

The Coming Separation

Dr. H. C. Morrison

Text: "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."—Matt. 3:12.

The estimate which our Lord Jesus placed upon John the Baptist is well known. Jesus said that no greater than John had been born of woman. John was not only a great man, but he was a great preacher. If he had not been a strong, good man, he could not have been a great preacher. The preacher cannot be greater than the man; man first, preacher next. There must be being before doing, fountain in order to stream, tree before fruit, lofty character in order to noble deed.

John the Baptist was not attractive or fastidious in his dress, nor would he in declamation have ranked with our pulpit orators of today. Finally, he languished in prison and was butchered to satisfy the caprices of a vulgar society woman and a dancing girl. Had our Lord Jesus not spoken of John as he did, the Christian Church would never have placed a proper estimate upon his character.

As a man, John was holy. He was full of the Holy Ghost from his birth; as a preacher, John was fearless and direct. He struck sin and used the plainest language. I doubt if any one, even the most illiterate, ever heard him who could not understand every word he uttered. The figures he used were familiar, striking, and startling. Sinners were serpents, vengeance was an axe, future punishment was unquenchable fire, formalists in religion were fruitless, worthless trees, and an axe lay at the root of them for their hewing down.

John's ministry stirred the whole country. No man heard John who did not for the time feel like making some change in his life for the better. Even Herod, wicked as he was, heard him with fear, and the record tells us that "He did many things." Herod's experience reveals the fact that a man may make some changes for the better, cut out some of his iniquities and yet be left a sinner ready to be won from his reformation to commit the most diabolical sin.

The substance of our text is this: Christ is a separator and cleanser. The figure is commonplace with which the people are quite familiar, but the teaching is profound and alarming. Everyone knew what it was to winnow wheat. John's figures are practical; as long as there are men there must be bread. If I have bread there must be wheat, and while there is wheat it must be threshed, winnowed and cleansed in order that it may be used; so John's illustration holds good through all time. John is proclaiming the coming of Jesus and he insists that he will appear one day with his separating instrument; he will divide the good from the bad; the straw, chaff, small and useless grain, shall be cast away and consumed.

John would fasten upon our minds the important truth that a time is coming when you and I must be tried on, not what we think or say we are, not what we intend to be, or what we hope for at some future time, but what we are. "He shall thoroughly purge his floor." That word thoroughly strikes me with great force; it sometimes drives me to careful self-examination. It sends me to my knees for you and for myself. What about us, my fellowbeings? Are we wheat, or are we chaff?

Are we the Lord's people? Have we repented of our sins, been born of the Spirit, and living the unselfish Christ life? Are we forgiving those who sin against us and loving our enemies? Are we visiting the sick, giving a helping hand to the poor, separated from the world, dead to its pride and wealth, to its empty honors and its loud and false applause? Shall we be found in that great day of separation and fire, the genuine wheat of the Lord?

I must be honest, even if, like John, I should lose my head. The man who stands in the sacred desk had better lose his head than lose his soul. I am uneasy about many who make a profession of faith, who are members of the church, who give and do many things, but are they really the Lord's wheat? Have you been born of the Spirit? Have you been crucified to the world? Are you filled with the Holy Ghost? Remember "He shall thoroughly purge his floor." I fear some of you will not be able to stand that test. I tremble for myself. I have no hope for that searching, separating hour apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, and the work he wrought for me upon the cross.

Jesus is coming with his fan. All straw of formalism and chaff of pretence will be fanned out and swept away. He will gather his wheat into the garner of glory. Jesus says "In my Father's house are many mansions." Christ will come and make up his jewels. The jewels of heaven will be the souls of those once lost in sin, but now pure and holy, made so by the blood of Jesus. Will you meet me in the City of the New Jerusalem, washed in the blood of Christ? "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

But what about the chaff? Will he simply let the chaff alone? No! He will cast it into the fire. What a day that will be when Christ comes to save his people and to gather his enemies out from among his redeemed saints and shut them up forever in the furnaces of their own wicked lusts, depraved passions, and the just wrath of a God whose laws have been violated, whose mercy has been rejected, and the warning of whose judgments has been trampled under foot. What will you do, sinner friend? The Master is come, the die is cast, the trumpet of doom sounds its summons to assemble the world to the threshing floor of God Almighty and Jesus appears with his fan in his hand. The earth is on fire, the stars are falling, the oceans are drying up, the judgment throne is descending, the redeemed are shouting their loud hosannas; hell opens wide its mouth, the flames of torment leap out to receive the sinner at his coming. The separation takes place; there is no hope or help or mercy on the judgment day; it is a time of separation, of judgment, of approval and justification and condemnation. It will be too late to repent, to pray, to beg for mercy. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. Why not seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near and be prepared for that awful day when our Lord and Master shall thoroughly purge his floor and "gather his wheat into the garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

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Imperative Needs

By Rev. Myron F. Boyd

Have you spent much time in a study of the Scriptures—the Bible? If you have, I venture to say that you have run up against terms and phraseology that have caused you to wonder at their full meaning. For instance: "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation (or living)." "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the World may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou has loved me." "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

Those passages mean something in which I am very interested. In a study of the Bible we discover that Heaven is a holy place inhabited by holy creatures. I am thrilled with the prospects of my spending all eternity in Heaven. I have yet to find the person who does not believe that Heaven is a holy, sinless place. I haven't found one person who does not want to and intend to make Heaven his eternal home. No one whom I know objects to being holy in Heaven.

Now, if heaven is a holy place and if all who dwell there are holy, then it of necessity follows that we who are sinners must be made holy some time. Are we made holy in this life, at the time of death, in the resurrection morning, just as we enter Heaven, or after we get to Heaven? Which would you say?

To make myself clear, let me say that sin is the opposite of holiness. As long as sin is present, one is not holy, but when one is cleansed of sin, he is holy. Sin is the thing that will keep us out of heaven; sin is the thing that puts a sting in death and a shadow upon the grave. We differ so in our thinking as to what a saint of God is like. Some seem to have the idea that in order to be holy, one must have reached the stage of absolute perfection so that he can no longer make a mistake, err in judgment, be sick in his body, or choose to do that which is wrong. A saint is not a person who is beyond the possibility of sinning, but one who does not desire to sin; a saint is not a person who has reached finality in Christian development and likeness to God, but he is one who is constantly striving to be more like God; a saint is not a person who is beyond the possibility of making mistakes, but he is one who recognizes his insufficiency and who trusts fully in the merits of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ while at the same time he endeavors to the limit of his capacity to remove all weaknesses from his life. A saint is any one who loves Jesus Christ with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his strength. A person may be fully in love with another and at the same time come short of the desire and expectations of the other. John Wesley, in describing what he meant by the holy life, the

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