

November 7

And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God. Revelation 20:4

ALTHOUGH this beheading is figurative and not literal, it nevertheless has a deep significance.... It signifies, not only death to *self-will*, but also to be cut off from all other heads, governments and law-

R2007 "The beheading is symbolic: for neither our Lord nor the apostles were literally beheaded. It signifies that all must suffer earthly disadvantages, and lay down their lives in the defence and service of the truth, if they shall be worthy to share Christ's glory."

(Rev 20:4 KJV) "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

R331 "I saw thrones and they sat upon them and judgment [Rotherham—judicial *sentence*] was given unto them." The thrones are those of earthly kingdoms at the present time, and all under the "prince of this world." (John 14:30) These are all condemned as unfit, and are to be overthrown, to give place to the kingdom of Christ. [The Greek word rendered *judgment* here, is the same rendered *condemnation* in the following passages: Luke 23:40; Jas. 3:1; Jude 4.]

"And I saw the *persons* of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God." We believe that a few of this class are now living. It is not a literal beheading, but in keeping with other figures; it is a symbolic beheading. [Some suppose this to refer to all the *martyrs* of past ages-- but of them the fewest number were *beheaded*.]

Beheading, is to cut off from a *head*. There are many so called *bodies* of Christ: the Methodist body, Presbyterian body, etc., are common expressions. (The Scriptures, of course, recognize no such division into sects; but assure us that there is only one *body* and one head.) Of course, each body must have a head or authority, from whence comes its government and laws. These are Conferences, Assemblies, etc., and we predict that any one connected with any of these who will "witness for Jesus," as the *only* head of the church, and for the "Word of God," as the only standard of

givers, and to recognize no "head" but Jesus, whom God hath appointed to be the Head of the church, which is His body....It means, not only to be *cut off* from institutional heads and authorities, but also to cease to have heads and wills of our own, and to accept, instead, the headship, the will, of our Lord Jesus. It is the same thought that is drawn to our attention by the

doctrine, will very quickly be treated as described--beheaded--cut off from those church heads. This is in harmony with the next clause which says they worshiped not the *Beast*, neither his *Image*, neither received his *mark*. These, we saw in our last number, represent sectarian systems.

This Scripture shows that such as are of this bounden class, not separated --beheaded--cut off--from others than the *true head*, are not overcomers, while the class described, of all ages, who will live and reign with Christ a thousand years, are. "This is the first resurrection."

R5197 "When we present ourselves as living sacrifices, we make consecration unto *death* and consequently, if accepted, lose forever all right to life on the *human plane*. We present our bodies that we may become priests of the new order, or profession, under the great High Priest, to whom we have given *our lives*. If He accepts them, we have nothing more to do with them. *He* has all title to our *earthly rights*. We do not hold over those rights. In other words, we *cease to be*; we are *beheaded*, so far as all *earthly* hopes or aims are concerned. By virtue of His *perfection*, our Lord has a *right* to everlasting life. We *never had a right* to everlasting life, but are enabled to present ourselves because of His *acceptance* of our sacrifices *as His own*."

R3709 "Each must lose his own self-will, his own headship, and must become members of the body of Christ, knowing no head, no will but the will of his Lord."

R4808 "Do I trust him implicitly? Is a "Thus saith the Lord" the end of all controversy, the solution of all doubts and the restful assurance in every perplexity?"

R2416 "It is not for us to supervise the trials and difficulties which may beset us. It is for us to make an unreserved consecration of ourselves to the Lord, and then leave to him the decision of how great shall be our trials and besetments--how great our sacrifices in following his leadings. The Lord may see that some need special trials, more than

apostle in Romans 6:3, where he declares that we are baptized into the *body* of Christ, as members of that body, under the one Head, Christ, by being baptized into His death.--a full consecration of our wills, and ultimately a full laying down of our lives, faithfully unto death. Z. '00-285 R2700:6

others, and those things which to some would be great trials and imply great sacrifices, to others, because of greater love to the Lord and his cause, and greater zeal for service, the sacrifice might seem to be, as the Apostle expresses it of his own, "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, and which are working out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If we are doing our part faithfully--if we are faithful to the Lord and to his people, and to his truth, to the best of our knowledge and ability, God will surely oversee our affairs so that we shall have *just* the right experiences to develop us; just the proper opportunities of sacrifice which his wisdom sees to be appropriate and needful to us...

In this enlightened day physical scourgings are not sanctioned by the *world*, nevertheless we may be called on to endure patiently and uncomplainingly "cruel mockings" of the *tongue*;--we may be imprisoned in the sense of being ostracized for the truth's sake;--as our Lord foretold, "They shall cast you out of the synagogue and *separate you from their company*: yea, whosoever shall kill you shall think that he doeth God service." Many to-day are *thus* imprisoned and killed in *influence* for the truth's sake. Thus the Apostle also declared, "I *die* daily." And all who will constitute the elect overcoming Church, must die thus. In the symbolic language of Revelation this is termed *beheading*, and we are assured that all who will share the First Resurrection and the Kingdom will have been thus symbolically *beheaded*.--Rev. 20:4."

R2074 "The "Narrow Way" of self-denial and self-sacrifice marked out in the New Testament is the pathway of those who would win the prize of the high calling to joint heirship with Christ as his Church, his Bride..."

The narrow way is foolishness to the world, neither can the worldly appreciate it, because its value must be spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:7-16)... It is inspired, not by earthly hopes...but by "exceeding great and precious promises," "heavenly promises," of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and unfading..."

HOW FAITHFUL

What contemplations will be ours
When sinks life's setting sun,
As we review in closing hours
The race which we have run?

Will noble deeds, and kindly act
And faithful service to our king,
Disclose a life of sacrifice
Of love obedient to His will?

Or have the days been vainly spent
And opportunities let go,
With world and pleasure crowding in
While work for God the morrow waits?

"BEHEADED FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS"

"And I saw the souls [persons] of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God;... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."--Rev. 20:4.

ALL constituting the Kingdom class are here referred to as beheaded--every member of the glorified Church must, eventually, have this experience, whatever it signifies. But we reflect that our Lord was not beheaded and, so far as history shows, few, if any, of the apostles were literally beheaded; indeed, very few, if any, of the Lord's saints, from Pentecost to the present time, have died by decapitation. We are to remember, however, that this statement is from the symbolical book, and is therefore a figure of speech, a word-picture, and its meaning must be sought for accordingly.

The Apostle gives us the key, saying, "The head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." (1 Cor. 11:3.) As a woman who becomes a wife accepts her husband as the head of the family, so the Church accepts Christ as its head, and each member of the Church thus comes into relationship with the Lord as a member of his body--not the head; and all of these, to be acceptable as members of the figurative body of Christ, must be will-less, headless: their own wills must be surrendered, so that, like their Lord, they can say, "Not my will, but thine, be done." They must be headless in the sense of ignoring their own wills, being dead to self and actuated henceforth by the will of the head of the body, Christ Jesus. His will, his mind, his spirit, must dwell in each member of the body, and abound, if it would abide a member of his body, the Church. Thus, as the wife loses her own name, and accepts the name of her husband and his headship, so each member of the bride of Christ must lose his or her individuality in order to be accepted as the Bride of Christ. It is this self-surrender to Christ on the part of his Church that is represented in the symbolism of the text before us.

One of the prime hindrances to Christian growth is the failure to discern the completeness of the sacrifice requisite in those who would be accounted as members of the elect Church, the body of Christ. No one can be of this elect number, to live and reign with Christ in his Millennial Kingdom, who has not been thus beheaded. We often think of this when we hear well-meaning Christian people say, "I have a mind of my own; I do my own thinking." It is certainly better, in many instances, that one should do his own thinking than that he should let another man or another woman do it for him; than that he should allow a body of men to make a creed for him, even tho that body of men, professing to be his head, be called a Synod or a Presbytery or a Conference, and desire that the individual shall submit himself to its headship, and become a member of some earthly church. Such sectarian systems--heads and members--are false bodies of Christ, which the real Head never recognized.

It is required of every one who would be counted in as a member of the true Church, that he should be not only beheaded (lose his self-will), but that he shall be *united to the true Head* of the Church and recognize himself as a member of the *true body of Christ*--"the Church of the living God, whose names are written in heaven." Membership in the Presbyterian *body*, or in the Methodist *body*, or in the Lutheran *body*, or in the Baptist *body*, or in any other human institution, does not count anything, for the simple reason that Christ never recognized any of them, never founded any of them, never joined or agreed to join any of them as *their head*. There are not *many* bodies of Christ, but only *one*, the Church of the living God--there is one body, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The Lord is not the head of these human institutions, which call themselves his bodies, and membership in them will avail nothing as respects the reward of joint-heirship with Christ in the Kingdom; but rather (as intimated in the words of this verse which we have omitted), the worship, reverence, of these human systems, when once they are seen to be counterfeits of the true body, would be a barrier to a place in the true body and in the Kingdom glories.

As Jesus was not the founder or institutor of these bodies, neither is he their head; neither were the apostles members of any of these human sects or parties, and all of the Lord's true saints who, under Satan's misrepresentations, have been led to consider these human institutions as bodies of Christ, and to join them, while really in heart holding an allegiance to Christ as far above them, as the only true authority and Head--these are now urged to come out of all these various systems; and the light of present truth is for the purpose of showing them where they are, and permitting them to renounce their allegiance to the human systems, and to declare their allegiance only to the *one* Head and to the *one* "Church which is his body." These systems are so numerous, and their theories so diverse

and confused, that the general term "Babylon" (confusion) is applied to them as a general or family name, and God's true children are admonished, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."--Rev. 18:4.

In Israel God gave a typical representation of his Church in Aaron, the high priest, and his sons, the under priests. So, says the Apostle, we are "a Royal Priesthood," and again, "Consider the high priest of our profession [or order of priesthood], Christ Jesus." Now, be it noted, that in the type the beheading of the under-priests was fully illustrated in the fact that the under-priests were required to wear "bonnets," while the high priest alone was without the bonnet and wore the mitre. The high priest was thus proclaimed to be the *head* of the priesthood; and in covering their heads the under-priests said in the type, We are headless; look to the high priest; he is our head. So, in the antitype, the spiritual Royal Priesthood must all be headless, must all, in the language of the hymn, say:--

"O to be nothing, nothing,
To him let all voices be raised;
He is the fountain of blessing,
He only is most to be praised."

And this headless or will-less condition is not merely a sentiment; it must be a reality, so far as the new creature is concerned. All those who are really "members of the *body* of Christ" must in their hearts reach that condition where they can say with the greatest sincerity of heart, The Lord's will be done, Teach me thy will, O Lord. They must reach that attitude of relationship to Christ that will be continually seeking to know the will of the Head, and seeking to do it. True, the new creature must operate through, and think with, the human organism; and the latter being imperfect, through the fall, the result may frequently be an imperfect apprehension of the will of Christ, as well as an imperfect doing of that will. However, the imperfections of the *flesh* are not imputed against the *new creature*, if the heart be loyal in seeking to know and in seeking to do the will of Christ.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;" and the intimation of our text is that it will be fidelity to this spirit of the truth, the spirit of Christ working in us, in conjunction with the Word of God, the "exceeding great and precious promises," that will work upon us to effect the change from our own wills to the will of Christ--beheading us, making us dead to self and alive toward God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is no intimation here of dependence upon sectarian arrangements and institutions; each "*soul*" (individual) must be beheaded for himself, and must be individually united to Christ, the Head of the Church. There is no intimation of the acceptance of sects and parties. On the contrary, sectarianism, in every sense and degree, is opposed to the Scriptural arrangement of union, direct and complete, between the Lord and the individual alone.

What an honor and dignity are thus given to the Word of God--and the testimony of Jesus,--not in his own words only, but especially in his life and example, the spirit of which all members of the body must partake of, ere they can have fellowship in his sufferings, walking in his footsteps in the same narrow way of self-sacrifice--thus to be made meet for a share with him in the Kingdom. However, nothing in this should be understood to imply that there are no helps, no assistances, to be rendered and to be accepted and appreciated in the body of Christ, as between the various members; indeed, other Scriptures show us that if one member of the body rejoices, other members are comforted; and if one member suffers the others share the injury. And the Apostle makes very clear to us that our Lord, the Head, communicates with the members of his body by using certain of their own number as his representatives--so that one member may serve the body as an eye, another as an ear, another as a mouth. (1 Cor. 12:12-31.) Nevertheless, we must always consider the headship of the Lord; and the provision which he makes for the body is what in every instance is to be sought, and not what men may scheme or do in self-exaltation and as would-be teachers in the body of Christ.

Dear brethren, let us consider well the force of this strong symbolic statement. Let us ask ourselves, (1) Have I in obedience to the spirit and example of Jesus, and the testimony of God's Word, given up my own self-control, self-will? (2) If I have, to whom did I give it?--to a large denomination, professing to be the body of Christ, or to a little denomination, professing the same? (3) Am I looking to

these as my head, my instructors, guides to my conscience, the directors of my spiritual energies? Or have I renounced my own headship and fully accepted the headship of Christ Jesus,--to the ignoring of all other contrary heads and authorities--to be taught of the Lord, guided of the Lord, used of the Lord, and given such experiences as his infinite wisdom sees best for me? (4) And am I fully content to be thus a member of *his body*, cut off from all others, and to be used according to his will as I find it recorded in his Word? Or am I, so to speak, a double-headed man, seeking to go through life acknowledging the headship of Jesus, but at the same time having another head or will of my own--and thus what the Apostle James called "a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways," attempting to follow my own inclinations at times, and the Lord's directions at other times, and thus unstable, unreliable, as a member of his body, and unsuitable to be used by him, but in a condition to be ultimately repudiated if I do not become entirely beheaded as respects my own will? (5) Or have I, still worse than this, three heads, or parts of three heads,--some of my own head, or will, not fully cut off; some of the head or

will of Christ, incompletely attached; and some of a sectarian, man-made head--a confusion worse confounded, which renders me utterly unfit to comprehend and obey the mind of the spirit?

Dearly beloved, the time is short, the great prize we seek is near, the "mark" or standard of character to be attained is plainly set before us, and the Scriptures are luminous with illustrations of the necessity for complete consecration to the Lord,--showing us that it means deadness to self. Shall we not each see to it that by the grace of God every other head and authority is completely cut off and cast aside, and that henceforth, as the Apostle expressed it, "For me to live is Christ"--as a member of the body of Christ, guided by his will as discerned through his Word and providence and example? This is another picture of full completion of character-likeness to our Lord. Did he not fully give up his own headship, his own will, to the Father's will? He surely did; and as that full consecration was rewarded by the Father, so we have the assurance that our full consecration (and nothing less than this) will be fully rewarded by our Lord and Head in the Kingdom.

R2699 (From Harvest Truth Database V8.0 2013)

SABBATH DINNERS AND HOW TO UTILIZE THEM

--LUKE 14:1-14.--OCT. 7.--

GOLDEN TEXT:--"Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

SO FAR as we know, our Lord Jesus never refused an invitation to feasts, banquets, etc., to which he was asked, with his disciples. The present lesson tells us of such a banquet, probably specially arranged in Jesus' honor, by a Pharisee high in social position as a ruler in the synagogue. The feast was appointed for the Sabbath day, as was frequently the case, many of the Sabbath feasts being quite sumptuous; but the viands were always served cold, it being a part of the Jewish code that fires should not be kindled nor victuals cooked on the Sabbath day. And altho we, as Christians, are entirely free from the Jewish Law, including the fourth commandment as well as all the other commandments of the Decalogue, but are under a new commandment, the perfect Law of Love, to God and to man; nevertheless, we concede that considerable blessing might be experienced, and additional opportunities for spiritual development enjoyed, if Christian people were to cook a double portion on Saturday, and thus leave themselves freer from domestic responsibilities on the day which, according to the laws of the land (tho not according to any law of the Scriptures) we appropriately observe by abstinence from the ordinary business of life, utilizing the leisure for worship, study and spiritual communion.

Evidently before entering the dining room, probably in the court-yard, our Lord, while surrounded by many notables of the scribes and Pharisees, noticed a man afflicted with dropsy; and it would appear that our dear Redeemer was so full of love and sympathy that he had a desire to bless and to heal every such person with whom he came directly in contact. The loving character thus manifested gives us assurance that when the Kingdom comes and our Lord shall take unto himself his great power and reign, he will assuredly bless and uplift so many as will accept his favors in a proper manner--so many as really desire to be blessed by him. Thus our Lord's general character fully substantiates and corroborates all the prophetic statements made respecting him and the character of his Millennial work of blessing all the families of the earth.

Our Lord well knew the extreme of fanaticism to which the Jews had gone, especially the outwardly pious and formal ones, representatives of whom were now gathered about him. He knew that they would regard the healing of the dropsical person as a violation of the Sabbath. Indeed, as illustrating the sanctity of the Sabbath, the Jewish Talmud tells of an instance in which a house took fire, and three young girls were burned to death, simply because their friends and neighbors interpreted the law against making a fire as implying also that it would be wrong to quench a fire on the Sabbath day, and when expostulated with respecting the matter, the answer was that it was "a sacrifice acceptable to God, who would reward them for having allowed their dear ones to perish rather than break his commandment!"

Jesus wished not only to correct such a false interpretation of the Law, but also, in harmony with his custom, to do a large proportion of his miracles on the Sabbath day; because that day typified the coming Millennial day, the great seventh thousand-year day in which, his Millennial Kingdom being established, he will scatter blessings of healing, mental, moral and physical, amongst all the people. By way of instructing his disciples and the Pharisees respecting the improper view of the Sabbath generally entertained them by religious teachers, our Lord enquired of the Pharisees what

they had to say on the subject: Is it or is it not lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? They made no reply; no doubt feeling themselves somewhat incompetent to discuss any question with one whom they had all learned to recognize as a great Teacher, however much they rejected his Messiahship.

Then Jesus, as showing his own understanding of the matter, that it would be right, that it would be in full harmony with the spirit of the Law to heal a man on the Sabbath day, touched the dropsical man and healed him. Then, by way of pointing out to his auditors the inconsistency of their line of thought on this subject, he reminded them that it was a recognized privilege and duty of every Jew to deliver his ox or his ass, fallen into some pit or difficulty, and to consider this a work of necessity and mercy, not forbidden by the fourth commandment of the Jewish Law. He allowed his auditors to draw the inference from this illustration, that as it could not be wrong to assist a dumb animal out of difficulty on the Sabbath, much less could it be wrong to relieve the distress of a human being made in the image of God. Thus he would show that God's laws are not arbitrary, but that it is always proper to do good.

THE PROPER KIND OF TABLE TALKS

Every Christian family should utilize the excellent opportunities afforded for social converse at meal-times. Not only does pleasant and profitable conversation assist digestion, and thus prove physically helpful, but, additionally, these regular family gatherings should be recognized as opportunities for mental profit and for growth in knowledge respecting both temporal and spiritual things. Particularly for the last fourteen years this has been the custom of the Bible House family at Allegheny,--and a very profitable one. Our topics are usually propounded in the question form, the privilege of questioning being open to all at the table. Answers to the questions are sought from each one present, thus stimulating thought and a proper expression of it, very helpful to all, as subsequently they may be called upon to answer such a question before others in public or in private. We commend the plan to all of our readers, suggesting that in such a gathering the one supposed to be most conversant with such matters reserve his reply for the last.

Where the family is composed wholly of "new creatures" the questions would properly differ somewhat in general character from what they would be if it were a mixed company; nevertheless, appropriate subjects should not be refused from anyone present; as, for instance, questions respecting table etiquette, good breeding, proper language, the events of the day that do not partake of the nature of gossip, etc. It is a shame that Christian people, even in the humblest walks of life, and when perhaps surrounded by poverty, have no thought of what valuable opportunities are afforded at such times of breaking of bread--to break to their families mental or spiritual food also, strengthening and elevating.

In proportion as Christian people realize their privileges and duties in such matters they will find that coarseness and rudeness at the table will disappear, refinement and intellectuality gradually displacing them. And one of the features most conducive to true table etiquette, and the drawing together of hearts and minds in true fellowship and intellectual enjoyment at the times of physical repast, will be found to be the giving of thanks to God--the recognition that every good and every perfect gift cometh down from our Father.

The family which at table neglects to return acknowledgement to the Giver of every good, will scarcely succeed in properly recognizing each other and having intellectual fellowship one with the other.

That our Lord was prompt to avail himself of all such table-talk opportunities, is very manifest. On each occasion of his attendance at a banquet we find him utilizing the opportunity for the inculcation of some truth--natural or spiritual. In the present instance he evidently did not consider his hearers to be in a favorable condition for high spiritual teachings, and hence his table-talk was on a lower plane, adapted to the natural man, yet nevertheless inculcating lessons which, if learned, would prepare the learners for the heavenly things. And this should be the thought in every family circle,--that the tendency of all conversation should be ennobling as well as instructive--leading upward as well as outward.

The guests had been invited to the table, and our Lord noticed how they were each seeking the seats of chief honor, thus showing the pride and ambition of their hearts. We may safely assume that our Lord and his disciples took the less distinguished seats, in harmony with the Scriptural injunction, "In honor preferring one another."

A favorable opportunity offering, our Lord indirectly called attention to the wrong self-seeking course,--not by saying anything against the action in this particular case, but by suggesting a propriety of conduct in a general way; he based his illustration upon a marriage feast, at which, more than any other, distinctions as to title, honor and position, received much consideration. As was his custom, he taught by a parable, permitting his hearers to draw the inference and make the application in some measure to the banquet to which they were then gathered; and he wound it up by making this a great lesson on a general principle; viz., that "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," --a lesson of vital importance to all who would be ready for and enter the Kingdom.

This is a great lesson applicable, not only to the natural man, seeking progress back to fellowship and harmony with God, but there is in it also a lesson to the "new creature" all through life's journey,--that if divine favor is desired and to be expected it must be sought; not in pride, not in self-sufficiency, but in humility. The Lord resisteth the proud, the self-sufficient, the boastful, and showeth his favors unto the humble. The Apostle James likewise calls attention to the importance of this grace of humility, assuring us that no true progress can be made in the way to God, except by the humble. (James 4:10.) And the Apostle Peter, after exhorting to humility, saying, "Yea, all of you, be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility," adds, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."--1 Pet. 5:5,6.

If the hearers had received the message and been corrected by it, it might indeed have worked considerable difference in their standing amongst their brethren, the Pharisees, but it would also have worked a considerable difference in their favor with God. By receiving such a spirit of humility they would be coming into that relationship with God and the truth which would have divine approval, and be thus the stepping-stone to further favor, by preparing their hearts to receive the good things which God has to give, but which cannot be received by any except the humble-hearted. Indeed, we know of nothing today that is so great a stumbling-block to the majority in nominal Christendom as the prevalent spirit of self-seeking. It is a great barrier before the minds of many, in and out of the pulpit, continually hindering them from seeing, hearing and obeying present truth--they love the approval of men rather than that of God.

The table-talk later turned in another direction, probably considerable being said in the interim that is not recorded, not pertinent; but before the feast was ended an appropriate opportunity came for the Lord to present some words of counsel to his host, and this was done in so kind and so wise a manner that it surely could give no offence, but, on the contrary, must have led the thoughts of all the hearers to higher and heavenly things. He advised that the banquets of the well-to-do in this world's goods be extended to their poorer, less fortunate neighbors and friends; assuring his hearers that such a course would bring the greatest blessing, as every good deed brings its blessings, forthwith --in the consciousness of having done good;

and in the reactionary effect upon one's own heart of every good deed, every benevolence. And, in addition to these blessings, our Lord pointed out that for such an one there would be a blessing in the future also--a reward that would fully compensate every such benefaction.

Our Lord's words were in part a commendation of the course pursued by his host in inviting himself and his apostles to dinner, for they were poor. Indirectly his remarks meant that if that very feast were given with a proper sentiment of heart, as we have every reason to presume was the case, his host might expect a reward for his conduct in the future--besides the blessing that had already come to his house through our Lord's presence and words of instruction.

Sunday School lesson comments will be found to misinterpret the blessing which our Lord declared would come to those who received the poor. One of these commentaries says, on this point, that "Our Lord refers to the first resurrection, mentioned in Rev. 20:4,5, assuring him that he would be raised in that resurrection as one of that glorious class. He would have the rewards that God gives, and can give only, to those who are righteous."

This is a grievous mistake, a misapprehension of our Lord's meaning. The first resurrection is not to be attained merely by the doing of kind acts to either the worthy or the unworthy poor. As explained in the connection (Rev. 20:4) none will have part in the first resurrection except those who have been "*beheaded* for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God." And, ^[1] altho this beheading is figurative and not literal, it nevertheless has a deep significance, implying much more than making a feast to the poor. It signifies, not only death to *self-will*, but also to be cut off from all other heads, governments and law-givers, and to recognize no "head" but Jesus, whom God hath appointed to be the Head of the Church which is his body--the head of every member of it.

It means, not only to be *cut off* from institutional heads and authorities, but also to cease to have heads and wills of our own, and to accept, instead, the headship, the will, of our Lord Jesus. It is the same thought that is drawn to our attention by the Apostle in Romans 6:3, where he declares that we are baptized into the *body* of Christ, as members of that body, under the one Head, Christ, by being baptized into his death,--a full consecration of our wills, and ultimately a full laying down of our lives, faithfully unto death. The attainment of this first resurrection and its joint-heirship with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom was clearly understood by the Apostle Paul, and was his aim: and respecting it he said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ....That I may know him, and the power of *his resurrection*." (Phil. 3:8,10.) Had St. Paul understood our Lord's words as the above quoted Sunday School lesson commentator did, he would have chosen the easy and pleasant plan of feasting the poor, rather than the years of privation and self-sacrifice in the narrow way which he pursued. And to this our Lord's words on another occasion agree, "Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom."

What, then, did our Lord intend to promise as a reward for a good deed--done without hope of reward in the present life? We answer, that he meant to promise the same thing that he promised to anybody who would give even so much as a cup of cold water to one of his disciples. He wished to assure them that all such would by no means lose their reward. (Matt. 10:42.) Not a reward of glory, honor, immortality and joint-heirship in the Kingdom of God, but a good reward, more than compensating for the kindness they performed. This rewarding of everyone who has done good, either to the poor of this world or especially to the Lord and his faithful brethren walking in his footsteps, will come to them, not *in* the first resurrection, but *at* that time; --after the first resurrection shall have glorified the Church and inaugurated the Kingdom, then Millennial blessings and the reign of righteousness beginning will bring rewards to everyone who has done kindnesses, helping them forward and abundantly rewarding them; while all who have done evil shall have some measure of "stripes" in compensation and retribution.

[1] Nov. 7 Manna, Rev. 20:4

Our heav'nly Father and our Friend...
Help us to make our calling sure;
O let us all be saints indeed,
And pure, as thou thyself art pure,
Conformed in all things to our Head.
