

"AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT."

For the sake of the many new readers of the WATCH TOWER, it may not be amiss to give a general review of the steps of faith by which the Lord has been leading us as a people, during the last seven years, and in a general sense during the preceding thirty-five years.

The parable of "The Ten Virgins" (*Matt. 25*) seems to have been given as a pen picture of some of the important events connected with the close of the Gospel Age. The introduction of the parable shows this, for after recounting to the disciples (*Matt. 24*) some of the signs of the ending of the Gospel Age and the --*parousia*--presence of the Son of Man, which *verse 37* assures them will be a *presence* which the world cannot recognize, then follows the parable, connected with the preceding statements by the word *then*. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven (church) be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps (Bibles) and went forth *to meet* the Bridegroom" (*i.e.*,) they went forth or separated themselves because of their belief that the Bridegroom, Jesus, was about to come.

While we are neither "Millerites" nor "Adventists," yet we believe that this much of this parable met its fulfillment in 1843 and 1844, when William Miller and others, Bible in hand, walked out by faith on its statements, expecting Jesus at that time. They were composed like all other earthly companies of two or more classes; one class had the Spirit in their hearts as well as its light in the Word (oil in their vessels and in their lamps) others had *only* the light of the Word (oil in the lamp).

The disappointment of that company of Christians (which was composed of many of the best Christians from all denominations) all are well aware of, but it was foretold in the parable: "While the Bridegroom *tarried* they all slumbered and slept." As a general arousing of the church to the investigation of God's Word had attended the preaching of Mr. Miller, and the Word was more studied than ever before, especially the Prophecies, so when his calculations seemed to end in such bitter disappointment, a spirit of drowsiness followed; some slumbered, some slept, and many vagaries--dreamings incidental to sleep soon sprung up.

The next important step of the parable (*verse 6*) is the midnight cry. The night of the parable was the time during which the disappointment lasted and the sleeping occurred, and was to end with joy in the *morning*, when, the tarrying being ended, the Bridegroom would be present.

As the former movement in the parable had been represented by Miller and others, so to this second movement we give a similar application. A brother, B_____ of Rochester, was, we believe, the chosen vessel of God through whom the "Midnight Cry" issued to the sleeping virgins of Christ, announcing a discrepancy of thirty years in some of Miller's calculations, and giving a rearrangement of the same argument (and some additional), proving that the *night* of the parable was thirty years [R289 : page 3] long, and that the morning was in 1873, and the Bridegroom due in that morning in 1874.

We do not here give the time, arguments or proofs. They are familiar to many, and can be had in more convenient shape. We merely notice here that the Bible chronology, first dug from Scripture by Bowen, of England, which shows clearly and positively that the 6,000 years from Adam ended in 1873, and consequently that there the morning of the Millennial day (the seventh thousand) began, in which a variety of things are due. The establishment of the kingdom of Christ, the binding of Satan, the restitution of all things, and the blessing of all the families of the earth, are all due. And if all these things are due during this thousand years which commenced in 1873, surely one of the *first* things due and on which the others all depend, is the coming of the Bridegroom, who must first exalt his church [establish his kingdom] before it can bless, restore or bind.

Bro. B_____ first began to preach the message, and soon started a paper, which he appropriately called "*The Midnight Cry*," the circulation of which soon ran up to 15,000 copies a month, and served to arouse many of the drowsy to a fresh examination and trimming of their lamps. These began again to search the Scriptures for the *time* of the Bridegroom's coming.

But the disappointment had served an intended purpose in casting a reproach on the subject of "*time*," and the *prudent* ones had reached the worldly-wise conclusion that having been disappointed once and consequently had the finger of scorn pointed at them, they would be more *prudent* in future, and not expose themselves to contempt; so there was a division of the company; some could see it and others could not. ("Thou hast hid these things from the (worldly) wise and *prudent*, and hast revealed them unto babes.") Some rejoiced in the midnight message that the Bridegroom was due in 1874, and were able to find the evidences in the light of their lamps; others admitted that though Scripture contained a great deal of "*time*," yet they were so fearful and prudent that their lamps would give no light. Thus they said: "Our lamps are gone out." Thus one separation took place.

When 1874 came and there was no outward sign of Jesus in the literal clouds and in a fleshly form, there was a general re-examination of all the arguments upon which the "Midnight Cry" was made. And when no fault or flaw could be found, it led to the critical examination of the Scriptures which seem to bear on the *manner* of Christ's coming, and it was soon discovered that the expectation of Jesus in the *flesh* at the second advent was the mistake; that the human nature had been taken for the purpose of giving a *ransom* for humanity, and that the *human* nature remains *a sacrifice forever*; that Jesus, though put to death in the flesh, was quickened or made alive *in spirit*--Sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body, &c., and that all spiritual bodies *can* be present unseen. Soon too, under critical examination ***Matt. 24:37*** and ***Luke 17:26,30*** were seen to teach positively that "in the *presence*" of Christ, "in his days," the world would be ignorant of the fact, and be attending to their affairs as usual. Then the words of Paul: "Ye *brethren* are not in darkness that that day should come upon you as a thief," indicated that the church should possess a light on the subject while the world would be in ignorance. Peter's words, too, were in harmony: "Take heed to the sure word of prophesy, which shines as a *light* in a dark place."

When this was seen it was apparent at once that the "*time*" element of the Scriptures was intended only for those who would walk very close to the Lord and *feed* on his Word, and not to scare the world into repentance. How necessary too, if the manner of Christ's coming was such that the world would not know, but would eat, plant and build as usual, that there should be some source of information to the waiting virgins, else they too, would be in darkness. How reasonable, too, that the knowledge of Christ's presence should be presented to the household of faith in the same way all other blessings had been received, viz.: by *faith* in the statements of the Word of God. It is thus they knew of their justification from all sin; thus they heard the call to become the Bride and joint heirs; thus they see the crown of life and all the exceeding great and precious promises--and thus they receive the knowledge of the *presence* of the Bridegroom--by faith built on the statements of God through Jesus, the apostles and prophets.

This increase of knowledge, led to still greater faith in the "*time*," for it was evident that the Lord was leading, and every item of light added increased brightness to others. It was the same light and the same oil shining more and more.

It was evident, then, that though the *manner* in which they had expected Jesus was in error, yet the time, as indicated by the "Midnight Cry," was correct, and that the Bridegroom *came* in the Autumn of 1874, and he *appeared* to the eyes of faith-- *seen* by the light of the lamp--the Word. Afterward it was seen that the thirty years of tarrying between 1844 and 1874 was the exact parallel to the thirty years of tarrying at the first advent, from the time the wise men visited the *babe* until Jesus stood on Jordan and was anointed with the Holy Ghost for his work, at thirty years of age. (***Acts 10:38.***)

This and other points of similarity brought attention to the fact that the Jewish and Gospel ages had been parallels in their general details, both being of the same length, and both ending with comings of Jesus and the *closing period* in each case, called a "harvest," or end of the age. Examination of the Word disclosed the fact that God had so ordered the Jewish age and people, &c., as that they were made a pattern or "shadow" on a fleshly plane, of things to take place in the Gospel age on a higher plane. The fact that the "time arguments" proved this parallelism was additional evidence that they were correct, and these wonderful parallelisms soon became one of the leading evidences that we are in the "Harvest," or end of the Gospel age, and that the Reaper is *present*, separating with the sickle of truth the wheat and tares. As there were seven years of "*favor*" to the Jews from the time Jesus' ministry began (the 70th week of **Daniel 9:27**), followed by thirty-three years of trouble called fire, so here we see the parallel of seven years of favor to October 3d, 1881, to the Gospel church, to be followed by trouble called "fire," which will consume the dross of Babylon and purify those of God's children in and contaminated by her.

To return to the parable. If these movements were of God, and if Bros. Miller and B_____ were his instruments, then that "Midnight Cry," based on the prophetic and other statements and evidences, was correct, and the "Bridegroom *came*" in 1874. We believe that Midnight Cry was of God, and was fulfilled by the Bridegroom's coming, not because Bros. Miller and B_____ claimed it, but because the Word of God supports it.

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word."

The next step in the parable, after the Bridegroom comes, is an assembling *in his presence* of those who are to be united to him and to become his bride. "The Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage" (**verse 10**.) The *going in*, like all other features of the parable, is a work of time, and we understand that it has been in progress during the seven years from 1874. Those who went *in with him* must all have recognized his presence; they include, we believe, saints *out of all* denominations who had made themselves living sacrifices *to* God (not sacrifices to sectarian churches and creeds--so many do this and *call it* sacrificing to God). Such as sacrificed self and became as little children, we believe the Lord has led during the past seven years, to a knowledge of the Bridegroom's *presence*, and as they accepted it, they "*went in* with him to the marriage." The marriage has not yet taken place. It could not until *all* had gone in.

The seven years which ended October 3d, 1881, were years of favor during the presence, that of the living generation *all* of readiness of heart might become members of the little flock and enter into the joys of our Lord's presence. If our application of Scripture be correct, the *favor* has now ended, and in the language of the parable, "the door was shut"; and to those who have never fully consecrated and sacrificed self to God, we cannot any longer hold out the great prize of our high calling, viz.: to be members of the Bride of Christ, joint heirs of Glory, Honor and Immortality.

But, thank God, we do not have it to say that the *door* OF MERCY has closed. Oh, no! "His mercy endureth forever." And while we call it the door of *favor*, yet we understand [**R289 : page 4**] the Word to teach that God has many favors to many classes of His children. He has favors and mercies for those who have *covenanted* and failed to make living sacrifices of themselves. He has mercies and favors for Israel according to the flesh, and still other blessings for "all the families of the earth." But the favor or opportunity of being members of the Royal family and partakers of the Divine nature is the chief prize, and those who, during the Gospel age, have won this prize by *so running* as to obtain must first be crowned before the other favors and blessings can be given to the other classes--these with Jesus, their head, constituting the seed in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

It is not ours to say which, individually, are shut out, but we believe that none were shut out who up to

that time, had made an entire consecration *to God*.

Does some one inquire: Why has the "marriage" not taken place if all [R290 : page 4] have gone in and the door is shut? We answer that we have not expected the "marriage" as soon as the door would shut, this parable and other Scripture illustrations seeming to demand a waiting time after the door was shut before the *union* with the Bridegroom. Suppose it were an earthly marriage, and the announcement was made that the door would open at 2 P.M. and close at 4 o'clock. Some would come early and others later; on arrival there would be more or less preparation to make, and when, at 4 o'clock, the door closed, it is only reasonable to suppose that some time would intervene before the ceremonies. So here the "gathering together unto Him" of those who have made a covenant by sacrifice (*Psa. 50:5*), *i.e.*, their going in to the marriage, has been in progress for seven years, and each, as he entered the wedding apartments, has become exercised in having his garments without spot and wrinkle *before him*--our Bridegroom, and our efforts extend to all who enter, for the Bride is to "*make herself ready*." (*Rev. 19:7*.) And if some came in very recently they, as members of the prospective Bride, require *time* and help to make them ready; besides who will say that others who have been rejoicing in the *presence of the Bridegroom* and waiting for the marriage; may not yet need the application of water (truth) and washing by water through the Word. (*Eph. 5:26*.)

Let us then not forget nor neglect these two things: First, to see that our own sacrifice is complete; and, second, to help one another to prepare for the great climax of our hopes; for who will say that though the door may be closed so that none will be allowed to enter, some may not be cast out "into outer darkness" if they be not ready for the marriage.

The next item to be noticed in the parable is that afterward came the other virgins, saying (after the door was shut: "Lord, Lord, open unto us." This, if we read the parable aright, indicates that after the door is shut, and apparently before the marriage takes place, some who now scoff at the idea of the Lord's presence will come to see differently, and entreat that they be admitted to be part of the Bride.

From other Scriptures it seems evident that their knowledge of the *presence* of the Lord came not from the light shining from the lamp of prophecy, but rather from the judgments upon the nominal church, which we believe are now fully due, and will soon come. These judgments will prepare them for truth by convincing them of the multitudinous errors of doctrines and systems in Babylon. If our inferences here be correct, that these will come to knock because of judgments manifesting the *presence* of the Lord, and if this knock is prior to the marriage, it would seem as though the marriage is some time after the door closes. How long--weeks or months--we at present have nothing to indicate, but we shall see from other types, &c., other things *due* here.

The Lord's answer to those knocking too late, we understand to mean: "I do not recognize you as part of my Bride; my espoused one has come in with me. I have only one bride. They must go through the time of trouble, and if they will may be of the great multitude, who come out of great tribulation, who shall be before the throne and serve God." (*Rev. 7:9*.)

This will be a glorious place and portion, though not so glorious as that of the Bride, to sit *with him* on His throne.

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