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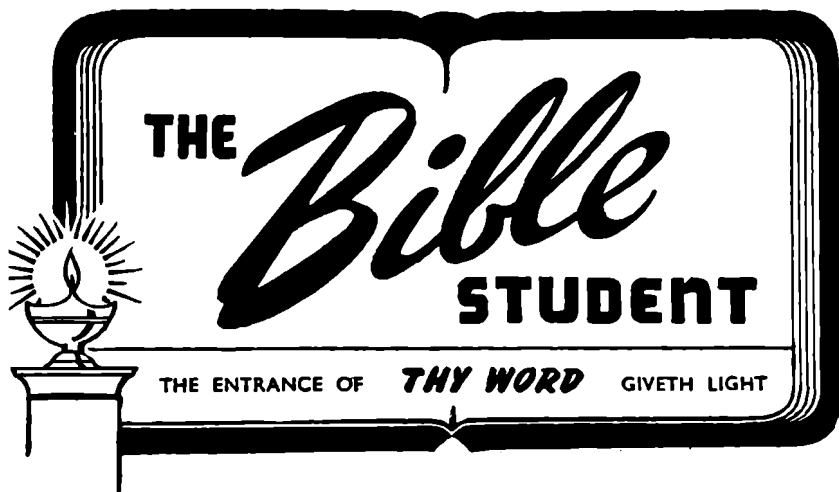
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

sin is transformed into Tyre's sin: 'In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned' (v. 16a, RSV).

Commentators find difficulty in 'thy sanctuaries' in v. 18, for they do not see why Ezekiel should be concerned with heathen holy places. The difficulty was felt as early as LXX, which translated, 'I have profaned'. Equally unnecessary is Moffatt's 'you have profaned your sacred position'. The Hebrew prophets were fully aware that though the religion of their neighbours was false it yet contained broken elements of the truth. For them it was a grievous thing that any man should deliberately fall below what little of the truth might have been preserved for him.

(To be continued)

'TILL I COME'

A. MCD. REDWOOD

The Christian's horizon is not bounded by death, but by the 'Glorious Appearing' of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Erratum: On page 110, Article: 'Till I Come'; line 5 — for Millennial), read *Tribulation*),

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rticipation in it, for, as the
e church in Thessalonica

—'the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive, that are left, shall together with Him be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air' (1 Thess. 4:14 ff. RV.). Such is the glorious prospect of every believer, and this 'Hope', as John calls it (1 Jn. 3:3), must fill our vision as well as motivate and inspire all our service with increasing expectancy in these perilous days.

But it is just on the one central feature that we would now fix attention, viz., that this coming One is the Lord Christ Himself; the Jesus of Nazareth; the crucified, risen and glorified Saviour. There will be, of course, many related events which are to take place in fulfilment of the great purposes of God in and for this

world. But it is not for these we look primarily, although all derive their relative importance through Him, the Son of God, as the Executor of the Father's will. Our expectation, however, is higher and even more glorious than all such earthly 'happenings'. The apostle states it very tersely in writing to the church in Phillipi: 'Our *citizenship is in heaven*, from whence also we wait for the Saviour, *the Lord Jesus Christ*' (Phil. 3:20).

Hence the great word of comfort and assurance spoken by the angelic messengers at the Ascension: 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? *This same Jesus*, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner 'We shall see *Him even as he is*', repeats John (1-Jn. 3:2). This 'intimate' feature characterizes the whole divine event, without which it would be deprived of its glorious inspiration and appeal.

This is illustrated by the significant occurrence of that short phrase '*till I come*', or its equivalents, which occurs four or five times in the N.T. It is intended to direct our vision upon the Person Himself. It is profitable, therefore, to examine their context and note the lessons they have for us in our testimony for God in the world.

1. The first occurrence of the phrase is in the Parable of the Pounds, spoken by Christ Himself: '*Occupy till I come*' (Lk. 19:13). He would enlighten those who thought that the Kingdom of God was immediately to appear—that is, in visible and executive form. He tells them of a nobleman who goes '*into a far country*'—not, as they might expect, of a King coming with a great army to take a Kingdom. In fact, Christ more than once paints this particular feature into the pictures He uses to illustrate *service* and *stewardship*.

Similarly in the twin parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14ff.), and again in each of the three versions of the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen: 'A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and *went into a far country for a long time*' (Lk. 20:9). The idea, though not the exact words, is found elsewhere, e.g., 'The Son of man is as a man taking *a far journey*' (Mk. 13:34); 'the bridegroom *tarried*', etc., (cf. Lk. 12:36-46; etc.).

Note that these phrases all occur in the parables dealing with

the Second Coming, and they imply that in the present interval, it matters not how long or short it may be, our faith and loyalty will be disciplined and our service fulfilled: 'Occupy'=R.V. 'trade'; or according to Grimm-Thayer *Lexicon*= 'carry on the business of a banker, a trader'. It is the only occurrence of the verb in the N.T., but the noun occurs once in 2 Tim. 2:4, 'No soldier on service entangleth himself in the *affairs* of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier.' These two passages are the complement one of the other, the obverse and reverse, we might say, of the one picture. It is a matter of relative values: 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's'.

It is true that the common tasks of life, the duties and obligations of all human relationships do lay their imperious demands upon us, and these demands have a place of their own in the economy of God. He never allows for their repudiation. This question is not involved, however, in the latter passage. What the Apostle is seeking to emphasize is, not that the 'affairs of this life' are inherently antagonistic to the 'business of the King and the Kingdom', but that, they must not become entanglements, obsessions, hindrances to the higher interests of the Kingdom. The tragedy which these 'affairs' may lead to when they become entanglements is dealt with in 2 Pet. 2:20—the only other occurrence of the word *emplekō* in the N.T.

The Master Himself has pointed the way to the highest blessing in life: 'Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and *His righteousness*, and all these things (the essentials of life) shall be added unto you' (Matt. 6:33). Hence 'trade ye herewith till I come', for the merchandise and investments of the Kingdom yield to all who obey, a 'weight of glory immeasurable and eternal' (2 Cor. 4:17).

2. The next occurrence of the phrase is found in a totally different setting, in the Letter to the Church in Thyatira: '*That which ye have, hold fast till I come*' (Rev. 2:25). Christ addresses Himself to the church, first, as 'the Son of God', invested with all authority and divine insight, in contrast to the false claims of the 'prophetess' Jezebel. Also He is the Holy One, whose 'eyes are like a flame of fire'—that is, He alone is possessed of omniscience and

omnipotence, 'who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the heart': And finally, as the One whose 'feet are like unto burnished brass'; representing His purity and strength in judgment when He acts in chastening or in vengeance. Such is the character of Him who searched out and exposed the hidden evils and moral plagues of Thyatira. And with swift and inerrant retribution He is to judge the perpetrators, but with equal compassion and authority He will succour those who are loyal to Him.

Then we note the divine appeal and warning to the faithful in Thyatira, 'who have not this doctrine'. The verb *krateō*, 'hold fast,' literally means to exert strength upon, whether physically as in Matt. 14:3; 21:46; 26:4, 48; etc.; or mentally and spiritually, e.g., Mk. 7:3; 9:10; Col. 2:19; Heb. 4:14. See specially the apostle's appeal to the church in Thessalonica (2 Thess. 2:15), '*Stand fast and hold the traditions* which ye were taught by word or by epistle of ours'. 'Traditions' (*paradosis*), is sometimes used of the teachings of the Jewish Rabbis, but more often refers to matters of Christian doctrine, as in 2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Cor. 11:2. Paul writing to the Galatians (ch. 1:12) declares he received the Gospel 'not from man but from God, through revelation of Jesus Christ' (also see 1 Cor. 15:3 f.).

These Apostolic teachings have been preserved to us in the providence of God in the Canonical Scriptures of the N.T., and the church of God must *still 'hold fast'* to them in their entirety, for they form the foundation of the Christian's faith and belief until the Lord Himself returns. Jezebels and false teachers abound even today, and are busy as ever in seducing unwary Christians and others, but, 'the Lord knoweth them that are His', and it will yet come to pass that 'all the churches shall know that I am HE which searcheth the reins and hearts' (Rev. 2:3).

Read in the light of other Scriptures it surely implies 'a Day of Reckoning' for the whole Church. This will be at 'the Judgment Seat of Christ' (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10), for 'the Father . . . has given all judgment unto the Son . . . and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man' (Jn. 5:22, 27). But the Master's own words still ring

out their own loving and strong appeal: 'Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves *like unto men looking for their Lord*, when He shall return. . . . Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching . . .' (Lk. 12:35-40). Scarcely less urgent is Peter's appeal: 'Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is being brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. 1:13, R.V. also v. 14).

3. The third occurrence of the phrase 'Till I come' is found in 1 Cor. 11:26; 'For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death, *till He come*.' Our ideas of preaching or proclaiming (it is the same word used in such passages as Acts 4:2; 13:5, 38; 15:36, etc.), are almost entirely bound up with sermons and addresses. Here the Apostle shows that the great ordinance of the Church, the Lord's Supper, is both a remembrance and a proclaiming—a remembrance of Himself, a proclamation of His death. Dr Griffith Thomas points out that the word 'remembrance' (*anamnēsis*) e.g. in Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24, 25; Heb. 10:3, always means an act of the mind, never an objective memorial (*mnēmosunon*). The two Greek words are not the same, but always carefully distinguished. In the act of remembrance our thoughts and heart's affections are centred on the Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, stimulating faith and love by an appeal to the sanctified powers of imagination, under the control and encouragement of the Holy Spirit's gracious ministry. The Supper presents a peculiarly fitting occasion to '*consider* the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus' (Heb. 3:1). The verb is carefully chosen—*katanoēō* 'to consider attentively, fix your eyes and mind upon' (as in Acts 7:31; 11:6; Jas. 1:23; this last ref. will have a special significance!). The real and essential value of the Supper is, surely, that which leads the heart out in communion, worship and gratitude for the costly love of the Great Lover of our souls.

At the same time we 'proclaim the Lord's death:' *kataggellein* literally means 'proclaim', or 'pronounce', and not (as A.V.) 'shew forth'. The latter is not free from the idea of 'exhibit'

and tends to lend colour to the Romish idea of 'exhibiting a sacrifice'. The Supper is neither an exhibition nor a sacrifice, but in the act of partaking we announce 'the heart of the Gospel', the death of Christ on our behalf, 'until He come.' Not, of course, that the Ordinance is either *a* means, or *the* means, of salvation; nor even an *offer* of salvation. Many have doubtless found salvation whilst sitting and beholding the service in progress, without partaking. The idea of making it an occasion for the proclamation of salvation, is, however, not present. Rather it is a pronouncement on the part of all who partake that the death of Christ for our sins on the Cross is the sole basis of communion with God, the only ground upon which we can worship Him acceptably; and from that death flows the life of the Church.

'It has been God's good pleasure to keep alive in the earth through all the years since the Lord died, this means of openly declaring that Death of all deaths; that Death which annulled death, which drew death's sting, which secured that at last death shall be cast into the Lake of Fire: the Death of the Prince of Life; the one Death since the world began, undertaken by Divine authorization, the only truly voluntary Death since death entered; the Death by which we live; the basis of all our hopes, the supreme revelation of the heart of God. We announce to an unbelieving world, to an opposing host of spiritual powers, to enquiring myriads of unfallen angels, to the hearts of all believing sinners, and to the heart of our God and Father—the LORD'S DEATH.' (J. B. Watson)

The careful student will have noted that the words 'until He come' do not follow the command to 'remember' (v. 25), but the statement in v. 26 regarding 'proclaiming' His death. We shall remember HIM through all eternity, though not of course in the same sense as now; but beyond that 'till He come' the need for such proclamation will have ceased.

It is to the point, therefore, that the little phrase 'as often' is inserted. It is not the mere equivalent of 'when', but the thought of ordered *frequency* is implicit. That the disciples observed the Supper at least each first day of the week, seems clear from a study of the Acts. Far from opening the way to mere 'common-place-

ness', every opportunity is to be welcomed as occasions of enhancing and magnifying the glory of God manifested in Christ's Atoning Death. It is not a question therefore, of whether the Church as a whole keeps the Feast too often, but often enough.

Another point worthy of note, in view of its close resemblance to the Passover, is that the Supper was not only inaugurated first by the Lord Himself—which fact alone would give it sufficient importance—but it formed the subject of a special communication to Paul: '*I received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you;*' all of which adds to the emphasis the Holy Spirit gives to it. Any contempt of the Passover was visited by Jehovah's manifest displeasure, so also no one can lightly ignore a Divine command of the Lord Christ Himself, certainly not the command to '*Do this*'.

The lessons these few passages teach us regarding the present interval 'till He come', are characteristically simple, yet profoundly important. *Firstly*, the Lord Himself is coming back to take us to Himself, to the home He is preparing for all His redeemed children. Nothing can prevent His promise being fulfilled: 'If I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' There can be no doubt we are on the eve of great changes, and reading the events of today in the light of N.T. eschatology, both Messianic and apostolic, the Coming is not a 'far off indeterminate' event. *Secondly*, the present interval offers unique opportunities daily to earn the Lord's 'Well done!'. 'Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find *watching*'. Of the faithful and true christians of every land it should still be true: 'They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and Fellowship, in the Breaking of Bread and in Prayers' (Acts 2:42; with which must be added the statement in the previous verse also, v. 41). *Thirdly*, there is a predetermined Divine limit—'UNTIL I COME'—beyond which probation, opportunity, service ends. Destiny and rewards depend upon present service. 'Occupy till I COME' is the Lord's present challenge to every redeemed soul.

[Other occurrences of the phrase we have studied, or its equivalents, will be found in 1 Tim. 6: 14, and James 5: 7, and will require attention.]