth for my benefit. Ch. 4:9 He ascended, as well, for my benefit. Ch. 4:10 He has given various gifted people to the body for me - that I might be equipped. Ch. 4:12 He is bringing me unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of His son. Ch. 4:13 He is perfecting me! Ch. 4:13 He is bringing me into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Ch. 4:13 He will help me with my walk. Ch. 4:17 He will help me with my conduct. Ch. 4:22 He will help me not to lie, be angry or steal. Ch. 4:25,26 & 28 He will help me be kind, tender hearted and forgiving. Ch. 4:32 Once I was darkness, but now I am **light** in the Lord - because of Him. Ch 5:8 When I bear fruit of the Spirit it is because of Him. Ch. 5:9 He gave me a psalm to speak and a song to sing. Ch. 5:19 He makes me thankful. Ch. 5:20 Because of God, I can submit. Ch. 5:21 Because of God. I am able to love. Ch. 5:25 He rewards me for doing good. Ch. 6:8 He will strengthen me in the power of His might. Ch. 6:10 He has provided me sufficient armor to stand against the enemy in the evil day, namely: His truth, His righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God and prayer. Ch. 6:11-18 His peace is to me! Ch. 6:23 And His grace is with me, Amen! Ch. 6:24

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*For all things beautiful, and good, and true;  
For things that seemed not good yet turned to good;  
For all the sweet compulsions of Thy will  
That chased, and tried, and wrought us to Thy shape.  
And value first when they are withheld;  
For light and air; sweet sense of sound and smell;  
For ears to hear the heavenly harmonies;  
For eyes to see the unseen in the seen;  
For vision of the Worker in the work;  
For hearts to apprehend Thee everywhere --  
We thank Thee, Lord!*

*--John Oxenham*

