

# Who Shall Dwell In Your Holy Hill?

We all desire to be on the right side of Christ when we stand before Him at the Great Assize shortly, so we all should have a great interest in pondering the following question presented by our Lord Himself:-

## “Who then is a Faithful and Wise Servant?”

In Matthew 24:45 & Luke 12:4 Christ posed *this* question to *all* who have heard Him right down through the passage of time. In the context, He exhorts *all* who anticipate His return to the earth to “*be you therefore ready... for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you think not*”, cp Matt 24:44. Or as the first part of that verse has been better translated, “*be you also getting ready,*” (i.e. ‘*continuous present tense in the Greek.*’) Of course, this describes a ‘*process of preparation*’ which involves a life of dedication. Much the same as when Christ said “*be you also perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,*” cp Matt 5:48. In these words, Christ is describing the process of striving toward godliness, rather than final evidence of complete perfection in any one saint’s life, whilst they prepare for eternity within this present vale of tears. In truth, *no-one* will be able to claim in all honesty, at the coming of the Lord, that they were as ready as they would have wished to have been for that climactic event. There is evidence that this lack of complete “*readiness*” includes *all* who have been called to a life of preparation. (It matters not, whether they have already passed into the article of death, having “*died in the Lord*” prior to Christ’s advent, or whether they are of that blessed number who are “*alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,*”) cp Rev 14:13; 1 Thess 4:15.

The Lord clearly reveals that absolute readiness will not be achievable by any one of us. We learn this Truth in the words of the parable which follows in Matt 25:5 - for “*while the Bridegroom tarried, these all (i.e. ‘all ten - an aggregate number representing all who are called’)* <sup>1</sup>*slumbered and slept*”. As Paul would have us recognise in Eph 2:2-10, it is only “*by Grace (that we) are... saved through Faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the (gracious) gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*”. There is nothing that we “can do” as such, to place God in our debt. Our Heavenly Father will never “owe us” Salvation, for we can never “earn” or buy our Salvation through our works. The Eternal life we will enjoy through His gracious mercy is an unspeakable gift that we will “*inherit,*” despite our present failings!

So what is an inheritance? Usually an inheritance only comes our way because of our relationship to the Testator. For example:- let us reflect upon an ordinary family inheritance. Under normal circumstances, one does not have to do much more than live worthy of the family

values and the family name to receive (*a portion of*) the Family inheritance, despite never having been the perfect offspring. Of course, dis-inheritance does sometimes occur. The Testator may take such an action against one who should be mentioned in the will, because, over a period of time perhaps, that member of the family has in some way continually violated and darkened the Family name and refused to demonstrate the Family values in some very important way.

Remember when that certain Lawyer (*“the expert in the Law”*) entreated Christ? *“Good Master, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?”* cp Matthew 19:16; Luke 10:25. Jesus’ answer was crisp, and unambiguous. In effect He said to that clever lawyer, *“There is nothing that you can **do** to **inherit** eternal life!”* It was as if to say (*‘as if to say’ = a.i.t.s*), *“Your eternal future depends, not so much on your doing any one thing, as on your being someone whom the Father can recognise as belonging to His Family”*. In other words, Jesus was plainly saying, *“If you seek eternal life, then you will do the will of your Father which is in heaven”*. That is, your attitude to your neighbour will be a reflection of your Father’s attitude to all His Creation, and with this attitude you will demonstrate that you are truly *“a child of your Father which is in Heaven,”* cp Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 8:14. The Lawyer had correctly answered Christ, when he recited the great *“Law of Love...”* *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind”* and *“You shall love your neighbour as yourself”*.

Here, though, is a problem! Jesus praised him for his insight, and said, *“You have answered correctly; **do this** and you will live”*. How can one **“do love?”** How can one **“command love?”** The concepts of **“doing”** and **“commanding”** love are in reality incongruent. Love is an expression from the heart of the worth that one places upon the object of ones affections. Love is not subject to Law, it is an expression of ones free will from the heart. As Paul tells us plainly, even if we might claim to have done a lot of things for God, and even if we might make the ultimate sacrifice, if the love of the Father that we could be manifesting from our heart toward those who would be our neighbour is absent, then we are *“nothing”*. We are not even a *“little bit of something!”* Neither are we even a *“little someone!”* Without a practical demonstration of the Father’s character of grace in our lives, *“we are nothing”*. We will not be in the Kingdom of the Father if we refuse to work on this issue of Divine Relationship involving the practical demonstration of our Father’s Character towards others, cp 1Cor 13; Isa 42:8. God cannot give *“His glory to another”*. He can only glorify those who are characteristically like Himself.

Having set the scene briefly then, we now want to have a look at the *“faithful and wise servant”* of Matthew 24, in an honest effort to determine what attitude of mind *we* must have, if *we* wish to be included in *that* blessed class, revealed in Matt 24:46; 25:21,23,34. Just as importantly, we plan to also look at the attitude of the *“evil servant”* as an example of that disposition of mind *we are to avoid* at all costs, as we labour together in the Lord’s Household.

Christ describes His *“faithful and wise servants”* as those who give *“meat (i.e. ‘sustenance’)*

*in due season*” to His “household”. The word “household” [Greek “*therapeia*], is the basis of our English word ‘*therapy*’ or ‘*healing*.’ This Greek word only occurs four times in the entire New Testament record. Significantly, we find that the last time it is used, is in Revelation 22:2 to describe the work of the saints as they “*heal the nations*” in the Millennium. Whatever Christ had in mind here in Matthew 24:45 & Luke 12:42 when He referred to ‘*a house of healing*,’ it is certain that today we refer to our ‘*houses of healing or houses of therapy*’ as “hospitals”. In fact, this may well have been what Christ had in mind, for “*hospitals are known to have existed in the Middle East....in the 1st Millennium before Christ, and among the ancient Romans as early as 100 BC*” (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1992).

Certainly the inn mentioned in Christ’s parabolic answer to the Lawyer in Luke 10:34 became a true “*house of healing*” or ‘hospital,’ for the “*certain man*” beaten, robbed and left to die by ‘King Sin’s Thugs.’ How grateful that “*certain man*” (*i.e.* ‘*representing any one of us*’) would have been for the merciful compassion shown to him by a Samaritan, *of all people!* The Samaritan, so far as we know, was not a “*man of God*”. On the other hand, the Priest and the Levite, both of whom had already made the decision to pass this “*certain man*” by, had both been chosen by God to “*have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,*” cp Heb 5:2. Both men had been called by God to be “*faithful and wise servants within the Father’s international ‘House of Healing’*”.

## **The Father’s House of Healing**

Originally, the nation of Israel had been chosen by the Father to be a gigantic “*house of healing*” or hospital”. Through the nation of Israel, God proposed to witness His grand purpose of healing all the nations, not just the natural offspring of Abraham, cp Isaiah 43:8-11; Zechariah 8:23. Under the Law of Moses, the Priests were appointed to be the ‘Doctors’ of the nation who bound up the broken hearted, who looked after the bruised, who clothed the naked, who housed those who had been cast out, who defended the Fatherless and the Widows, and who cared for all those less fortunate than themselves, cp Lev 12-15; Isaiah 58; James 1:27. The Levites were to deal out the Bread of God’s word in faithful moral instruction, cp Deut 8:3; Isaiah 55:1-2; 58:6-7; Mal 2:4-7.

However, the Father did not intend the responsibilities of these “*men of God*” to be confined to the nation of Israel only! Israel had been positioned by God at the crossroads of earth’s major continents, in the “*navel*” or “*belly button of the earth*” [*so says Ezekiel 38:12*] that the nations too, might learn about the Father and embrace His will, and be healed of all their diseases, cp Deuteronomy 4:5-8; Isaiah 43:10; Isaiah 56:6-8.

Yet we find that the lawyer who had asked Christ the question which had prompted the Lord’s parable of the Good Samaritan, (*like the Priest and the Levite, - and, dare I say it? - like ourselves so often,*) was not seeking to find where his obligations began, but he wanted to know instead,

where they ended, cp Luke 10:25-29. How masterfully our Lord turned the enquiry back upon the Lawyer himself, forcing him to acknowledge that he too must imitate the Samaritan (*though the Lawyer could not bring himself to vocalise that name,*) and “*show merciful compassion*” to any and all who have been beaten, robbed and left for dead by King Sin and His band of Merry Thugs, cp Luke 10:37; Exod 34:6; Psa 145:7-9; Mic 7:18.

What beautifully appropriate terminology Christ has introduced us to, to describe *all* those who have been called by the Father to be His children, cp John 1:12.. We are *all* diseased! Sick, nigh unto death! Every-one of us! No exceptions! Stricken with the leprosy of mortality! Slowly dying even while we live! All of us, heading inexorably to the grave! Robbed by King Sin and left to die alongside of the road of life! This is why Christ was sent into this world of sin and death. The Father looking down from Heaven, saw “*that there was no (mighty) man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought Salvation,*” cp Isaiah 59:16.

So the Son of God was introduced among men, being at the same time “*the son of God’s right hand, whom He had made strong for Himself,*” cp Psa 80:15-17. “*And thou (Mary) shalt call His name Jesus (Yah-Hoshea): for He shall save His people from their sins,*” cp Matt 1:21. (As if to say, “Doctor, can you please save my children from death?”) What loving parent will not go to the greatest of measures to save *any* of their children from the awful fate of death? What a loving Father we have! He has referred *all* His children by His grace to the greatest Doctor that this world has ever known! cp 1 Tim 2:3-4; 5:9. Spiritually, we are all “lepers” in His sight (*in a figure*) - how then can any one of us claim to be a ‘better leper than any other’ as we hobble our way on diseased feet, holding each other up, each helping the other to make our way to the Great High Priest (Doctor) who is “*able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by Him*”, cp Luke 17:10-14; Heb 2:17; 4:15; 5:2; 7:25.

Notice the work of this Doctor! It is to “*save His people*” from “*their sins*”. Not just all those many sins that we have committed before repentance and baptism, but also all those sins of omission and commission wherein we “*all fall short of the glory of God*” at *any* time this side of immortality and perfection, cp Rom 3:23. In other words, His people are sick - every single one of them - very sick, blighted by sin, and requiring the greatest of intensive care and life support to “*endure unto the end*”. By now we should be able to see that this “*house of healing*” or “*hospital,*” has a monumental work load attached to it. There is nothing like a massive work load to make the time just fly. Have you ever experienced that? You are involved in some worthwhile project.... and the end of the work day arrives! However, you have been so engrossed in your work that you have forgotten lunch, and it really feels as though you have no sooner arrived at work that it is time to go home again. In fact you have been so busy in your labours that you haven’t even noticed that the boss was not there all day. You worked just as hard anyway. Harder in fact, because the benefits He gives you in His enterprise are just beyond compare, cp Rom 8:18.

So what does the Lord say the “*faithful and wise servant*” is doing in his Master’s absence? Just like the Priests and the Levites were supposed to do under the Law of Moses. He is distributing “*meat (food) in due season*” cp Matt 24:45. He is doing the work of a Priest and a Levite. A most important work in any good hospital! Healthy food to restore a frail, sick body back to full health. Truly a full time job in a “*house of healing*” this size. Christ has His mind back in the Psalms for this servant’s job description. In a Psalm which poetically describes the seven creation days, and the wonder and balance of life, the Psalmist declares that “*man goes forth to his work and to his labour until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all: the earth is full of your riches...These all wait upon you; that you may give them their meat in due season. What you give them they gather: you open your hand, they are filled with good,*” cp Psalm 104:24-30.

Again in Psalm 145:14-20, we read, “*The Lord upholds all who fall, and He raises up all those that be bowed down (with sickness?) The eyes of all wait upon you; and you give them their meat in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all His ways, (cp Exod 33:13 - 34:7) and merciful (marg. “bountiful, generous”) in all His works .The Lord is near unto all them that call upon Him (i.e. ‘just as when we as a parent, keep our ears open when one of our children is ill’),... .He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them (i.e. help - save me! - from death?) The Lord preserves (from death?) all those who love Him*”. When we examine “*the will of the Father in Heaven*” as revealed in the New Testament Scriptures, we learn that His Will is to heal His Children, and to save them from death, cp Matt 12:50; John 6:38-39.

Do we get the picture? Our Loving Heavenly Father is a Merciful God. He has a wonderful generous character, cp Matt 20:1-15; Eph 1:2; 2:7. He is not niggardly or mean with His blessings. He opens His hand, and the abundance of His goodness flows out to sustain *all* His creation, cp Matt 5:43-48; Acts 14:17. Imagine where any one of us would be if Our Heavenly Father was “tight fisted and mean”, holding back on His blessings until we ‘deserved them or earned them’, cp Psa 103:1-10; 130:3; Isa 59:1; Lam 3:22.

No, even though we are weak, sickly creatures of the dust, imperfect and immature, and figuratively “*hospitalised in intensive care for most of our days,*” our Loving Heavenly Father *still* exercises His Longsuffering and Loving Kindness upon us. Take a moment to look at the context of all those scriptures that reveal our Heavenly father’s desire to “*heal us of all our diseases*” and soak up the glory of this wonderful character of our Gracious God and Father in heaven, cp Psalm 103:3-14; 145:3-13.

So we must ask ourselves, how is the Lord’s “*faithful and wise servant*” spending His time as he performs his duties of Priest and Levite? He is manifesting the glorious character of the Father in Heaven! He is esteeming *all* His Brethren “*better than himself*” (*though perhaps he may, in fact, be ‘better’ than they*), cp Phil 2:3-4. He is busy inside the “*house of healing*” bathing the

sick, feeding the weak, binding up the broken limbs, comforting the broken hearted, tending to the diseased, and bearing up the burdens of his fellow inmates, relieving their anguish and sorrow. You cannot do any of these tasks with a clenched fist. One has to have an open hand, stretching out to his fellow in merciful compassion to accomplish *any* of these tasks. The help is constantly required and *must* be given, even when the inmates in the hospital do not ‘deserve’ it. What a job this true Doctor’s assistant, or Hospital orderly has! He is truly doing the work of our Loving Heavenly Father within that “*House of Healing*”.

It is no surprise then, that this “*servant of the Lord*” is not recorded as thinking “*my Lord delays His coming!*” Neither is he thinking “*where is the promise of His coming?*” He is so busy doing the work that His master left for him to do that he has no time to think such idle thoughts. He is so busy “*occupying [Grk. ‘busy in trading’] until his Lord returns,*” cp Luke 19:13. For him, the Lord will return and find him as busy and as contented and as satisfied in His employ as any man could wish to be, cp Matt 19:30. What an excellent attitude!

No wonder the Lord, in this and subsequent parables, commends this wonderful servant. “*You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things, (i.e. ‘all things’)*” cp Matt 24:21-23; Luke 19:15-19. As if to say, “*Because you have exercised proper dominion over yourself and your feelings and your attitudes, and have treated my creation in the way that I would have it treated, generously sharing the blessings I have given you with others who needed them as much as you, I will now grant you true dominion over my (new) creation,*” cp Gen 1:26-28; Psalm 8; Heb 2:6-11; Rev 3:21.

And again, “*come you blessed of my Father (i.e. notice the family relationship) inherit the kingdom (i.e. ‘remember an inheritance is usually bequeathed upon us because of our relationship to the Testator’) prepared for you from the foundation of the world.. For I (‘Christ’ - often in the guise of those Brethren we regard as least and whom we find most difficult, cp Matt 25:40,45 - i.e. “the least of these my Brethren”) was hungry and you fed me (i.e. ‘with the bread of Heaven’); I was thirsty and you satisfied my thirst (i.e. ‘with the wine of the covenant and the water of life’); I was a stranger and you took me in (i.e. ‘when no else would have me’), naked and you clothed me (i.e. ‘covering my shame - not noising it abroad’, cp James 5:14-20; Gal 6:1-3); I was sick and you visited me (i.e. constantly in the “House of Healing”); I was in prison and you came to me (i.e. to release my heavy burdens and to free me from the penalty of my sin)*”.

Look at this marvellous servant’s attitude! “*Lord when did I see you hungry, and feed you? or thirsty and gave you a drink? or a stranger and took you in? or naked and clothed you? or sick or in prison and visited you?* Note the surprise in his reply! He was simply not expecting such recognition. This “*faithful and wise servant*” has been so busy sharing the blessings that his Lord had given to him by grace, with all of his Master’s creation, (and especially “*with those who are of the household of faith,*” cp Gal 6:6-10), that he has not noticed the time passing. Neither has he

kept a record of his actions to place his Lord in his debt. As if to say, ***"Lord, I was doing nothing special, I was just simply carrying out your instructions in your absence as you asked of all your servants - I was merely tending to your (new) creation and caring for it the way that you intended from the very beginning,"*** cp John 15:1-16; Gen 2:15; Isa 51:3; Rev 3:14 *and many other verses beside, which proclaim the Gospel of the New Creation in Christ Jesus).*

What is his reward? He is appointed "ruler" over Christ's "household," or over "ten cities or five" as Luke 19:15-19 reveals. It will be his joy to go forth with Christ "as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his beams" to be a therapeutic influence among the nations, cp Mal 4:1-2; Isaiah 56:5-8. This honour is his because all through his life with Jesus he has exercised dominion over himself *only*, and he has been generous to others, just like his Lord, cp Mark 9:38-50. Like the "salt of the earth" that the "faithful and wise servant" is, his presence in "the house of therapy" has been savoury, preservative, and healing. As his Lord demonstrated before him, it is "the goodness of God that leads men to repentance" as a Shepherd leads his flock, cp Isa 40:10-11; Rom 2:4; John 10:1-16. So by faithfully following his Lord's example, the "faithful and wise servant" has established and maintained a wholesome 'fellowship in Christ' with all the 'inmates' in his Lord's "Hospital".

In his ministrations to *all* his fellows he *has* actually ruled in their hearts because whenever they saw him, they saw the face of <sup>7</sup>Christ walking toward them, with outstretched hands overflowing with the gracious gifts of redemption, cp Luke 19:15 ("money" = mg. 'silver'); Psa 68:18-20; Eph 4:1-13.

As the Spirit has revealed, "the faithful and wise servant" has learned early that "he who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" cp 2 Sam 23:3. Again, as prospective Kings and Priests in training today for the coming age, he has also learned that "faithful and wise servants" ought to "execute true judgement, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart," cp Zech 7:9-10; with Zech 6:13; Rev 5:9-10.

He is the doctor's assistant! A Royal Priest of Grace. In effect, *every* servant who finds himself born into the "house of healing" by the Grace of God has been bound by a form of 'Hippocratic Oath.' This ancient oath, says in part, that: - "***we pledge to prescribe only beneficial treatments, according to our abilities, and to refrain from causing harm or hurt, and to live an exemplary personal and professional life***" cp Encyclopaedia. Brit. 1992).

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