

## SOME BETTER THING

© Eddy D Field III

This world has beauty, and joy, yet it also has great ugliness and sorrow. Moreover, sometimes the righteous suffer, and the wicked prosper. This was a problem which some of the prophets of old considered. Job asked, “Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?” (Job 21:7) King David wrote the Thirty-seventh Psalm about this very problem. Asaph, in the Seventy-third Psalm, confessed, “I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked... Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.” (Psalm 73:3, 13, 4) The Preacher of Ecclesiastes says, “There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 8:14) Jeremiah the prophet asked, “Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?” (Jeremiah 21:1)

Of course, as Job well learned, God in His great wisdom and great benevolence has a good reason for all that He does. Even so, that the righteous suffer and the unrighteous prosper troubles the righteous. The righteous live by faith, however. They believe that God is good and wise, and they trust Him to do right. Saint Paul wrote to the Hebrews, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) The righteous man trusts in God. He takes Him at His Word. If God says something, the righteous man believes Him, even if He does not understand. By faith the righteous man seeks to understand what He believes to be true. By faith, Saint Paul wrote, the righteous men of ancient times were commended. God did not commend them because they were prosperous, nor did He commend them because they suffered loss. He commended them because, whether they prospered or suffered loss, they trusted in Him. They trusted God that this life is not all that there is to life. They trusted Him that there is a life after this one. They are glad to prosper in this life, but they know that their greatest blessing lies in the next. Saint Paul gave as examples Able, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah. He wrote of them, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” (Hebrews 11:13) The righteous desire, Saint Paul explained, “a better country, that is, an heavenly.” (Hebrews 11:16) There were other faithful, some of whom, by the world’s standard, succeeded, and some of whom, by that same standard, failed, but all of whom, by God’s standard, succeeded and received His commendation. Saint Paul wrote:

And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and

imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (Hebrews 11:32-38)

The apostle concludes, “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (Hebrews 11:39, 40)

And what did God provide for them? Not merely a better place in which to dwell, but rather a Person who would dwell with them, who would dwell in their hearts by faith, a Person in whom they would have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Ephesians 3:17; Ephesians 1:7) That is to say, He would give them His Son, Jesus Christ. They did not receive Him in their lifetimes. How could they? In their lifetimes the Son of God had not become incarnate, had not died, had not been raised. Yet, they looked for Him, as He Himself later said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.” (John 8:56)

The position of the that have lived after the First Advent of Christ is far better than the position of them that lived before it. They who lived before the First Advent of Christ could only look forward to His coming, to what would come to pass, to what would become a reality. They who have lived since His First Advent look backward to His coming, to what has come to pass, to what has become a reality. Jesus in private said to His disciples, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” (Luke 10:23, 24) Later He publicly said to the people, “But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. (Matthew 13:16, 17)

After Jesus rose from the dead, He ascended into heaven, so that His people see Him no more. (John 14:19; 16:10, 16) They do not see Him, yet they believe in Him, and in faith they love Him. Saint Peter wrote of Christ, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” (1 Peter 1:8)

Although Christ has come, and they that believe in Him do not look forward to His First Advent, yet they do look forward to His Second Advent when He will come, not as one whom men will judge, but as one who will judge men. Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:28, 29) Then all those who have believed and obeyed the Lord will together be made perfect in Christ.

Let us live by faith, believing everything that God tells us. Let us put our trust in Christ our Savior. Let us also obey Him, not only because we look forward to His return to judge the world, but also because we love Him.

Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.