

# MORNING WATCH

A HERALD OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE, AS BRIDEGROOM, REAPER AND KING!

September 2010

[www.biblestudents.net](http://www.biblestudents.net)

## GOD'S KINGDOM

*"Of those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist, but the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he"—Luke 7:28*

There can be no better illustration of the sharp line of distinction between the earthly and the heavenly classes and their calling than is shown by our text. The great Teacher freely attested to the loyalty and courage and saintliness of His cousin John, as evidenced by the words of our text. But if so great and honorable a Prophet, why could not John be a member of the Bride class? Why could he not be numbered with the disciples of Jesus and be an Apostle, or at least a footstep follower? The answer is that he was not called to the heavenly plane, but to the earthly. He was honored of God in being made one of the Prophets of the Jewish Age—the last of them. Although a different honor from that conferred upon the Apostles, John's was a great honor, and we have reason to believe that, under Divine providence, when perfected in the resurrection, he will appreciate the earthly blessings and privileges which will be his, more than the spiritual and heavenly privileges bestowed upon the Apostles and the less prominent members of the Church.

The Lord "will choose our inheritance for us," we read (Psa. 47:4). Happy are those who repose implicit confidence in Divine goodness and who seek to obtain whatever may be God's choice for them. If we have been called with the heavenly calling, let us not shrink back and declare ourselves unworthy and decline to accept the favors of God and to choose an inferior position. Let us, rather,

be glad to say, Thy will be done in my heart, in my life, in all my future. "Order Thou my steps in Thy Word."

### A FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM

Jesus had a two-fold mission:—  
(1) He came "that the world through Him might be saved"—that He might give Himself "a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. 2:6).  
(2) Incidentally His mission was to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord—the time in which God is willing to accept the sacrifices of such as desire to walk in the Redeemer's footsteps, and to constitute these the Bride and Joint-heir of Messiah.

John the Baptist referred to the latter feature of our Lord's work, saying, He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom heareth His voice and rejoiceth greatly. This, my joy, therefore, is fulfilled (John 3:29). It was not for him to be a member of the Bride, but he rejoiced to be a friend of the Bridegroom. As our Lord's forerunner he announced the Bridegroom; he called upon the nation of Israel to turn from sin, to purify their hearts, to come back into harmony with God and thus to be prepared to receive the Bridegroom and to become the Bride. So far as the nation was concerned John's mission was a failure, as God had foreknown and foretold. but so far as the Bride class was concerned John's mis-

sion was a success, for, as the Scriptures intimate, those who believed John's testimony accepted Jesus and He accepted them.

### **GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM**

We must remember that the Church is the Kingdom of God—now in a formative or embryotic state, but in the end, by "the resurrection," to be spirit beings and partakers with Jesus, their Bridegroom, in His wonderful glory, honor, immortality and Kingdom work. This Kingdom class is not reigning now, but merely forming. It is joined "on probation," after the Methodist style. If the probationary period of the present life be faithfully used, the full induction into the Kingdom, its glories, honors and immortality, will surely follow—by participation in the First Resurrection.

Amongst the faithful followers of the Master there will be differences, as St. Paul explains, "as one star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Cor. 15:41). We cannot know, and it is not necessary for us to guess, who shall occupy the chief places in the Kingdom. These shall be given to those whom the Father prefers, as the Redeemer explained to the woman who asked that her two sons might sit, one on His right hand and the other on His left hand in the Kingdom (Matt. 20:21).

If we were to guess who shall be closest in position to the Master we would suppose that St. Paul would be first, with St. John, St. Peter and St. James near by in glorious excellence. And yet we know not how nearly up to the Apostolic standard some may be who have lived very humble and obscure lives, have fought a good fight and finished their course with joy. Indeed, the twelve Apostles seem to occupy, by Divine decision in advance, the very highest stations in the Kingdom, next to that of the Redeemer, Who said of them, "Ye who have followed Me, in the regeneration . . . shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). Again, they are pictured to us as the "crown of twelve stars" to the Church in her future glory, and again they are pictured to us as the twelve precious foundation stones of the Church in future glory, as the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14).

Those called of God to this high salvation, as members of the spiritual Kingdom which shall bless natural Israel and through her all the nations, are required to demonstrate their loyalty to God by faithfulness even unto death—in the narrow way of self-sacrifice. As there is no other name than that of Jesus whereby any may be saved to eternal life, so, likewise, there is no other path whereby any may reach the Kingdom except the narrow way, "and few there be that find it." All who attain to the Kingdom must be overcomers of the world to the extent of self-sacrifice. The gradations of glory will be because of special manifestations of zeal for the Lord and His cause of righteousness and Truth against sin and error.

### **A LESSER SPIRITUAL SALVATION**

The Scriptures clearly show another class in process of salvation during this Gospel Age, quite separate and distinct from the Bride class. These are referred to in various parts of the Scriptures. They will all be loyal, to the extent that they would not deny the Lord nor wilfully practice sin. Their failure to reach the status of the Bride is indicated in an insufficiency of zeal in connection with their loyalty. This class is described in Rev. 7:14. They are represented as having failed to keep their garments unspotted from the world—failed to live circumspectly, carefully enough.

Hence in a great time of trouble in the end of this Age these are represented as washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb and then coming up through that tribulation to glory and honor, but not to immortality, nor to the same degree of glory and honor as the Church, the Bride. The distinction in their glory is indicated in that instead of being in the Throne they are before it; instead of being the Bride, they will serve; instead of wearing the crown, they will bear palm branches; instead of being the Temple, they will be servants in the Temple.

This same class is referred to by the Apostle in his declaration respecting the end of this Age. He intimates that some will have an abundant entrance (2 Pet. 1:11) into the Kingdom, while others will be "saved so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). The fire of this

Day will test every man's work of what sort it is. Some will be proved to be gold, silver, precious stones. These the "fire" will not consume. Others will be proved to be an admixture of hay and stubble, which will be consumed, though themselves will be saved so as by fire (1 Cor. 3:12,13).

The tribe of Levi pictured the entire "Church of the First-born," but it contained two classes—the "little flock" of priests and the "great company" of Levites—the Bride class and the servant class, none of whom have any inheritance in the earth, all of whom have the heavenly inheritance.

As Isaac typified our Lord, the Redeemer, and as Rebecca typified the Bride class, so Rebecca's maidens typified this "great company" class. This same thought is brought to our attention in Psa. 45, where the Bride class is pictured as being presented to Jehovah in the end of this Age in glory, honor and immortality, illustrated by raiment of fine needlework and gold. Following the Bride come "the virgins, her companions, who follow her." These also will be greatly honored, greatly blessed, though theirs will be a lesser honor. This "great company" will not constitute the Kingdom, although they will be identified with it and its wonderful salvation and blessing for mankind.

### **KEEPING OR BREAKING COMMANDMENTS**

The great Teacher's declaration that they who break God's commandments and teach others so to do shall be called "least in the Kingdom" has caused considerable perplexity in the past. The question has been, How could anyone be fit at all for the Kingdom who breaks God's commandments and teaches others so to do? The answer is that many of God's people have labored under more or less of blindness and have done things which they ought not to have done and left undone the things which they ought to have done. As an illustration, John Calvin, noble man as he was, burned his Christian brother, Servetus. Such violation of the Divine commands and such wrong teaching must, according to our human judgment, assign Brother Calvin to a lesser place in the Kingdom than if he had more carefully, more earnestly sought the will and Spirit of God. However, it is

not for us to judge. We are merely seeking to ascertain the spirit of our Lord's words.

Begotten of the Holy Spirit and privileged of the Lord to be disciples and to be guided of the Holy Spirit, we should be so faithful in the study of the Scriptures as not to be mistaken in respect to the general application of their meaning. Wrong practice and false teachings do not always represent disloyalty to God, but they surely do always represent slackness or inattention to the Divine message; though we may be sure of the Lord's faithfulness in enlightening all who are of the proper, teachable spirit.

### **JOHN THE BAPTIST CLASS**

To what class does John the Baptist belong, and what will be his share in the Kingdom, according to our text? Since the call of God began with the call of the Church, and since the Church began at the First Advent of Jesus, it follows that no one was called of God to salvation prior to Jesus' time—none for forty-one hundred and fifty years after sin entered the world.

God did, however, recognize the loyalty of heart of His Prophet Enoch and communed with him and blessed him, etc. God also recognized Abraham's faith and spirit of obedience, and Isaac's and Jacob's, and that of Moses and Aaron and numerous prophets and other faithful ones less notable. Did He not call these? We answer that He did not call them to salvation, for no salvation could be positively offered until the Redeemer had sacrificed; nor were they called to the Kingdom, for the same reason, God did tell them that in due time He would bless all the world. He did tell them that in due time the great Ruler of the world would come forth from Abraham's posterity in the line of Isaac and Jacob and the nation of Israel. But telling them of a coming blessing and giving them eternal life are different matters. St. Paul declares that none of them got everlasting life, and that "by the deeds of the Law no flesh can be justified before God."

Israel's Law Covenant served to instruct the Chosen People. It was a call to do right, and a promise

of eternal life if they would keep the Law. "He that doeth these things shall live." Israel learned the lesson that a perfect Law could not be kept by imperfect beings. Some of them and some of the Gentiles in due time heard of Jesus and how God has provided justification through His sacrificial death.

### **SOME BETTER THING FOR THE CHURCH THAN FOR ANCIENT WORTHIES**

St. Paul tells us the status of those noble characters, of whom John the Baptist was the last. They were volunteer servants of God, so to speak. Those of them who were born under the Law Covenant, by their faith lived above it and will be fully rewarded, although they lived before any specific call or offer of eternal life was made. Their faith and obedience were pleasing to God; as St. Paul relates, "All these died in faith, not having received the things promised (them), God having provided some better thing for us (the Gospel Church), that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:13,40).

"The Church of the First-born" is to be perfected first, and on the spirit plane, "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). In due time those Ancient Worthies will come forth from the tomb to receive the blessing which God declares shall be the reward of their loyalty. As the Church will have the "better resurrection" on the spirit plane, so those Ancient Worthies will have the "better resurrection" on the earthly plane. They will come forth from the tomb actually perfect, while the remainder of mankind will be obliged to attain perfection by the slow process of faith, works, obedience, during the thousand years of the Kingdom.

### **ANCIENT WORTHIES WILL BE PRINCES IN ALL THE EARTH**

Moreover, those Ancient Worthies, while not members of the Kingdom, per se, which will be spiritual, will be members of that Kingdom in its earthly phase. They will be the Kingdom's earthly representatives, princes or rulers, in all the earth, as the Scriptures declare (Psa. 45:16). We remember the words of Jesus to this effect: "Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the Prophets in the Kingdom," but He said not a word about Himself or His disciples being seen; properly so, because they, as spirit beings,

will be invisible to men.

The Scriptures still further intimate that during the thousand years of Messiah's reign, all the faithful of mankind, all the obedient, will be privileged to come into relationship with the King. This is figuratively represented in the statement that the great ones of the earth "will bring their glory and honor into the New Jerusalem."

With such glorious hopes before us, with such appreciation of our Heavenly Father's glorious character and wonderful Plan, with such a grand view of our Savior's work, with such a hope of a share with Him in His Kingdom, what manner of persons ought we to be in holy living and godliness! Nor should it be thought strange that any of the spirit-begotten now, or the restored of the future, who would turn their backs upon the gracious provisions made for their salvation, would be considered unworthy of further favor or blessing at the hands of God and should die the Second Death—annihilation. As Paul says they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power (2 Thess. 1:9).

Soon the disciples of the Master will be one with Him beyond the veil, sharers of His glory and Kingdom. Then will come the time when the world will believe. The knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth and all the blinding and stumbling influences of the present will be at an end. The Savior will then exercise His power on behalf of the world, overthrowing evil and uplifting every good principle and all who love righteousness, and destroying those who would corrupt the earth.—Rev. 11:18

#### **MORNING WATCH E-NEWSLETTER**

*THE MORNING WATCH* is published by BIBLE STUDENT MINISTRIES and sent freely to all who desire to receive it. Copies are sent via e-mail in pdf format. To be added to our mailing list please write to: [webservant@biblestudents.net](mailto:webservant@biblestudents.net)