

Beauties of the Truth

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Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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The Dedication of Solomon's Temple and Its Relationship to the Seven Last Plagues

"And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of Jehovah, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of Jehovah had filled the house of Jehovah" (1 Kings 8:10, 11).

Solomon's temple was completed in the 8th month of Solomon's 11th year as king (1 Kings 6:38). However, in the 7th month, Solomon brought the Ark of the Covenant and other furnishings into the temple and proceeded with its dedication. Smoke then filled the temple and no one was able to enter (1 Kings 8:2-4, 10-12).

The question naturally arises, "Why furnish and dedicate the temple a month before its completion?" God must have had something specific in mind when He did this.

REVELATION CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The answer is provided in Revelation 15. There we see that the temple filling with smoke is connected with the pouring out of the seven plagues. Hence, the temple furnished and dedicated prior to its completion indicates that the great work of atonement will not move forward until the seven last plagues have accomplished their task.

"After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple ... And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished" (Revelation 15:5-8, NAS).

Notice the sequence here. The temple filled with smoke so no man could enter until the seven plagues were fulfilled.

Because Solomon was promised a peaceable kingdom, his reign represents the peaceable kingdom of Christ, the antitypical Solomon (Matthew 12:42). Solomon's work of building the temple illustrated the work of Christ in building the spiritual temple that would serve during the kingdom of Christ. The Apostle Paul said, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16, see also Revelation 3:12). So, Revelation 15 also relates to the dedication and completion of the Church Class.

But why would its completion be delayed? As mentioned earlier, Solomon's temple filled with smoke one month **before** it was completed and went into operation. In the Revelation account the smoke filling the temple must represent something that precedes the completion of the church. In fact, the account says that "no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled" (verse 8).

THE SMOKE REPRESENTS GOD'S JUDGMENTS

Because of the connection that Revelation makes between the plagues and the smoke, the smoke must represent God's judgment and the resulting time of trouble. In Psalms 97:2,3, David offered a similar analogy between clouds and darkness and the judgments of God. "Clouds and darkness are round about him [God]: righteousness

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Solomon's Prayer at the Dedication of the Temple
 (Courtesy La Vista Church of Christ website)

and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.”

Solomon echoed that sentiment when he said, “Jehovah said that he would dwell in the thick darkness” (1 Kings 8:12). Although scriptures indicate that, “God dwells in the light” (1 Timothy 6:16), the sense in which He dwells in thick darkness is that His judgments, which bring trouble upon those being judged, are righteous acts. The seven angels, sent to pour out the plagues upon nominal Christianity, recognize that they are “great and marvelous” works and that God’s ways are “just and true” (verse 3).

Notice too that in Revelation 15 the smoke is said to be “from the glory of God” (verse 8). The true and righteous judgments of God will reveal to the world the glory of His just character. No one will properly question the correct judgment that leads to the destruction of everything that is nominal and false. Though troublous at the time, the result eventually will be beneficial to the world.

Thus the picture being used in Revelation suggests that the temple class will not be completed until the seven plagues are poured out. In the context following Revelation 15, the completion of the Church Class occurs in Revelation 16:17, after the 7th plague is poured out. “And there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.”

BLESSINGS COME AFTER THE TROUBLE

“So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud” (1 Kings 8:11). In Solomon’s day the temple was filled with smoke so that the priests were unable to do their priestly work. Antotypically, this indicates that no one can come to the temple to receive its blessings until the church is complete. The resurrection of the sleeping saints is not sufficient for Jesus and the church to administer New Covenant blessings to the world. And so, we wait for the time of trouble to accomplish its purpose and for the smoke to clear. Once it does, the priestly class will begin its work of reconciling the world to God.

Living today, as many Bible Students believe, in the time when these 7 plagues are being poured out, we can be encouraged to know that the end of this order is near and the glorious temple will soon begin to function. The plagues, which will bring down the present evil systems, are the just and righteous acts of God. They will soon lead to the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2), and “the desire of all nations shall come” (Haggai 2:7).

This understanding provides a beneficial perspective in knowing that, in the end, the trouble will be worth the pain, because the righteous judge of heaven is in control and His glory will be revealed.

Two Pillars

“He cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece: and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about” (1 Kings 7:15).

The Temple of Solomon evidently is a picture for us of the Church class, which, when completed and glorified, will be God’s agent for drawing mankind back to Himself.

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). “Ye ... as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). These texts relate the church to the Temple in the present time. But the service of the Church for the world relates the picture to the Millennial Age.

PILLARS OF THE TEMPLE

The pillars of the Temple are another symbolic way of representing members of the Church class. Revelation 3:12 promises, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.” That there are two pillars perhaps indicates that the Church comes from two backgrounds, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:15, Jesus makes “in himself of twain one new man” — both Jews and Gentiles having equal access to the privilege. “That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross ... [he] preached

peace to you which were afar off [Gentile believers], and to them that were nigh” {Jewish believers]}” (verses 16,17, see also Romans 4:16).

The measure of these pillars was 18 cubits tall and 12 cubits around, as expressed in our lead text. We suggest that these two measures also convey the thought that the Church class is drawn from both Jews and Gentiles. Twelve is the number of the tribes of natural Israel, and is thus often associated with the Jewish people. Even in Revelation, where the number 12 is used of Spiritual Israel, the meaning of the number is derived from the 12 tribes of Israel, as indicated in Revelation 7:4-8. Thus the 12 cubit circumference of these pillars refers to the fact that some Church members were Jewish believers.

EIGHTEEN

The other measure, 18 cubits of height, would then refer to Gentile believers. In the New Testament, the number 18 is rare. It occurs in but a single chapter of the New Testament, namely Luke 13. There it occurs three times, related to two distinct situations. Here are the relevant texts.

(1) Luke 13:4, “Those **eighteen**, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men?”

(2) Luke 13:11, 16, “There was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity **eighteen** years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself ... whom Satan hath bound, lo, these **eighteen** years.”

The 18 persons who died at the Tower of Siloam, through no fault of their own, represent the world of mankind, subjected to the curse of sin and death through inheritance. The woman bowed over with infirmity, “whom Satan hath bound,” through no fault of her own, also represents the world, bowed under the burden of sin.



Jairus' Daughter, Died and Raised at Age 12



Reaching for the Hem of his Garment, after 12 Years of Distress

TWELVE

In another chapter, Luke chapter 8, the number 12 appears twice. Luke 8:42 refers to the daughter of Jairus, “He had one only daughter, about **twelve** years of age, and she lay a dying.” Subsequently she did die, and Jesus brought her back to life.

However, as Jesus was about to attend to this need, he was interrupted by a lady in need who had suffered an affliction for **twelve** years — repeating the same number as expressed in the age of Jairus’ daughter. Luke 8:43, “A woman having an issue of blood **twelve** years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any.” She had come from behind Jesus, laid hold of the border of his garment, and was healed through this contact, and her faith in Jesus, as a gift from God.

These two instances of **twelve** pertain to the Israelites at the first advent of Christ. They were dead in trespasses under the Law (as pictured by the daughter of Jarius), and unclean through their inability to keep the Law (as pictured by the afflicted woman).

Thus in Luke chapter eight we have Jewish believers represented twice consecutively in the number 12 — and in Luke chapter 13 we have Gentile believers represented twice consecutively in the number 18. This supports the suggestion that these two numbers in the measure of the pillars are used to indicate that the Church members are drawn from two different backgrounds — Jewish believers, who were near to the covenants of promise, and Gentile believers, who formerly were “afar off” (Ephesians 2:17).

The reason that 12 is associated with Jewish believers is plain to see. But why is the number 18 used for Gentile believers? Probably the key is that 18 is the sum of a triple six — 6 plus 6 plus 6. Six, one shy of the perfect number seven, represents the world under sin and death for six millenniums, until the Kingdom. The six sons of Keturah likewise represent the world of mankind born in sin, but later elevated in status during the Millennium.

— Br. David Rice

Coverings of the Ark of the Covenant

“When the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall go in, and his sons, and they shall take down the veil of the screen, and cover the ark of the testimony with it, and shall put thereon a covering of sealskin, and shall spread over it a cloth all of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof” (Numbers 4:5,6 ASV).

Among the many details given in the Bible that specify the design of the Tabernacle are the instructions for moving from one campsite to another. These are recorded in Numbers chapter 4. All of these are fascinating in their rich detail and there are many antitypical lessons associated with them.

Of particular interest is the process of preparing the Ark of the Covenant for the move. The Ark of the Covenant, as the holiest and most important object in Israel, is the first item given attention. Aaron and his sons were charged with this task. This is described in our opening text, above..

The first action was to take down the veil between the Holy and the Most Holy in the Tabernacle. The height of the veil, and the Tabernacle itself, was 10 cubits, or about 15 feet. So they would have required a ladder, or something similar, to take it down. The veil was then laid over the Ark of the Covenant and thus became its first covering.

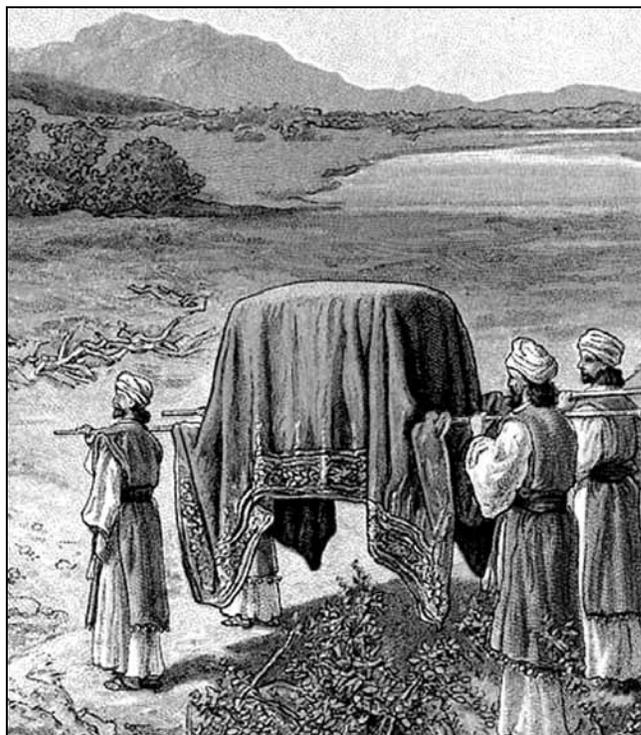
Next, a cover of sealskin, mistranslated “badgers’ skin” in the common version, was laid over the vail.¹ Finally, a cloth of blue became the outmost covering. The staves were placed in the Ark and then it was taken out of the Tabernacle for transport to the next location of Israel’s wilderness wanderings.

The placement and order of these three coverings is very significant and reinforces other important teaching in scripture.

The Ark of the Covenant itself is rich in antitypical detail. It normally resided in the Most Holy. The Most Holy represents the perfection of the Divine Condition, the hope of the church. This is in contrast to the Holy which represents the incomplete condition of the church during its trial and experience in the flesh. Put another way, the Holy represents the spirit-begotten condition while the Most Holy represents the spirit-born condition. Consequently, the Ark of the Covenant represents the Glorified Christ, Jesus and his church, having attained the Divine Nature.

THE FIRST COVERING

The veil, which was hung between the Holy and the Most Holy, represents the sacrificial death of the flesh. In the book of Hebrews this veil is actually mentioned



The Ark of the Covenant, with Blue Outer Covering

three times by the Apostle Paul and reinforces this understanding.

The first mention is in Hebrews 6:9, “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (ASV). Paul here demonstrates that the Most Holy compartment typifies our hope of glory and is an anchor for us. We will enter into glory by going from the Holy condition past this veil into the Most Holy.

The second mention of the veil is found in Hebrews 9:3, “And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies” (ASV). Here Paul explains that the Most Holy is beyond the second veil of the Tabernacle.

The last occurrence is found in Hebrews 10:19,20, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (ASV). In this passage Paul teaches that Jesus’ faithful disciples enter into the antitypical Most Holy by his blood. He clarifies this further by showing that it was by the sacrificial death of his “flesh” which is represented by the second veil.

THE SECOND COVERING

After the vail was placed over the Ark of the Covenant, a cloth of sealskin was laid on top of it. Sealskins were used as outmost coverings in several places connected with the Tabernacle. The largest of these was the outermost layer of the Tabernacle itself. The practical value of this was the fact that sealskin is waterproof and makes an excellent protective layer.

It is worthy of note that sealskin, from an aquatic animal, seems out of place in the wilderness where Israel wandered. But this too is significant. These sealskins were undoubtedly obtained from the Red Sea which Israel crossed at the start of their wilderness journey.

Sealskin appears to be a picture of how Jesus and the church are viewed by the world. Someone looking at the Tabernacle from the outside would see only a black, drab looking tent. They would not see the precious and beautiful things within. Likewise, when the world looks at a Christian, they cannot see the precious and beautiful character that God is developing within that individual.

This is how Jesus was viewed by many. When he first began to teach, detractors saw only the outside. Mark 6:2,3, "And when the Sabbath was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, 'Whence hath this man these things?' and, 'What is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?' And they were offended in him."

They saw only "the carpenter." How could a carpenter say such things?

There is a prophecy in Isaiah that shows the same kind of cold reception that Jesus would receive during his ministry. "Who hath believed our message? And to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not" (Isaiah 53:1-3, ASV).

Note the description that "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." This negative perspective is represented by the unattractive sealskin.

That sealskin seems to be out-of-place in a wilderness reflects the fact that sincere Christians walking in this

world are also out of place. They live by different and higher standards and do not conform to this world. Their eventual home will be in heaven.

As a layer on the Ark of the Covenant, it might be expected to be the outermost covering, as it is in every other usage in the Tabernacle. But curiously it is not. There is a third covering.

THE THIRD COVERING

The final covering over the Ark of the Covenant was a cloth of blue. To understand its antitypical meaning we have to review all three colors that are used extensively throughout the Tabernacle: scarlet, purple, and blue. The meaning of these colors is intuitive and consistent throughout scripture.

- **Scarlet** — The color of blood, this represents sacrificial death.
- **Purple** — The color of Royalty.
- **Blue** — Represents faithfulness. It is the color the sky takes in response to the light of the sun. The best result of the light of God's word in one's life is faithfulness. There are two texts which associate faithfulness with the skies:

"Thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, is in the heavens; Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies" (Psalms 36:5 ASV). "For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; Thy faithfulness wilt thou establish in the very heavens" (Psalms 89:2 ASV).

These colors, blue, scarlet, and purple, can be seen in a text very familiar to Christians, Revelation 2:10. "Be thou faithful (**blue**) unto death (**scarlet**), and I will give thee the crown (**purple**) of life."²

So this last covering represents the faithfulness of the glorified Christ.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The sequence of these three coverings is significant. Remembering that the Ark represents the glorified Christ dwelling in a Most Holy condition, we look for meaning after the church has been resurrected.

Taking down the vail, removing it from between the Holy and the Most Holy, represents the completion and end of the high calling. Using the vail to then cover the ark reflects the fact that the church has attained her hope beyond her temporary condition in the Holy.

The sealskin laid on top of the vail represents a very important doctrine that has been obscured in the minds of most Christians. This doctrine is taught by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:50: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

Our hope is for a spiritual resurrection, a resurrection to the divine nature with immortal and incorruptible spiritual bodies. This picture of the sealskin shows that the flesh



Model of the Ark of the Covenant

does not go beyond the veil. It did not touch the Ark of the Covenant, remaining separated from it by the veil. The flesh does not enter into glory — it cannot inherit the kingdom!

But why show this at all? If it does not enter into the picture of glory, why is it there? The answer is shown by the final covering of blue.

Spiritual beings are invisible to human eyes except when they choose to materialize a form to communicate with men. So in the Kingdom, the church will not be seen! Friends and family will note their absence. But there will be an acknowledgement of their faith. All will know that these faithful men and women, who gave their lives for the Gospel, have entered into heaven and have become the Kings and Priests of the Kingdom.

PSALM 87

Psalm 87 seems to describe this very thing.

Verse 2, “Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” Zion is a picture of both spiritual Israel and fleshly Israel, depending upon the context. In this case, the contrast with the “dwellings of Jacob” shows that spiritual Israel is intended.

Verse 3, “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.” In scripture spiritual Israel is mentioned several times as a city. One clear and compelling example is found in Revelation 21:2, “And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”

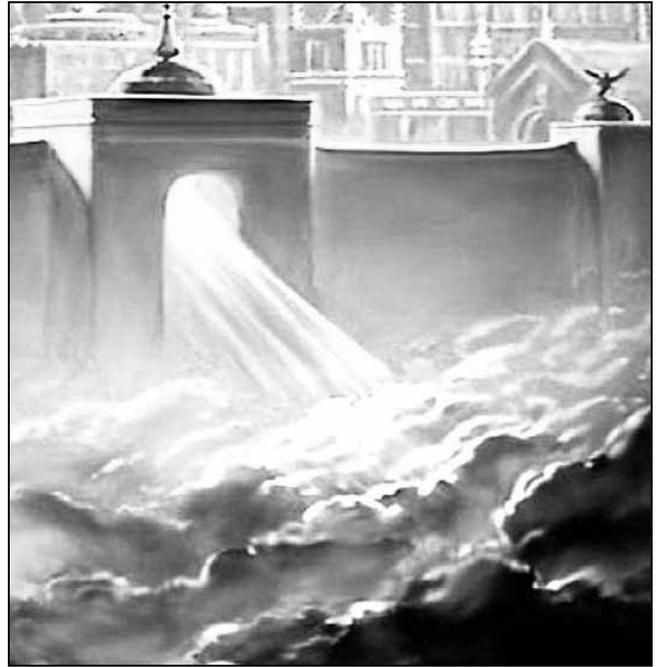
The bride adorned for her husband can be none other than the church. Thus we have the interpretation of the holy city — New Jerusalem — representing the church.

The “Glorious things” spoken of this glorified city are spoken by both God and the peoples of the earth. The Hebrew word “Selah” is an annotation for the music of the Psalm. It means “to pause.” In our case, we pause to reflect upon its meaning.

Verse 4, “I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon as among them that know me: Behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia: This one was born there.” God starts speaking of the glorious things by declaring to several nations “This one was born there.” Who was born where? The next verse expands.

Verse 5, “Yea, of Zion it shall be said, ‘This one and that one was born in her; And the Most High himself will establish her.’ “ Being “Born in Zion” describes the birth of spiritual Israel to the divine nature. The people of the earth will then recognize that their Kings and Priests are on the divine plane.

Verse 6, “Jehovah will count, when he writeth up the peoples, this one was born there. Selah.” The list of overcoming church members, the number of which is 144,000, will be published. The world will know who their rulers are. And it is likely that there will be biographies of



New Jerusalem, descended from above

each of these individuals so that the people of the earth will know of their sacrifice and faithfulness. The Psalmist ends with another “Selah,” a directive to pause and consider these wonderful words.

Bringing this back to the coverings of the ark, we see that the outermost cloth of blue, the only covering seen by everyone in Ancient Israel, represents the fact that mankind will see and acknowledge the faith of the church. But they will not see the flesh. The flesh will be gone, hidden under the cloth of blue!

APPLICATION

We praise God that two simple verses, describing how the Ark of the Covenant was moved, contain such a rich trove of truths. How efficient God is! And how satisfying it is to see the distinction between fleshly and spirit nature depicted in this beautiful type.

An encouraging thought can be gleaned from all of this. Do your utmost to live a faithful life, day-by-day. Let your light shine in the midst of friends and family, many of whom may have no clue about your calling. Let your good character testify to the love and compassion of God. In due time, they will remember your diligent faithfulness and will themselves praise God for it.

Selah!

— Br. David Stein

(1) Or Manatee skins. See “Tabernacle Coverings of Sea-cows,” *Beauties of the Truth*, February, 2010.

(2) It is interesting that the great harlot of Revelation 17 is described with purple and scarlet. She is a queen (purple) and has martyred the saints (scarlet). But she has **no blue**. Of course she would not — she is a great example of **unfaithfulness**. How appropriate that blue is lacking!

The Eleventh Hour Worker

“When he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour ... and said ... Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. ... Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? ... Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive” (Matthew 20:2-7).

The parable of the 11th hour worker has been a difficult parable to understand. What were the circumstances that caused Jesus to give it and what is the lesson to be gained?

Found in Matthew 20:1-16, the parable describes a land owner who had gone out early in the day and hired men to work in his vineyard. Each worker agreed to work for a penny. At the 3rd, the 6th, and the 9th hours, the owner hired additional workers and, as wages, said that they would receive “whatever is right.” Finally, at the 11th hour of the day, he hired more workers, with the same condition, that they would receive “whatever is right.”

At the end of the day, as the workers collected their pay, those who were hired first noticed that the 11th hour workers received the same penny wage. They complained to the owner that it was not fair. They had expected to be paid more since they had worked so much longer. But the land owner answered, “Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my money? Or are you envious because I am generous?” (verses 13-15 NIV).

CHAPTER DIVISION

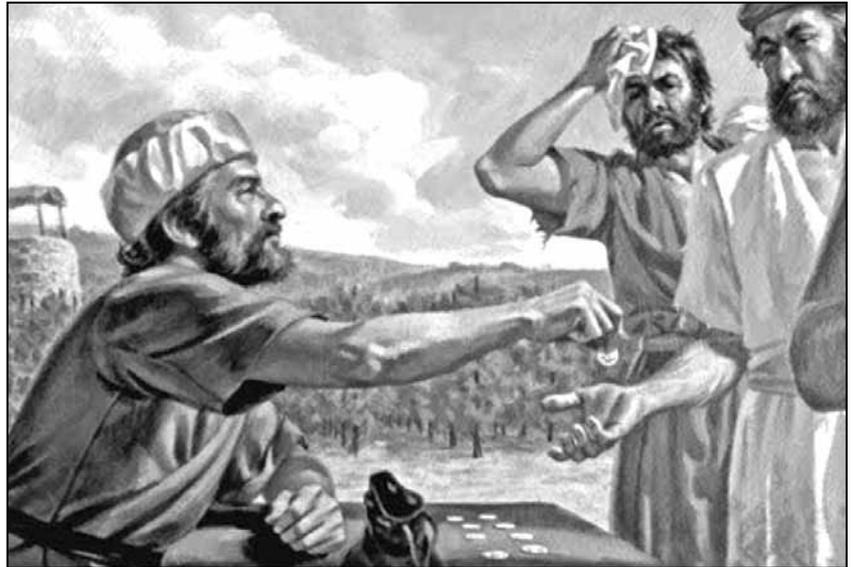
One of the difficulties with studying this parable is the chapter division. The parable begins chapter 20 with the word “For” or “Therefore.” This is a word meant to draw a conclusion. So, to get the sense of why Jesus gave the parable of the 11th hour worker, it is necessary to go back to chapter 19 in order to see what precipitated it.

The context preceding the 11th hour worker reveals a discussion between Jesus and a rich young ruler who had approached Jesus with a probing question. He said, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” After telling him that he should live by the principles of the Law the young man said, “All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?”

Jesus then said, “go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (verses 21, 22).

This discussion was likely a sad experience for the Lord. Here was a man with a good heart, but one too caught up in his own wealth to live a life of sacrifice. He gave up far more than wealth when he refused the Lord’s invitation. It is ironic to think that, had he accepted Jesus’ offer, and been faithful in his consecration, he would someday have more wealth than he could ever possess on earth. Jesus called it “treasure in heaven.”

After the rich man declined our Lord’s invitation to sell his possessions and follow him, Jesus said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (verse 24).



Workers Receiving Pay at the End of the Day

The disciples were amazed by this statement, and they made two comments. One said, “Who then can be saved?” (verse 25). In other words, “If we have to overcome our natural propensity to selfishness, do good to others, and give up all that we have, how could we ever be saved?”

PETER’S QUESTION

But Peter was not so skeptical. He said, “Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?” (verse 27). Peter’s statement is the reason that Jesus expanded the lesson that he just gave about the rich. He expanded it into a lesson about making comparisons with others.

Jesus offered the rich young man the answer to how he might gain eternal life, and lay up true treasure in heaven. To gain these riches he should forsake all his possessions and follow the Lord. Peter’s sentiment was “Lord, we have done that. What will we get?” Though not



The Rich Young Ruler — The Price was Too Dear

an unreasonable question, it showed a measure of selfish desire, spoken by a natural man.

But Jesus did not take offense. He simply answered by saying, “Ye which have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (verse 28). And then he gave the beautiful message of verse 29. “Everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, or farms to follow me will get much more than they left. And they will have eternal life.”

Here was the complete answer that the rich man did not understand. What one gives up for the Lord is inconsequential in comparison to the reward they will receive. So Jesus drew a complete picture of what is expected of his followers. He expects them to forsake this world and to do God’s will. It is a comprehensive description of consecration.

THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST

At the end of chapter 19 Jesus said, “But many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first” (verse 30). In connecting that statement to his discussion with the rich man, Jesus was saying that in this world the rich are first in honor. The rich young man was an example of that.

But in the kingdom, many who are now first in honor will be last. Their wealth will not enter into the measure of honor that they will then receive. His disciples, who are now least in the estimation of this world, will be first in honor because of their consecrated lifestyle.

However, it seems to have still bothered Peter that the rich man could receive “eternal life,” the same reward as the disciples who had “forsaken all.”

To address this concern Jesus used the words of the land owner who told his disgruntled workers, “Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my money? Or are you envious because I am generous? So the last will be first, and the first will be last” (Matthew 20:15,16 NIV). Jesus was saying that Peter and the disciples did not have the right to question how God would reward those who entered the race after them.

Contextually then, Peter was like the worker who had born the heat and exhaustion of the day. The disciples were the ones grumbling

about the 11th hour worker who received the same wages from a generous Lord.

At the time Peter and the other disciples had been with Jesus for about three years. They had served with him and sacrificed their lives for the Gospel. It is understandable that they would question why the rich man would be worthy of the same reward as those who had been with the Lord from the beginning.

The Parable of the 11th Hour Worker, then, was Jesus’ answer to Peter’s envy. However, it conveys a principle that is not limited to the early disciples. Every Christian should understand that no one has a right to question who the Lord blesses and rewards. Jealousy should have no room in the Christian heart and comparisons are unprofitable.

Every follower of the Lord should focus on their own responsibilities, understanding that the Lord will deal righteously and lovingly with every individual. He can be trusted for that.

— *Br. Tom Ruggirello*

*Whosoever doth not bear his cross,
and come after me, cannot be
my disciple. Likewise, whosoever
he be of you that forsaketh
not all that he hath, he
cannot be my disciple.
(Luke 14:27, 33).*