

SOME DISPENSATIONAL PARABLES.

September, 1897

V.—THE POUNDS.

(Luke 19:12-27)

A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

"And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, 'Occupy till I come.'

"But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'"

The parable points to the glory and exaltation of the Man Christ Jesus, for it was a man of noble birth who went away "to receive for himself a kingdom."

His ten servants refer to His glory among the Gentiles, for ten is the number used in Scripture for the Gentile nations.

Each servant received one pound. One testimony was committed to each, to be used after the people of His city had refused Him to reign over them. That is after the martyrdom of Stephen.

The glory of the Lord Jesus has been declared in three distinct degrees, thus—

His official glory as "Lord of all."

His personal glory as "the Son of God."

His divine glory as "the Man Christ Jesus" in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

The first recorded proclamation of Christ to the Gentiles was after the death of Stephen, by Peter to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10). Peter preached Jesus as "Lord of all" and the Judge of quick and dead. The Man anointed of God with the Holy Ghost and with power, to give remission of sins.

The second recorded ministry of Christ to the Gentiles is that of Paul at Antioch in Pisidia to both Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue preaching Jesus as "the Son of God," by whom all who believe are justified, and receive everlasting life (Acts 13:32-48). The word of salvation is sent to all who fear God (v 26). The doctrine preached by Paul among the Gentiles is given to us more fully in the Epistle to the Romans. It was concerning Jesus as "the Son of God," proved to be such by resurrection from among the dead; in whom the believer has, through faith in God, justification from sins, deliverance from the dominion of sin and of the law of Moses. Association with Christ in His relationship to God as sons of God, and assurance of eternal glory, Christ being exalted at the right hand of God to make intercession, so that nothing can separate the believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The third ministry of Christ to the Gentiles is contained in Paul's epistles to the Gentiles after his preaching in the synagogues is ended. These epistles commit to the Gentile believers the truths peculiar to the present dispensation of

grace to the Gentiles, and which were never declared either at Jerusalem or in the synagogues, because separation from Jerusalem and from Israel, as a nation, is essential to their manifestation. These epistles declare Christ to be "Head over all to the Church which is His body" (Eph 1:22-23). The Head of every man is Christ (1 Cor 11:3). "Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor 12:27). "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor 6:17). The union of the believers to Christ as the Head and to one another by the Spirit given by Christ, is the basis of all the practical teaching of these epistles. "As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For with one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:12,13).

The Gospel committed to the Gentiles is concerning the Godhead of Christ, and His death as an offering for sin. "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself...For He hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us: that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:19-21).

The exaltation of Christ "at the right hand of God, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named," as the Head of the Church which is His body, is further taught in Ephesians 1:21-23 and in chapter 2:15, the fact of His "having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances."

In the Epistle to the Colossians the Godhead of Christ is stated in connection with His headship of the Church: "all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all

things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the Church" (1:16-18). This is repeated in chapter 2:9-12, together with the fact that the ordinances of circumcision and baptism were fulfilled in His crucifixion and His burial. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in the baptism, in whom also ye are risen together through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead."

Thus Scripture shows us three successive ministries to the Gentiles concerning the glory of Christ, answering to the three servants named in the parable; each ministry surpassing the previous one in the declaration of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; the Judge of quick and dead—the Son of God, the justification of the believer and Giver of eternal life; and lastly, the Man in whom dwells all the fulness of God, the Head of His body the Church, in whom all His members are complete. All the glory of God being revealed in the face of the risen and ascended Christ, in whom believers are risen together with Him. The first and second of these ministries have accomplished the purpose for which they were given; for, throughout the whole world wherever the Name of Jesus Christ is acknowledged, it is acknowledged "that He is ordained the Judge of quick and dead."

So also wherever Protestant Christianity is known it is acknowledged, at least in doctrine, that Jesus is the Son of God, the justification of the believer and the Giver of eternal life.

But where is there or has there ever been any corporate testimony, either ecclesiastical or national, to the truth committed to the Gentiles through the epistles of Paul? Confessing Christ only as the One Head of the Church which is His body—confessing the Deity of His person, and His One offering as the One sacrifice for sin, and the Holy Spirit given by Him as the One Baptism, by which alone every believer becomes united to Himself in resurrection in the perfection of His person?

But to return to the Parable:—

"And another came saying, 'Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin, for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.'"

The important lesson in the parable is in the conduct of the third servant and in the Lord's dealing with him.

The napkin is spoken of only twice in the Scripture, it was bound about the face of Lazarus (John 11:44), it was about the head of the Lord Jesus when He lay in the grave (John 20:7). When He rose from among the dead, "He wrapped it together in a place by itself"; it was laid aside for ever, for it was the symbol of death and burial, and "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more" (Rom 6:9). "The head of Christ is God" (1 Cor 11:3). When the Lord Jesus lay in the grave the glory of God was veiled, for "the Living One" had become dead (Rev 1:18); but when He rose from among the dead, all the glory of God was unveiled, revealed in the face of the Risen Son of God, never to be veiled again; the napkin was done with for ever!

The servant took up that which the Lord Jesus laid aside as having no further use, and used it to keep in concealment the

one thing that the Lord had committed to him to use in His service!

Christendom has done likewise; so long as the Church was connected with Jerusalem, Christ being preached in the synagogues as the hope of Israel, "to the Jew first and to the Gentile also," the stand-point of the believer was association with Christ in His death, as being freed thereby from the dominion of sin and of law (Rom 6:11 and 7:4). Baptism with water, a figurative burial with Christ, was a suitable illustration of such a stand-point, it was also the ordinance appointed by the Lord for the outward and visible association of the uncircumcised with the circumcised in one company as confessing Jesus to be Lord of all; both Jew and Gentile who believed "were planted together in the likeness of His death" (Rom 6:5).

But when the Church of God was set in order among the Gentiles, in separation from Jerusalem and from the hope of Israel as a nation, further truth was made known to the saints which gave them an entirely new stand-point in their relation to God through faith.

Christ was declared to be the sanctification as well as the justification of the believer (1 Cor 1:30); the bodies of the saints were declared to be the members of Christ (6:15); Christ being the Head of the Church which is His body. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (v 17). Therefore the confession of Jesus as Lord henceforth does not stand in connection with the flesh, but by the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, for "no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (12:3). The Holy Spirit given by the Lord Jesus being the "One Baptism" administered by the Lord Himself,

whereby all His members are united to Himself the Head (1 Cor 12:12,13).

Henceforth the stand-point of the believer before God is union with the Man whom God has raised from among the dead and exalted at His own right hand, and made Head over all things. The Man in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; who has "abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances: for to make in Himself of twain one new man." Circumcision and baptism having been fulfilled in the death and burial of the Lord Jesus, in whom the believer is risen through faith (Col 2:11,12), the believer is "COMPLETE IN HIM," being united to Him in resurrection in all the perfection of His own person before God: "Accepted in the beloved."

But Christendom, throughout, obscures this precious revelation of the glory of Christ. Like the wicked servant it hides the Lord's money in the napkin which the Lord had "folded together and laid aside." Christendom has continued to obscure the truth that the believer is risen with Him through faith, and uses the symbol of death to set forth a dead Christ, thus hiding the truth of a risen Christ, as it were in a napkin. The servant esteemed His Lord an austere man. So, by subjection to ordinances, the "One Baptism" with the Spirit administered by the Lord Himself in infinite grace is obscured, if not actually denied.

The Lord does not reject the charge of taking up that He laid not down and reaping that He did not sow, for the Lord laid down all that belonged to Him as Man and as a Jew. He was buried as the manner of the Jews is to bury. He rose the Head of a new creation, the first-born from the dead. He

sowed the word of the kingdom, He gathers fruit from the word of His grace (Col 1:6).

"Take from him the pound and give it to him that hath ten pounds."

When the Lord Jesus returns, "having received the kingdom," the testimony to His exaltation is taken from the Gentiles and given to a Jewish ministry as at the beginning of the Gospel; this revived apostleship will fulfil towards the Gentile nations the commission given in Matthew 28:19, 20, proclaiming the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel, according to Psalm 2:9-12 about to sit upon the holy hill of Zion and to judge the world in righteousness.

"But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

When the Jewish ministry to the Gentiles is resumed, proclaiming the Lord Jesus at His return to take the kingdom which He has received, then judgment begins to be executed upon Jerusalem, and "the Great Tribulation" commences (Matt 24:15-22). The Lord will be present with His disciples during these days according to His promise: "Lo, I am with you all the days, so long as the end of the age." The days of the Son of Man (Luke 17:26).

The stand-point of Matthew 28:19, 20 is shortly before the days which constitute the end of the age. The Lord's presence will be until and through the continuance of those days.