# Luke - Commentaries by Charles Stanley

The Wanderers Restored: Jesus in the Midst, Wanderers Restored, The

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There can be no doubt that the last days of difficulty and perplexity are present realities. You meet a friend, and almost the first word is, “What a state of confusion everything is in!” His face as well as words seem to say, Everything is gone. Some have been expecting the universal spread of Christianity and the conversion of the world; others, who have long seen the unscripturalness of such a thought, have been expecting there may be some great display of the church in its unity on earth. Instead, they find division and sorrow, through the perversity and obstinacy of men. Such become greatly discouraged and have real sadness of heart.

Thus, if we turn to Luke 24, we shall find a picture of the things that are happening in our very days. We know the church, or assembly, was not yet formed, for the Holy Spirit had not yet come to form it. But the company then gathered at Jerusalem was the very company which was afterward baptized by the Holy Spirit when the church began.

We find, then, two of them with their backs on Jerusalem — on the assembly there — and their faces toward Emmaus. They were not going far away — about six miles. Now what was their condition or state of mind? They were occupied with the things that had happened. Intellect was at work, and they reasoned. There does not appear to be any willfulness or stubbornness in their conduct, but they were very sad of heart and sorely perplexed.

Let us remember they were of the company at Jerusalem, but not in their place. They were walking away, as if all were over and lost. Things had turned out very different from what they had expected, and they were sadly disappointed. Is not this a picture of many in this day? They are of the church of God, the assembly; they are members of the body of Christ, but as to their position, they are so sad, by reasoning about the things that have happened, that, though of it (“two of them”), yet they are walking with their backs to the assembly and their faces toward Emmaus. Did the Lord forget these two wanderers, as they talked together of all these things which had happened? No; it was while they thus communed and reasoned Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. Now what is really the matter with souls in this state is just as it was with them: “Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.”

How tenderly He inquires of their sadness! Does He not feel the same now? Is His love changed? May we not say, “Oh teach me more of Thy blest ways”? There was little intelligence in them, and their faith in His resurrection was very weak. How tenderly He listens to every word! One thing He did rebuke was their slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken! “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” And may not the wandering, sad hearts be rebuked in this matter now? Oh, for the tender love of Christ to open up the Scriptures and show that not a single thing is now happening that has not been foretold in Scripture. Yes, all our disappointment and sadness of heart arise from not knowing the Scriptures. They were ignorant of the Scriptures, and they knew not Him.

And now they want to turn in and settle down for the night — a little independent company, or, if you please, individuals away from the assembly. Oh, the love that could not give them up! Though He showed His disapproval of their step, He opened to them the Scriptures, and their hearts did burn, though as yet their eyes were closed. But what a change when their eyes were opened and they knew Him! “They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.” What a picture! While our souls are in that moral state not to know the Lord in the midst of the assembly, our backs are sure to be turned to Jerusalem. And the moment we truly know Him, the face is immediately turned toward the assembly. Wonderfully does this picture illustrate the condition of many of the children of God at this time. Doubtless many are sad of heart and sorely perplexed with all the things that have happened who never yet knew the sanctuary of deliverance revealed in this scripture. They reason in vain; their thoughts turn to convocations, alterations in ecclesiastical law, and questions of so-called church and state. They are distracted with discord, jarrings and divisions on every hand but are as blind to the true deliverance from these tumults as these two sad hearts were blind to the One who so gently opened unto them the Scriptures.

Others who have walked with Him have been turned aside — not only those who, in willfulness, have sought to lead disciples after them (Acts 20:30), but such as have, like these two sad hearts, been so occupied with men and things that they have lost the power of discerning the Person and mind of the Lord. Oh, that such might dwell on the love of the Lord to these two wanderers! Would He not take us to the Scriptures and show us that all that has happened was foretold? Ah, He would not merely make our hearts burn by His own precious ministry, but He would open our eyes to know Himself. And we cannot know Him without becoming attracted to the assembly, His body. Is there anything on this earth so dear to the heart of Christ as His church? Does not the Spirit of God move our hearts to arise and go back to the assembly?

Oh, meditate on that infinite love to the church, and we will soon find ourselves on the way back. We cannot know Him without loving that which He loves. There may be little intelligence, yet we shall soon find ourselves where He delights to reveal Himself.

And soon they arrive at Jerusalem. Weariness and sadness and disappointment are all left at Emmaus — all uncertainty is now gone. “The Lord is risen indeed” is the certainty they find in the company gathered together. And the two returned ones are ready to tell their story of deliverance from sadness and disappointment, “how He was known of them in breaking of bread.” Is it not sweet also in our day to have returning ones tell the story of restoring love? This touched the heart of Jesus: “And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” Surely this was as superior to the earthly sanctuary, the worldly temple, with its priesthood and ritual, as heaven is to earth.

Have we been gathered to Christ, the Holy and the True? And are those who had wandered in sadness, a little way from the assembly ground of the twos or threes gathered together unto His name, being now restored by Him? Is it still true that, apart from all worldly sanctuaries, human priesthoods and carnal ordinances, set up of man, Jesus Himself is in the midst of those gathered to Him? And does He still speak those precious words to those so gathered, “Peace be unto you”? Can we not hear, above the roaring tempest of human discord, those tender words, the very voice we know, “It is I; be not afraid” (Mark 6:50)?

It is indeed very blessed when He first speaks peace to the conscience through His precious blood: “It is finished”; “peace be unto you.” Eternity will never unfold the infinite debt of love we owe to Him for this character of peace.

But let us see Him and hear Him in the midst of the company gathered in the upper room. Ah, they were even afraid of the religious world outside, so the doors were shut. What a contrast with that religious world! It had antiquity and everything to please the ear and the eye. Shall we say they, the little company, had nothing but Jesus? The fullness of the Godhead stood bodily in their midst risen from the dead — the Head and the beginning of the new creation. Where are we: with the religious world or with Jesus Himself? He speaks in the midst of those gathered to Himself. Truly He is not now present in body. But is He not as really present in Spirit? They were afraid. Yes, though it is unspeakably blessed, yet it is an awful moment when the soul is first separated from earthly religion and brought into the very presence of the risen Lord. He says, “Peace be unto you.” What pen or tongue can tell the wondrous peace His presence and His words give in the midst of those truly gathered to Himself ? It is peace in every sense, both to conscience and heart.

Now since He is risen, since He is present, since He says, “Peace,” how searching the question He put to them and to us! “Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?” Troubled ones, what do we answer to the Lord? Why are we troubled? Do we say, We are troubled about our sins? He has borne them on the cross; He shows us His hands and His side. Do we say, We are troubled about the confusions and divisions in the professing church? But, He says “peace” in the midst of those gathered to Himself. Nothing can ever break that peace. All the things that trouble us vanish in His dear presence. No need of convocations to legislate or decide in His blest presence. No need of altered prayer books or learned doctors there — oh, the simplicity, the reality of His presence! But no man can come there truly to Him, unless the Father draws him. It is hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes, and from every stormy wind that blows, He gives perfect rest. “Peace be unto you.” Satan’s greatest effort is to keep souls from being gathered thus to Christ. It may be asked, But has not Christ now gone up to heaven? Quite true, and has not the Father sent down the Holy Spirit? He abides with us to the end. How little this is believed!

And it may be asked, But is it not all over now? Have not difficulties arisen, and is not this blessed testimony to the Person of Christ all lost? Oh, beware of staying too long at Emmaus. What is lost? Is not Jesus Himself as truly present in Spirit now as at the very moment He was bodily present in the upper room? Is not the unspeakable peace of His presence just the same? Is not the Holy Spirit as truly present to take of the things of Christ as at the beginning? Why then are we troubled? Difficulties may arise — they have arisen. There are no difficulties where His presence is owned. Disown His presence, and we have human intellect only!

There is always danger in reasoning about the things that have happened. These two had the letter of Scripture for expecting the setting up of the kingdom. They had not spiritual discernment of the times and hence were greatly disappointed. Some have trusted and expected the testimony to be something to be seen in the world, but if we have the mind of the Spirit, what can we expect beyond the sure promise of the Lord? “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). It was not at Emmaus that He said, “Peace be unto you,” but in the midst of the little company gathered together at Jerusalem — the foreshadowed assembly. Yes, all is perfect peace in His presence, while all is perplexity and sadness with those who have turned their backs on the assembly.

May the Lord teach us more of His blest ways in seeking the sad hearts who have wandered to Emmaus. And may He ever keep us satisfied with Himself.

Some Papers on the Second Coming of Christ and on Prophecy, Part 1 - Questions of Interest Relating to the Coming of Christ and His Reign on Earth

We have noticed lately, as the coming of Christ draws nearer and nearer, that many Christians who have spent years in complete darkness on these subjects, are being stirred up to serious inquiry. Take the following extract from a letter before me: “I now wish for a little more light on the church during the millennial reign. You say in harmony with Joel that Christ will come to this earth and gather the living nations for judgment. Will Christ, in administering judgment, and the after blessing, be on this earth during His one thousand years’ reign? In your tract on the millennial reign, page 9, you imply that the saints will look down upon this earth. If so, how will the church be reigning with Christ? Will not the church be helping to administer in the government of the earth during the millennial reign, in harmony with the parable of the ten pounds in Luke 19:17, ‘Have thou authority over ten cities’; and so with the five pounds?” Let us turn to the scriptures for answers to these questions — questions evidently on the minds of great numbers of Christians. It will be important to notice what we find in the Old Testament as to God’s purpose of blessing to this earth, centering in the people of Israel. “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance” (Deut. 32:8-9). “Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words” (Deut. 33:3). These and all the words of Jehovah shall be fulfilled to them, His chosen nation.

The Psalms are largely occupied with the sufferings of their Messiah, and the sufferings of the remnant of Israel. And after the sufferings, the reign of Christ, Jehovah, Messiah. In Psalms 2 the kings and rulers of the earth take counsel against Him, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” He asks for the inheritance of the earth for judgment, but asks not for it during the period of the church being gathered. See John 17:9.

We thus learn that the millennial reign will be brought about, not by the gospel, but by judgments. Then in Psalms 8 we have a greatly enlarged view of the millennial glory Christ, “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens.” And though there is not one word in this Psalm about the church, yet the Spirit in Paul refers to it, as applicable to the great truth of Christ the Head of the church: “And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His

body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:19-23). The apostle does not go on to quote Psalms 8:7, 8. He carefully distinguishes between the celestial and terrestrial glory of the kingdom. We must keep this distinction before us in our inquiry: the glory above the heavens; and His kingdom and glory on the earth.

If you now read Psalms 72, you will have no difficulty in seeing that this is entirely the theme of the earthly dominion of Jesus, as Israel's Messiah. But over the whole earth, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (vs. 8). The Psalms will become a deeply interesting study if we read them as referring to God's future dealings with His ancient people. "In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion" (Psalms 76:1-2). We are told expressly that it is Israel that is before the mind of the Lord in the prophecy of Isaiah: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:1). No doubt the Holy Ghost often uses these precious chapters to the Christian. Indeed, as in the Psalms, we see a far wider range of the glories of Jehovah Jesus, than only as the Messiah of Israel, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever" (Isaiah 9:6-7). That child, who is the mighty God, has been born, and rejected by Israel. Yet He must be established on the throne of David, according to these words of God. True, there is no statement as to His being on the earth, or the church with Him during the one thousand years.

That in Isaiah 11, which gives a very full description of His millennial kingdom, is all on earth. And the same judgment as is named in Psalms 2:9 is shown to be the prelude to the millennial kingdom. "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth (vs. 4). Then the peaceful millennium, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Israel and Judah are gathered from the ends of the earth. Yet there is no evidence again of the residence of the Messiah during the one thousand years. No doubt there is a reason for this, and that reason will yet be plain to us, as we go on. Yet He is in the midst. "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee" (Isa. 12:6). "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Read Isaiah 25:6-9). Precious also are the promises to Israel in Isaiah 52, and then the atoning death of the Lord Jesus in Isaiah 53, and the blessing as the result in Isaiah 54, and when iniquity has come to the full, Isaiah 59, then the Redeemer shall come to Zion (vs. 20). As Paul also quotes in Romans 11, when the time of the kingdom and glory is come to Israel: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." But still not one word as to the church being on the earth with Christ. (Isa. 60:1).

Let us read Isaiah 61 carefully. We know that verse 1 and half of verse 2, as quoted by the Lord in Luke 4, refers to His presence then on earth. And though as to His body He is now above all heavens, yet all through this period of the church He still continues through His gifts to proclaim here the acceptable year of the Lord. It is actually the jubilee up to this moment. He is still proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Now read Isaiah 61:3 to end of chapter 62. What wonderful blessing for Zion, Jerusalem, and Israel, and the Gentiles during the millennium! But no statement as to the church. Indeed it was hid (in God, not in the OT Scriptures), as we are told in Ephesians 3.

Many details are given as to how all this will be brought about in Isaiah 66:8-22. All nations shall come up to Jerusalem to worship. The reign of Messiah is also foretold in Jeremiah 23:5-7: "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely." And there can be no doubt to those who believe the Word of God, that all this shall be fulfilled.

In the prophet Ezekiel we have some most remarkable details as to the millennial kingdom. The wondrous grace of God to Israel, Ezekiel 37:23-28. We learn here that (a scion of the house of) David will have the place of king and prince in the millennial kingdom. "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. Then after the destruction of their great enemy of the north in Ezekiel 38 and 39, we have the description of the millennial temple in Ezekiel 40-47. Yet there is no special reference to Messiah having His residence, or bodily presence, in this temple. In other words, there is nothing to indicate that this temple is the center of Christ's throne or reign. The prince of Ezekiel 46 must not be mistaken for Christ; verse 2 could not be true of Christ; "He shall worship at the threshold of the gate." Daniel says: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days." And the glory of the terrestrial kingdom is given to Him (Daniel 7:14). The same kingdom and dominion is also given to the saints of the Most High (vs. 27).

In Micah also very distinctly is it foretold that that blessed One, who was born in Bethlehem and has been taken up to the Father in heaven, is to be ruler in Israel, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity" (margin). In Zephaniah 3 after the judgment (vs. 8), comes the glorious reign: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." So, in Zechariah again, after the judgment comes the reign of Messiah. "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives" (Zech. 14:4). "And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee... and the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one" (Zech. 14:5). How great is the blessing reserved for the remnant of Israel, who shall be saved as objects of mercy. The earthly supremacy shall surely be theirs, and theirs the earthly glory with Jesus, when He shall be King over all the earth. Yet we must admit there is nothing in the Old Testament that implies that the supreme place of the throne of Jesus, Lord of all, will be on this earth, or that it will be the dwelling place of Himself and the church His bride. While it is as clearly revealed that Israel will have a place of wondrous dominion and glory in their land, when we come to the New Testament's fuller revelation of the purposes of God, we shall then see the perfect harmony of all Scripture as to the coming reign of Christ. Before we do that, the reader would do well to turn and compare the whole scope of promise and prophecy in the Old Testament. Study carefully the context of the scriptures referred to in this short paper. Do not forget that the Holy Spirit means what He says. When He speaks of Israel or Jerusalem, He means Israel and Jerusalem, and not the church.

This world's cup of iniquity and apostasy is fast filling up. How rapid the increase of worldly pleasures and amusements, infidelity and superstition, and the nations preparing for mutual slaughter. Soon He will come. He says, "I come quickly." All this makes our inquiry, the millennial reign of Christ, deeply interesting. Let us then look in the next place at the teaching of the New Testament.

Things New and Old: Volume 28, Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10.

When riches are trusted in they are a terrible hindrance. “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” Jesus Himself has given us a picture of the awful surprise of a rich man who had lived in luxury with every earthly comfort, when he died. “And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.” What a change! How many are hasting on to that awful surprise.

Here was a little rich man who lived at Jericho, the place of a curse. Now it is well to remember that this world is still the place of a curse—it is still Jericho. And whether it is the poor blind beggar, or the rich publican, or tax-gatherer, sin and the curse are here, and death is here. And neither poverty nor riches can remove one or the other. It is difficult to get the gospel before the rich, but if one should read this, who is unsaved, let him ask himself this question, “With all my earthly comforts, is not this world a very Jericho?” Oh, the sting and curse of sin! That sting is as dreadful in the mansion as in the cottage. And every day brings you nearer to the end of it all, and then the sad surprise of that flame of torment—unending torment. And all these undeniable facts on the very testimony of the word of God.

Well, there was nothing in the riches of Jericho that could satisfy the little rich man. He was chief of the tax-gatherers, and he was rich, but this did not satisfy the desires of his heart. There was a crowd, a press of people, but to merely mingle amongst that crowd would not satisfy the desire implanted in his heart. That crowd was around Jesus, but that crowd could not meet the yearning of his heart, or the need of his conscience.

Are you satisfied with riches? If that were possible, how sad it would be, with the surprise of hell before you. Are you satisfied with the crowd of profession about Jesus? Do you say, I am in the great fashionable crowd established by law; or, I am in the opposite crowd of dissent? Does this satisfy you? Unhappy, deceived man if it does. A different desire took possession of the soul of Zaccheus.

“And he sought to see Jesus.”

Is this, has it ever been, the longing; desire of your heart, to see Jesus? The only Jehovah-Savior Jesus—the living Jesus—Jesus Himself? Ah, not the crowd, not the priest, but Jesus. Oh, sin-burdened soul at Jericho, will aught do for thee but Jesus? Peters and Johns are all well, but “he sought to see Jesus, who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.” Earnest soul, you cannot sec Jesus for the press. You say, “How am I to see and know what is truth? Only see and hear that crowd. Thousands upon thousands are in that press, some crying, Sacraments, sacraments, come to us and we will forgive your sins. You must hearken to us, and perhaps you will be saved. Some are shouting, Works, works for salvation; some, Do penance, do penance; some exalt feelings; some, holiness by faith. Oh, what a press, how am I ever to know the truth and be saved?”

Now look at that little earnest man, why he runs away from all the crowd. Do you say, “I am unlearned, I am too little to see through it all?” That is just what he was; but he ran away from them all. Do likewise, run away from the confusion of the Babel of discordant sounds. Do you say, “Where am I to run to?” Run anywhere, so that you can see Jesus. He ran and climbed “a sycamore tree to see him.” But how do I know that I shall see Jesus for myself? How do I know that I shall speak to Him, and be saved?

Now just mark another thing. Not only did Zaccheus desire to see Jesus, but Jesus desired to see him. The eye of Jesus was on Zaccheus in the sycamore tree. Wherever you are, do you desire to see Jesus? Then be assured Jesus wants to see you. For you may rest assured God put that desire in your heart. The devil may put it into your heart to seek salvation in sacraments, and priestly ritual, but God alone will bring you to Jesus Himself. “And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.”

An earnest soul says, “I must climb a little higher to see Jesus. But Jesus did not tell Zaccheus to climb a little higher. No, but, “Make haste and come down.” So He says to us, make haste, and come down. We cannot be too little for Jesus. Let us come down, and be just what we are in His presence. Do not think you have to repent first, and give up your sins and then come to Jesus. No, you will never truly repent until you see Jesus the Lord. How long Job tried to climb a little higher, but when he saw the Lord, he made haste and came down. He took his true place before the Lord. He says, “Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Job never repented whilst looking at himself. Neither will you. What a moment was that when the eyes of Jesus and Zaccheus met. Have you ever met those eyes of infinite love to the sinner? It takes many years for some to cease climbing. But Jesus says to you, “Make haste and come down.” And where are you to come to? He did not say, Come to Peter, or John, or Andrew. Did he say. Come to my mother, and she will try to soften my heart toward thee?

Some would represent Jesus as so hard to the sinner, that he needs His mother, angels, apostles, saints, to intercede and try to soften His heart toward the sinner. Ah, they do not know the blessed Jesus who said to Zaccheus, “come down; for today I must abide at thy house.” Yes, Jesus not only bids him come down to Himself, but He must be his guest; and He must abide with him. And does He thus bid you come down at once, direct to Himself—it may be in the deepest self-abhorrence? He says come down to Me, from all thy efforts to climb, and I must abide with thee. What a Savior I Just as Zaccheus was, little tax-gatherer, down he came to Jesus, at His word. And may you do the same? Yes, and do just as he did: he received Jesus joyfully. Do thou the same, and He abides with thee forever.

That God should thus welcome the sinner to Himself is most offensive to poor deceived, self-righteous men. “And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.” Thus also, at this day, are the riches of the grace of God rejected and despised. Ah! let them murmur. Oh, Jesus, we adore Thee, that Thou hast, in perfect love, thus revealed Thyself in grace to us!

As yet Zaccheus does not half apprehend this precious grace to him. He “said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation I restore him fourfold.” In itself this was very good to his fellow men, and contrasts with the hypocrisy of the Pharasaism of this day. Can you say you are giving half of your goods to the poor? The same thing was found in Cornelius. “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.” Yet he was one that needed to know the salvation of God. (Acts 10) There perhaps never was a day of more cruel selfishness than the present. Think of the waste in dress, in tobacco, wine, and pleasure, whilst families are starving for bread.

But mark, Jesus did not say, for so much almsgiving salvation is sent to thee. He did not say, thou hast merited salvation by thy works! He can never say that to a single, guilty, fallen child of Adam.

“Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, for so much as he also is a son of Abraham.” “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” “So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” (Gal. 3) Faith and salvation cannot be separated. In Jesus the Savior he saw the Lord. Salvation that day was come to that house. Has Jesus thus come to you at Jericho? As He says, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” It is the old, old story of the grace of God that bringeth, it does not come seeking salvation in you, but bringeth all you need; nay, all that He in infinite love can give: for He gave Himself.

Why has the Holy Ghost left the record of this lovely incident, if not to show you that Jesus is the one object to attract you to Himself? Do you want to see Him? Ah, He wants more than to see you! He must abide with you: you must be taken into everlasting companionship with Him—not on the principle of works, but through faith.

Abraham believed the promise of God. He was accounted righteous. Do you believe God, who has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, “who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification?” Then by faith you are justified, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. God says so, it is the truth. Make haste, then, and come down—down just now; Jesus waits to receive you. He must abide with you. Salvation, infinite and eternal, is come to you. Do you want to know the truth? He is the Truth. Do you want forgiveness? He says, Thy sins be forgiven thee. Do you want eternal life? He says, He that believeth hath eternal life.

Why should you not receive Him joyfully? God grant that you may come down, and receive Him now, and be forever happy. C. S.

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Plain Words, Plain Words.—No. 16.

As It Was in the Days of Lot.

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all, even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."—(Luke 17:28-30.)

“How can this be?" some of my readers may ask. "We thought Christianity would spread, until all the world would be converted. Does not the Scripture say, `The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea?'—(Isa. 11) How then; can this world become as wicked as Sodom; and that wickedness go on, until the very day that Christ is revealed from heaven?" The answer is very simple. The Scripture nowhere teaches, that the time of the earth's blessing will take place before Christ comes, but after. There can be no doubt, but that it will be exactly as Christ says. As it was in the days of Lot; yes, until the very day that Christ is revealed from heaven. Yes, my reader may live to see that day. If not a believer, but a rejecter of Christ, you may be taken with as great surprise, as when they had just taken their shutters down in Sodom, to commence another day's business, and another day's sins.

But let us see how it was in the days of Lot. There are some most solemn lessons, connected with this subject. There was Abraham, the man of God, outside Sodom, in unhindered communion with God. There was Lot in Sodom; and, consequently, out of communion with God; though saved so as by fire. And there was the doomed city of wickedness.

There was but one Abraham on the face of the earth. And how few, at any one time, have really walked with God. Of the first two men born of a woman, one set aside God's sentence on the earth and tried to bring the best he could grow, an offering to the Lord; and was rejected. The other, Abel, owned the sentence of death, and approached God, through the blood of a victim. Enoch also walked with God; but there was only one Enoch in his day. So of Noah; but there was only one Noah, out of the whole world. And in the new world, so soon filled with idolatry, there was only one Abraham. And again only one Isaac. And only one Jacob. And only one Joseph. And then, not one man of faith is named for some hundreds of years. And then a little child is found hid by faith, in an ark of bulrushes. But, on the face of all the earth, there was only one Moses. Aaron even worshipped a calf. And then a Joshua—a Samuel—a David. And what is the history of the Prophets but that of a very few men at any time, on the face of the whole earth, fully walking with God? How often they had to walk alone; even the nation of Israel, utterly departing in heart from God.

And when Jesus came to his own, did they walk in his light? Alas! they rejected and killed him. Aye, and after the resurrection, there was but one Paul. And since his day, how few have walked with God, in the power of the heavenly calling! Alas! how earthly, and worldly, the great house of Christendom has become. Sad contrast to the heavenly, exalted, Church of God.

And will it be so up to the very coming of Christ? There can be no mistake about it. He, who cannot lie, says it will be, as it was in the days of Lot. Oh, far, far worse than it is now!

The Lord then appeared to Abraham, as he sat, pilgrim like, in the tent door, on the plains of Mamre. (Gen. 18) There was unhindered communion at once. Not so with Lot; the Lord would not even go into the city, where he was; but sent his messengers to pull him out. First the eye lusted after Sodom; then the tent pitched towards Sodom; then in Sodom itself. Where are you, my fellow—Christian? The eye on the world; the tent towards it; or are you in it? Sad place for a child of God! The Devil is the god of it. Destruction is its end. When a man has got his utmost wish of this world, what can it afford? Ask that gray-haired old man; What does the world afford you, prosperous, rich old man? I hear you have got a good bit of property in Sodom. Does it satisfy? He shakes his head. "What does it afford?" He says, "An empty, aching heart; that it all." What are all the riches, and honors, of Sodom, to be compared with one hour's real communion with God. Oh, for more real separation to him; to feed on Christ with him; to talk with God.

Not so Lot. All confusion and vexation. He tries to reform Sodom! and loses all power, even over his own family. Child of God, is it not so? true picture of every worldly Christian! How can we say, Lead us not into temptation; and then settle down in Sodom? But God is rich in mercy. "Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and daughters?" Oh, precious grace, it is just what God is doing at this very time. The terrible day of the Lord is very near; but God still waits in mercy, and is awakening whole families. It is as though the Lord said, I would not have those, so dear to you, to perish; go and wake them up; tell them of my mercy, and tell them of my coming judgment. Oh, my reader, if saved yourself, have you no sons, or sons-in-law, or daughters? Are there none you love, for whom you would pray; and to whom you would speak the warning word?

But Lot seemed, to his own children, as one that mocked. Oh, tad effect of Sodom. My reader, your children watch you; they may see you clinging, and grasping at Sodom's property. You may get your heart's desire in this world; and when you warn your children, you may seem as one that mocks. Ah, you may see them left to perish. Still poor Lot lingers. Still property is there; and "the men laid hold upon his hand" the Lord being merciful to him. Thus was he, his wife, and two daughters, brought out. Not a word about sons, and sons-in-law. Even his poor wife looked back, and perished.

The sun was risen. The city was astir. Lot was out. Oh, what a cry of wailing and bitterness, as the first drops of liquid fire fell. It was too late.

And is this the doom that awaits this deceived world? Yes: it shall come as a thief in the night. Roll on, poor world; thou hast rejected Christ; thou halt preferred a murderer, for thy God. The Devil that deceiveth thee, shall be cast into the lake of fire with thee. Oh, my reader, is this thy doom—art thou still a rejecter of Christ? Do ponder the end. To there is mercy; pardon through the precious blood of Christ. God only knows to-morrow. Oh, may God speak to thee now, being merciful to thee. Remember, it is Christ who says, "In such an hour as ye think not the son of man cometh.”

C. S.

Plain Words, Plain Words.—No. 15.

"As It Was in the Days of Noah”

"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man, they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the days that Noe entered into the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."—(Luke 17:26, 27.)

If these words were but the mere opinions of men, we might disregard them, but since they are the words of the Son of God, they must, and will be fulfilled to the very letter. Let us then carefully inquire, how it was in the days of Noe.

“God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart, was only evil continually." (Gen. 6:5.) Yes, God saw. It does not tell us what man thought, but what God saw. There is no deceiving God. God sees all that takes place under the sun. Just think of God seeing the imagination of the thought of the heart. Could my reader bear to be in the presence of a fellow man, if he knew every thought you ever had in your heart? and what was the wickedness of man then, compared to the wickedness of man now? Has not man murdered the Son of God, and for 1800 years rejected him? and Jesus foretells that this wicked rejection of himself, will go on up to the very day that Christ is revealed.

I dare say man thought the days of Noah were days of wonderful progress. But "the earth was corrupt BEFORE GOD, and the earth was filled with violence," what is it now? let it even speak for itself. The world's newspapers say, we have no sooner recorded one deed of violence, but we are called to report another. But what is it before God? and what will it be very shortly, when the true church of God, shall be taken up to meet Christ, and Satan deceives the whole world? Peace shall then be taken from the earth. (Revelations 6.) And men shall kill one another, in that day of tribulation, tribulation such as never was, and never will be again. It will be as literally true, as it was in the days of Noah, when the earth was filled with violence; yes, far more literally true than men expect.

I look upon the translation of Enoch, as a type of the translation of the whole Church of God. (1 Thess. 4.) And then all the world becomes infidel, tiled with blasphemous wickedness, except a small remnant of godly Jews, who will be saved as Noah and his family. So that it may be asked, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

And God revealed His purpose to Noah that He would destroy man from the face of the earth. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness, which is by faith." (Heb. 11)

And still the world went on; its buildings, its commerce, its pleasures, and its sins,—men would not believe God. The ark grew larger every day, a witness of the coming judgment; certainly there was no appearance of the coming flood. Indeed, human reason would have said it was impossible,—what God destroy this beautiful world, only just in its infancy? Many of the wise men of this age would have said, Oh, no, Noah; you are quite mistaken; it is only your opinion; besides, a great many prophecies have to be fulfilled yet,—all the world has to be blessed, and filled with righteousness, so that you must be mistaken, Noah, you had better give over working a, that great ship, and give up preaching such peculiar views, as you hold; come and enjoy yourself, man, and don't be such a narrow-minded bigot; do you think everybody is wrong but you? But the flood came, and destroyed them all. "And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh;" "and the Lord shut him in." Every soul that was not shut in with Noah, was shut out. There was then no hope; it was too late. Yes, and it shall be so in the day of the Son of Man. We read in the parable of the Ten Virgins, "They that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut; afterward came also the other virgins, saying," Lord! Lord I open to us?" But it was too late.

A Jew, as he listened to the discourse of Jesus, in Luke 21, foretelling the certain destruction of Jerusalem, and the scattering of the Jews, amongst all nations, might have said, "Ah, that must be a mistake; why this city is to be the center of the whole earth, and blessing shall flow out through it, to all nations: we scattered among all nations I nay, all nations shall come up, and worship in Jerusalem." But the day of fierce destruction came; and the city is trampled under foot; and they are scattered amongst all nations.

In like manner, men may say now, "Be as it was in the days of Noah, the earth filled with violence, and wickedness, when the Son of Man cometh, up to the very day? Oh, that is only your opinion;—why, man, the world is to be converted! Apostate Christendom destroyed?' why Christendom has to extend, until all the world are Christians; aye, every man, woman, and child!”

Thus man rejects the word of God, just as blindly and as fatally as in the days of Noah; or when Jesus foretold Judah's awful doom. Yes, in like manner shall they say, Peace and safety, up to the very day of Christ. It is quite true the world shall be filled with blessing; but this did not hinder the flood, did it? It is quite certain that Jerusalem shall be the metropolis of the whole earth. (Isaiah 2) But did this hinder its awful destruction? It is quite certain, that the knowledge of the Lord, shall cover the face of the earth. But will this hinder the words of Jesus being fulfilled? "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh." How can the future reign of Christ, in blessing over this earth, which shall take place after he comes, hinder the fearful judgments, which will surely take place, at His coming? No, the world will go on increasing in wickedness, until He comes.

His words will surely come to pass. It will be exactly as it was, the world will be taken with as great surprise, as it was in the days of Noah.

Oh, my reader, are you ready to meet the coming Lord? do you, like Noah, believe God? or with the world, are you rejecting him? are you shut in with Christ, as Noah was shut in the ark? or are you shut out? God saw, and God sees your every thought, the gospel still sounds; God grant that you may hear, believe, and live. If my reader is a Christian, let me beg of you to search the Scriptures, and see if these things be so. Jesus says, "Behold I come quickly." (Rev. 22)

C. S.

Plain Words, Plain Words.—No. 8.

Worship; or, "One in Ten.”

Luke 17:12-19.

IT must have been a grievous sight—ten men met the Lord Jesus; and these men were "lepers, which stood afar off." Suffering from that loathsome, incurable disease, they might wander from place to place, seeking relief, but none could give it; nay, none dare touch them or be near them. Such is the awful picture of man's condition as a sinner. His very nature itself corruption and sin. Afar from God—utterly unclean and incurable. He may wander from place to place, but none can give him relief. No remedy can he find for loathsome sin. There was this difference, however: the poor lepers knew their condition. And when Jesus met them, they cried to Him for help. How many thousands of leprous sinners know not their condition. Fearful to think, yet such is the case! In the sight of a holy God their sin is far more loathsome than leprosy is in the sight of man. If my reader has not been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, then certainly this is his awful condition, though he may not know it.

But when Jesus meets a sinner, then, like the poor lepers, the sinner both knows his condition, at least in measure, and knows that He alone can save.

I fear great numbers who profess to be Christians have never really known their condition. How can they? They are either quietly careless about it, or they are still going about from place to place, trying ordinances, commandment-keeping, or one remedy or another, to heal the poor, old, leprous self, which can never thus be healed. But when Jesus meets the poor sinner, then He comes to a dead stand, like the poor woman who had spent all that she had upon physicians, and yet was no better. There is now nothing but Jesus. The poor lepers cried in the bitterness of their hearts to Jesus. I wonder if you have ever thus cried?

What a strange reply did Jesus give them. "Go show yourselves unto the priests." Now it was not the least use going unto the priest, unless they were healed. The leper was to go unto the priest, in the day of his cleansing; and the priest would look to see if he were healed. (Lev. 14:1-3.) And Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests; and yet there was not the least sign in themselves that they were healed. They had only the bare word of Jesus to rest upon. And did they stay until they felt they were healed, or did they look at themselves until they saw some amendment? Oh, no! They might have stayed forever, mourning and sighing, and saying, I cannot feel I am cleansed; I cannot see any amendment in myself. No, they believed the bare word of God the Son;—they went. "And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed" It is so with the sinner. Oh, those wretched doctors that set you looking into yourselves for signs of amendment! You have not to wait until you feel you are cleansed. The sinner is saved by faith, not by feeling. God declares that the blood of his Son cleanseth from all sin. And the moment the lost, leprous sinner believes the bare WORD OF GOD, that moment he is cleansed. Blessed Jesus! He is the only anointed one, to heal the sin-burdened, broken hearts.

One of the ten, "when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan." But why did he not go to the priest and fulfill the law? Why was not one bird killed over running water, another bird dipped in its blood, and let fly upon the open field-shadows of death and resurrection? Why did he not need the washings for his cleansing, and the blood of the sin-offering, as commanded in Lev. 14? He came to Jesus, the substance, of which those offerings were but mere shadows. He goes not back to the shadows, out comes to Jesus, the substance, and owns Him God—falls at His feet a cleansed worshipper, giving glory to God with a loud voice.

Jesus said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." This poor Samaritan stranger had not the Jewish religious tendencies of the other nine to draw him to the law and its shadows. The religion of the nine kept them from taking that happy place at the feet of Jesus as cleansed worshippers, giving glory to God. And it is so at this very day is there even one in ten, of those who are cleansed, who are Christians, who heartily give glory to God, and know their happy place as purged worshippers? No, their minds are full of dismal doubts, whether it is so or not. Oh, this sin of unbelief, how easily it besets! and especially how it besets the nine, who have their self-righteousness to contend with. I believe we are little aware how the pure gospel of God's pure grace has been corrupted by Jewish leaven.

How many washings and offerings were required under the law. But one word from Jesus, and the leper is cleansed. The many sacrifices of bulls and goats could never take away sins—could never bring the sinner to God. But "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us TO GOD." Has He failed? Oh no. Every sinner that believes on Him is brought—not half way—no! but really into the happy presence of God, a cleansed worshipper. Perish the thought that would undervalue the death of Christ. It cannot possibly be true that the believer is half saved, or half cleansed, or brought half way to God, or made half fit to be a worshipper. Fellow-believers, "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." It is done—yes, and still more wondrous, "by one offering HE HATH perfected forever them that are sanctified." Yes, I repeat, Jesus died to do all this, and He has done it if God has given my reader faith, in his own bare word, like the one in ten, then pause and survey what Jesus has done for you. He has sanctified you by his death, and brought you, perfected for over into the very holiest, to God. That is your place, without sin through the blood of Jesus. I say you have not to hope to get there; you are there; It is your home. Jesus expects you to open your mouth and give glory to God, with a loud voice. His blood cleanseth you from all sin. It is written of Him, "who being the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Oh, do you know that Jesus sits there, the living proof that your sins are all purged away? Was it not amazing love for such a one to be made a sin offering for you, that you might be brought to God, happy with him, a purged worshipper? Your sins would shut you out of His presence forever. His blood brings you into His presence forever.

Now look once more at the leper cleansed. He gave Jesus thanks. He did not hope he was cleansed. He gave thanks because he was cleansed; and this drew out unfeigned worship. Are you a believer, and would you dishonor Christ with a cold hope that you are cleansed? or will you honor Christ, worship Him, and give Him thanks, because you are cleansed by His blood? It is every believer's privilege, with holy boldness, by the blood of Jesus, to worship in the holiest. (Heb. 10)

Where are the nine? Are you one of them? Have you believed in Jesus, and are you now going to ordinances to be made perfect? Surely not. Would you add anything to the blood of the Lamb? Oh, return to Jesus—fall down—worship Him!—give Him thanks!—give the full glory to God with a loud voice.' Do not be ashamed of him. Do not doubt Him. Trust in Jesus with your whole heart. Trust in His blood. Trust in Him alive from the dead, and trust in nothing but Christ. From this moment may you walk in the blessed, present, certain assurance that you are a cleansed worshipper by the blood of the Lamb. C. S.

Selected Writings of Charles Stanley: Volume 1, What It Is!

We have seen in the former section that this beautiful parable of the great supper shows us that God is not demanding from man, on the principle of law, but giving, providing, in free grace. “A certain man made a great supper” (Luke 14:16). Thus He provided everything, the guests brought nothing. What a new truth this was as to God and salvation, to men under the administration of the law, which did not give, but demanded. Then we found this supper was great because it cost the greatest price in the universe: the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The agony, the atoning suffering, of the cross, forsaken of God: that was the price of the supper. The price of the great salvation was His precious blood.

Nothing could be more striking than this picture. When you are invited to supper, and all things are ready, you have only to sit down and receive the rich provisions. And note, this picture admits of no uncertainty. A person must know whether he receives his friend’s supper or refuses it. We now propose to examine what this great supper is. Let us continue the figure of the supper. Here then is a great supper spread out, all ready, warranted to meet the needs of every poor sinner brought to it, not only for a moment, but to satisfy forever.

Pray, what is your need? Do you say deep indeed is my need. I am a guilty sinner. Death and judgment is before me, and I cannot escape; and I cannot undo what I have done; and I know very well in my sins I cannot enter heaven. Sit down here; this is what meets your case at the very head of the table, God speaks to you, “Be it known,” — yes, all is certainty at the supper — “that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” Yes, “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 13:38; 10:43). This is a wonderful part of the great supper. Immediate forgiveness of sins; and note this is not through our feelings or doings; but through Jesus. And this is not only immediate forgiveness, but perfect and everlasting forgiveness. “And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17). Oh! do you believe God? This is the very first taste of blessedness at the great supper. “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” (Romans 4:7). Yes, the moment you sit down in the light of that great supper — for there is no darkness there — then you immediately know that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Sins can no more be reckoned to any at that great supper. They have been borne by Jesus, their Substitute; and can never be imputed to them.

Then all there are justified from all things? This is the very next thing on the table. “And all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39). Why, this was the very thing that Jesus, after He had died for our sins, was raised from the dead for. “He was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). Just as the creditor puts the stamp on the bill that has been paid, for full evidence of settlement, so God has raised up Jesus our Lord from among the dead, to be the everlasting receipt — the full evidence of settlement — for that debt paid in His precious blood. Perfect and infinite sacrifice: perfect and everlasting justification, must give perfect and everlasting peace with God. And so all at the supper enjoy this? If they believe God they do. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). This is the happy position of all at the great supper. “Being justified.” That is always so. Always we have perfect peace with God. It must be so, the supper is always the same, always through Jesus Christ our Lord. The justification could not be more complete. It was God who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead for our justification. Who shall lay anything to the charge of those at the great supper? “It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again” (Romans 8:33). Oh, reader, do you believe God? Have you sat down at the supper?

Now we will look a little further, and see what God has made and provided at this great supper. Christ Jesus, still meeting our needs, “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Just as you could look at the various dishes on your friend’s table, all provided for you: not brought by you. So here, at the great supper; God’s great salvation. Do you say, I am so ignorant, I greatly need wisdom. Sit down and contemplate Christ Jesus made unto you wisdom. The philosopher may study the stones

and the stars, but at this supper, you know Him who made them all, from everlasting to everlasting.

Do you say before I can be quite sure I am saved at the great supper: must I not be righteous in all my ways before God and man? Can God possibly justify me before that is the case? Fatal mistake if you have to bring righteousness to the supper: at that supper you can never be: for you are guilty, and fail at every point. Was not this the fatal mistake of the Jews? Is it not the fatal mistake of the ritualists? They are vainly trying by works to bring that to the supper which God has made Christ Jesus to be to every one that sits at the great supper. But says another, must I not attain to higher Christian life, must I not bring holiness to God? Here is the same mistake again: that is exactly what you find at the great supper, not what you bring. Christ Jesus made unto us sanctification. Well, says another, I need redemption, how may I be sure that I have got it? That again is exactly what all have at the great supper. Yes, God has provided all. Jesus Christ: infinite wisdom: everlasting righteousness. “By one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). Eternal redemption. The great mistake we make is in supposing we have to bring some of these, instead of sitting down, in perfect peace, and finding all we need, and all ours for evermore. If we are still on the ground of God’s righteous demands from us, we are lost, for if He deals with us in righteousness He must condemn us. The blood of propitiation for our sins has been shed. God in His righteousness has raised the believer’s substitute from the dead. God thus proclaims forgiveness of sins to us, and all that believe God are justified. They sit at the great supper in perfect peace with God. Christ is their wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. And they hunger no more. They need no other righteousness before God; no other sanctification; no other redemption.

But what is there in this great supper to provide for righteousness before men? Just everything. Being justified by faith before God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost dwells in them, and thus walking in the Spirit, practical righteousness is fulfilled in them.

Here comes one with trembling desire to sit in perfect peace at the great supper. Well, Jesus says, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me” (John 14:1). Pray, what do you ask for at the supper? Is this what you long to know? When all the sorrows and storms of this sad life are past, I want to be quite sure of a home above. Oh, if you will sit down, and just take what is set before you, you will find three times more than you ask. This is the very thing He makes so certain. He says to you, poor trembling believer, “In My Father’s house are many mansions (abodes): if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3). Yes, He says, your home above with Me shall be as certain as that I am there. Could He say more? Yes, He does. He promised the Comforter, the Holy Ghost to be with you all the way. Yet more still — “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). Certainty of home; the presence of the Comforter all the way, and His peace which is surely perfect. My section is finished, but it will take eternity to unfold the vastness of this great supper; the great salvation of God. Tell us, dear reader, how will you escape if you neglect it?

We now proceed to inquire — who are the welcome guests?

Selected Writings of Charles Stanley: Volume 1, Great Supper, A

We want to talk with you a little about the wonderful parables of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is one of them. Jesus said, “A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper” (Luke 14:16-24).

This great supper is a picture of God’s great salvation. When you are invited to supper by a friend, do you expect that you will have to pay for it? Or will you be expected to provide it? Or take any part of it to your friend’s house? Of course not. Would you not simply have to sit down and receive it? Just so. You would merely be a guest. All would have to be done by someone else before you could receive it. A great deal would have to be done before the servant could say all things are now ready: the supper is on the table. This is the peculiarity of the Gospel. Not so when man was under law. Then the law made known the righteous demands of God. That was more like the landlord coming to your house for the rent, when you can’t pay it; can’t pay it when you would. This great supper is not like that. All is provided, all is given.

Why don’t you like to think about God? Don’t you think He demands something from you, something that you find you have not to give? Yes, you do. You think you have to become good, holy, righteous, religious. God demands all this from you, and you cannot give it Him. Is not that what you think? Have you not often tried to bring all this to God, and still you find you fail to do it. And yet you think if you do not bring something to God, according to the demands of His law, you never can be saved. The Lord Jesus will show you in this picture that you are quite mistaken, that this is not God’s present plan at all. God provides and gives everything. He does not expect you to bring, but to receive, just as you would at your friend’s great supper. Do you see that this great supper is in direct contrast with the demands of the law? The law says thou shalt love God. This supper shows how God has loved you.

What is a great supper? If half-a-dozen men were invited to a supper that cost one shilling, that would not be called a great supper, would it? A supper is great according to what it costs. What would you think, if a nobleman sold all he had, and made a great supper for the poor? That would be a supper to talk about. A great supper indeed. If a supper is great according to what it costs: and if God is the provider of this great supper: this great salvation: let us then inquire:

Some Papers on the Second Coming of Christ and on Prophecy, Part 10 - Questions of Interest Relating to the Coming of Christ and His Reign on Earth

“However plain some of the passages appear that speak of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of its being our duty to watch, and be ready to meet Him at all times, there are other passages that do not seem to accord with this expectation. Take for instance Luke 21:28: “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” Here it is when certain things begin to happen, your redemption draweth near. The passage then goes on to speak of the fig-tree and all the trees: when they shoot forth it is known that summer is near at hand. “So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand” (Luke 21:29-31). Here again it is when certain things happen, then they are to know that the kingdom of God is near. Is it not therefore right that we should look for the things of which Christ spoke to His disciples, rather than for the Lord to come for His saints without any preliminary intimation?

These questions show how important it is to make a study of prophecy in all its main branches, and not confine our attention to any one of them. If we simply take the words “the coming of the Lord,” we may go greatly astray unless we see its connection and always distinguish between the coming of the Lord for His saints — the proper hope of the Christian — and the coming of the Lord with His saints, when He comes to execute judgment on the wicked. (See Jude 14-15.)

But there is a coming of the Lord that does not fall under either of the above. It is in connection with Israel, who in the future will be placed in peculiar circumstances; and unless these are seen, the nature of Christ’s coming to them cannot be understood.

But before we look at what these circumstances are, we must consider a difficulty that has often arisen in the minds of the students of prophecy. What authority have we to interpret the passage in Luke 12:36, Be ye “like unto men that wait for their lord” as applying to the Christian now; and apply the passages quoted from ch. 21 of the same gospel to Israel in the future?

In Luke 12 our Lord is clearly not addressing His hearers as children of Israel. In verse 32 He says, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”; and then goes on to address them as servants, some of whom are faithful and some are unfaithful.

In Luke 21 it is quite different. Verses 1 to 4 speak of the rich men and the poor widow casting their gifts into the treasury. Then in vs. 5, “Some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts”; then our Lord foretold its destruction and spoke of coming judgments: all refers to Israel. Verse 24 says that “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” This time is, as we know, now running on. It is now the “times of the Gentiles”; but there must be a long interval between verse 24 and what follows; for verse 25 speaks of signs in the sun, moon and stars, and great distress upon the earth; followed by “Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” This we know has not yet taken place.

That this does not refer to the coming of the Lord for His saints is evident by its being added, “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.” It is clear that “this generation” does not refer simply to the lifetime of those He addressed, for our Lord did not return during that period; but the term “generation” refers, as it does in other places, to the people of Israel generally, as in Deuteronomy 32:5,20.

Here also the coming of the Lord is said to be with power and great glory, whereas when He comes for His church nothing is said of this: He Himself is the all-absorbing object; hence it may be that He will come in private to fetch us, and the world know nothing of it till they find out that we are gone.

It may, however, still be asked, Why we as Christians are to have no sign of the Lord’s coming, if Israel is to have a sign? Is it not because of the different circumstances in which they will be placed? This passage tells us that there will be signs in the heavenly bodies, distress of nations, with perplexity; indeed, we read of their being brought through a great tribulation, such as never was before and will not be again; and they will undergo a prolonged and varied persecution by their enemies. Their cry will be, “How long, O Lord?” and they will look and pray for the destruction of their enemies, as we find in many of the Psalms — language which we cannot use respecting our enemies; but which will be quite right and according to God’s mind then; for He will be about to destroy their enemies, and bring His ancient people into full blessing.

With this before us, we can readily understand how gladly they will look for the signs that God has spoken of, for then they will have — what? The joy of being caught up to meet the Lord in the air? No; but their “redemption draweth near,” that deliverance that will fully establish them on the earth, and greatly bless them in their own land.

We thus see that their hope is quite different from the hope of the Christian. It is plainly revealed in Scripture that before they can be brought into blessing as a nation they must be brought through tribulation and oppression; therefore they cannot now be looking intelligently for their redemption. Our Lord declared to them, “Your house is left unto you desolate, and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me until the time come when ye shall say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Luke 13:35). If any believe in the Lord Jesus in the present dispensation, of course they become a part of the church.

It will be seen from all this that when our Lord spoke of His hearers looking for a sign He was not speaking to them as believers, but as a part of Israel; and it will be right for them when the time arrives to look for those signs. But it is quite different for His saints now. It is their privilege to be longing to see the One who loves them, and who bought them with His blood, and to be looking for Him to come and fetch them, according to His blessed promise, “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.” May the present enjoyment of His love keep this hope bright before us all.

Some Papers on the Second Coming of Christ and on Prophecy, Part 5 - Questions of Interest Relating to the Coming of Christ and His Reign on Earth

“It is said, with the greatest confidence, that it was a mistake of the Thessalonian saints to be expecting the coming of the Lord; and that this is proved by the second epistle to that church, in which it is declared that the day of Christ is not at hand, or near; and that there must come a

falling away before that event can happen. How is this difficulty to be removed? How can we be expecting the Lord at any time if something must happen first?”

That it is the duty as well as the privilege of the Christian to be expecting the coming of the Lord at any moment is quite clear from other passages. Take for instance Luke 12:35-37: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching.” Clearly the attitude of such servants is to be always ready, so that they can open the door immediately. Blessed are the servants found watching. All this would be entirely nullified if it were true that certain occurrences must take place before the return. Then we might be looking for some event to happen, let it be what it might, but we could not be expecting the Lord, for He would not be coming until after that event, whereas Scripture puts nothing between. “We look for the Saviour.”

We are like virgins that have already gone forth to meet the bridegroom: surely not because He is not to be expected; but because the proper attitude of the Christian is to be watching for and expecting His coming. This, indeed, is the blessed hope of the Christian, and not our dying and going to the Lord, blessed as that is. When Paul wrote the first Epistle to the Thessalonians he records how God had turned them from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:9-10). If this waiting had been a wrong thing, would he not have corrected it then and there? But instead of this, he thanks God for them, for they had become examples to other believers, and the word of the Lord had sounded out from them; and indeed it was God Himself who had turned them... to wait for His Son from heaven. It is impossible therefore that it could be a mistake on their part to be thus waiting.

Neither is this waiting for Christ from heaven in any way said to be a mistake in the second epistle. It is well known that many think it is so; but it is because they do not distinguish between “the coming of the Lord,” and the “day of the Lord” (as 2 Thessalonians 2:2 should read), which are two totally different events. What can be a happier thought for the Christian than to be hoping for the Lord to come and take him and every other saint on earth and in the tombs to be forever with and like the Lord Himself? Well may the apostle add, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Whereas “the day of the Lord” is connected with judgment. Let us look at a few of the passages: “Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it” (Isa. 13:9). “Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand: a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains” (Joel 2:1-2; see also Joel 3:14-15). “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). Now if we turn to the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, we find that someone had been troubling the saints (by a false epistle or message) and teaching that because they were in tribulation therefore the day of the Lord had come, or was present (as it should read in 2 Thessalonians 2:2). The apostle tells them that the day of the Lord could not come before the revelation of the Antichrist, the man of sin, whom the Lord when He comes in judgment will destroy with the brightness of His coming. And further, he tells them that though the mystery of iniquity was at work, yet the Antichrist could not then be revealed because of Him whose presence hindered; but He would be taken away, and then the man of sin could be revealed, and would be destroyed by the Lord Himself.

The apostle reminds them that he had told them these things; but the enemy had come in with false teaching, and the saints were in distress. The passage gives an awful description of the end of those who now will not believe the truth; then they will believe a lie, and will perish with the one who will have been the instrument of their apostasy.

But all this is entirely different from the blessed hope God sets before His saints, and with which He bids them encourage one another. “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51-52). “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thess. 4:16), and then we shall all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” May we all be looking for this blessed event, the coming of our Lord, and be found ready and watching when He shall come.

Things New and Old: Volume 29, Have You Perfect Love?

Such was the question an aged Christian asked the writer a short time ago. The earnest manner in which he made this inquiry, showed how long, and how anxiously, he had been seeking perfect love; but seeking it where it was not to be found. He said, “A person called on me lately and said he had had perfect love for five years: have you perfect love?” “Yes,” I said, “I have had perfect love about fifty-two years. Nay, I may go back fifty millions of years, and that love was perfect. But mark, it was, and is, not my love to God; no, it was the love of God to me.”

My aged friend had made the common mistake of seeking perfect love in himself. This, no doubt, had hindered the progress and joy of his soul and his life, and sadly blighted his service. To use his own words—though we hope he was mistaken—he said all would have to be burnt up, and he be saved so as by fire. He could not remember a single soul converted to Christ through his long ministry.

We believe many souls, even aged Christians, are under this serious mistake, seeking for perfect love in themselves. Not having clear views of divine grace, they will turn to such a scripture as Luke 10:25-29; and supposing that the Lord preached the gospel to the lawyer who came to Him tempting Him, they conclude that the way to obtain eternal life is to have perfect. love; to love God “with all thy heart,” &c. Now it was just because man had not done this, and had no strength to do this, that Christ died for the ungodly. It was—the law: and the apostle says, If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” (Gal. 3:21.) Trying then to find perfect love to God in myself, is trying to be saved by the law.

There is however another scripture grievously misunderstood by those who are seeking perfect love in themselves. “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is so are we in this world.” (1 John 4:17.) The question here is this, Is this the correct translation, or the reading in the margin? “Herein is love with us made perfect,” &c. “Herein” in what is that love made perfect, even right on to the day of judgment? Is it our love to God, or His love to us? As it says “Herein;” let us examine carefully the context. The apostle, conscious of inspiration, could say, We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us,” It is not he that heareth the church, but lie

that heareth the words of the inspired apostle. Let us then, believing this, hear What John on this subject of love with its made perfect. All who do not receive the inspired word are in error.

What then is the source of this love? In us, or in God? “Love is of God.” Its source is of God. Is it divine, or human? “God is love.” It is His very nature. If we love, it is a proof we are born of God—have His nature.

God has manifested this love in two things, and both prove this perfect love to be of Him, and not of us.

“In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” Yes, the love of God was perfect to us, when we were dead in sins. In this very thing God has commended His love to us, in that whilst we were enemies Christ died for us. The cross manifested the perfect love God had to us, before the foundation of the world. Jesus asks, and waits for the tune when the world shall know that God has loved them as He has loved Christ. Yes, this is perfect love from all eternity. (John 17:23.) And Jesus says to us, “As the Father Lath loved me, so have I loved you.” (John 15:9.) Such is the perfect love of God to us from all eternity. That love stands out in all its eternal perfection when we had no love to God. All was forfeited through sin. He sent his Son that we might live through Him.

But there is a second proof that it is God’s perfect love to us, and not our perfect love to Him. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” That love which gave the infinite Son which dwelt in His bosom, surely is perfect love. The cross reveals the hatred of man, not his love to God. But it reveals also the perfect love of God to us. Meditate on this, and seek not to reverse this by finding perfect love in self. If we love, it is the proof that God dwells, in us, and His love, not ours, is perfected in us. Can you say, I have known and believed the love that God hath to us? God is love. Do you really know and believe this?

Thus the context shows most conclusively that it is not our love to God that is perfect, but His love is perfected with us, or, “Herein is love with us made perfect.” Since God has loved us from all eternity, even as He has loved His only begotten Son; and through that Son, has given us eternal life, and provided for the display of His love to us, through this moment of time, and to all eternity—having given us life that can never perish—having brought us into favor in Christ that can know no cloud of change—having loved us in Christ, with a love, from which nothing can separate us—having by His atoning blood, cleared away according to His glory, all our sins and defilement—we can indeed say, “Herein is, love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is so are we in this world.”

Yes, the knowledge of and belief of this perfect love casteth out fear. How can we fear the One who so loves? The effect of this is there is no fear in love. There is no effort, but “We love him because he first loved us.” And His love is shed abroad in our hearts.

Oh, what a contrast this is to the vain effort to find perfect love in ourselves! There is however one serious question, If the love of God is thus perfect to us, how is it we abide so little in the full enjoyment of His perfect love? Let us hear what Jesus says as to this. “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (John 15:9-11.) Is not this the solution why there is so little enjoyment of the perfect love of God to us in Christ?

Are we doing our own will? Why are we doing this or that? is it because others do so? Did Jesus ever walk by such a principle? Did He do anything because the scribes and Pharisees, did it? He would do nothing but that for which He had the word of the Father. He could say, “I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak.” (John 12:49.)

How can we be filled with His joy, if we are not seeking to do His will? Only let us sit down and write all we do for a week, even religiously, and we shall be astonished how much we do simply because others do so; without a command from the Lord, or an intimation in His word that such is His will.

In these last days He commends—us to Himself and the word of His grace if then we turn to what calls itself the church, or to human ordinances; or to man in any form, can we expect anything but leanness of soul?

May the Lord use these meditations to turn to Himself, the source of perfect love; and to keep His commandments; to own the whole: inspired word. of His grace, as the will of the Lord; and however it may differ from the thoughts and ways of men, we shall find, just as we keep His commandments, so shall we abide, in His love.

But let us beware, on the other hand, of turning from the good and perfect love of God to the law; or the principle that God will love us if we only first love Him with all our hearts. Surely man has been fully tried on that principle, and nothing Was found in him but hatred to God. Does not the cross at the end of the trial, of man fully prove this? whilst it brings out the infinite love of God to us. We love Him now, because He thus first loved us, To Him be all praise.

C.S.

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