

BIBLICAL RECORDER.

THE ORGAN OF THE NORTH CAROLINA BAPTISTS—DEVOTED TO BIBLE RELIGION, EDUCATION, LITERATURE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

Volume 33.

RALEIGH, N. C., WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1893.

Number 33.

The Biblical Recorder.

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY.

OFFICE:

(13 up stairs) Fayetteville Street, Raleigh, N. C.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION:

One copy, one year..... \$ 2.00
One copy, six months..... 1.00
Clubs of ten (copy extra to sender)..... 20.00

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Christ in Metaphor—No. 1.

BY HIGHT C. MOORE.

THE TESTATOR.

"For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." Heb. 9: 16.

The text is the simple recognition of a point in civil law. No will is valid while the testator lives. It goes into force only at his death.

The Apostle argues the precedence of christianity over Judaism. The former covenant has been eclipsed by one far superior. The ceremonies of the old dispensation were typical of the new. Past blessings were the prophecy of future glories. The twilight of the centuries now merges into noonday brilliancy. The true Messiah comes, the divine testator. He draws his last will and testament, and therein bequeathes priceless legacies to the children of men.

Here, then, we have a striking metaphor. It presents the dying Saviour making his final covenant with men and cementing it with his blood. It unfolds the true mission of Jesus to the world. It reveals him placing the treasures of heaven at man's disposal. In bold outline it sketches the whole plan of redemption. Clearly we see the heavenly testator (1) making his will, (2) naming his legatees, (3) describing his heirs, and (4) appointing his executors. Let us consider him more particularly in each of these relations.

I. HIS WILL.

1. It is his *last* will. A living testator may make a hundred testaments, but after his death only the last is binding. Christ knew his hour was coming. He made his will in view of his death. The covenant of the past may now be declared null and void; those of the future are counterfeits of the basest type. This alone is valid and true because it is the last will of the testator. It is, hence, unalterable. Curses are pronounced on those who dare to change it. And it is enduring. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

2. It is *signed and sealed*. A will with no seal or signature is a dead letter. It has no value. It is totally useless. These are essential to its validity. The covenant of redemption is not weak at this point. The hand that was pierced on the cross firmly and willingly signed this document. Then Christ sealed it with his own blood and made it secure.

3. It is *witnessed*. Angels came down to sing "on earth peace, good will toward men." A halo of glory encompassed the Messiah as the Father declared, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." Jesus said to the heirs, "Ye are my witnesses," and they went forth amid fiery trial and fierce persecution to attest his mission to earth. Conscience, guided by the Spirit, bears unmistakable testimony. Even the critical world is often brought to recognize the true claim of Christ and the validity of his will.

4. It is *published*. The commission was given, "Go ye into all the world and preach my gospel to every creature." The heralds of the cross have gone forth. The conditions of this covenant have been rehearsed in huts and hovels, in courts and kingdoms. The contents of this will have been widely scattered. Its benefits have been extensively realized. And past achievement is the earnest of future success. It is destined to go into every tongue, to invade every nation under heaven, to belt the entire globe. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

II. HIS LEGACIES.

The divine testator has wealth in exhaustless abundance. He owns the fat of the land and the fruit of the sea. The rich mine, the fertile plain, and the stately forest are his possessions. "The cattle on a thousand hills are his." He is King of kings. All thrones, sceptres, and coronets are subject to him. He is the embodiment of power and might and strength. He can speak and worlds come into existence. All nature

bearkens to his voice. His commands are heeded throughout the universe. He is "Lord of all."

Out of his treasury the wants of man are supplied. He said, "All things are yours." But he does not always bestow on his heirs material wealth. There is something of greater value than silver and gold. There is property more secure than houses and lands. This he freely bequeathes to the race.

1. He gave *himself*. It is said that the Queen of Cambra consulted the gods as to how the drought cursing her domain might be checked. The reply came, "It will be stayed, if the Queen will give herself a sacrifice for her people." She consented and was buried alive. Out of the hill on which she was buried gushed a stream of pure water, and the land was blessed and the people were saved. Thus Christ gave "his life a ransom for many." The crystal stream has gone forth and now the barren waste may blossom as the rose. Upon his sacrifice hinges our salvation. His blood appeased the wrath of God and effected our redemption.

He also left us an "example that we should follow his steps." A clean record is a priceless heritage. A pure life is a guiding star. A noble example is the loftiest inspiration. The path of Jesus will lead the weary pilgrim to the mansions above. The career of Christ as a compass will guide the voyager safely into the harbor of rest. The courage of the Captain of our salvation inspires with hope his flagging lines and urges them on to victory. A stainless life is before us complete in suffering, submission, and sacrifice. What greater bequest has ever been made!

2. In giving himself, he also gave *happiness*. There is often misery in a palace and bliss in a dungeon. There have been times when kings were willing to barter thrones for the unmixed delights of ordinary life. Jesus brings joy. The Prince of Peace declares, "My peace I give unto you." Joy and peace are named as fruits of the Spirit. Paul in the midst of trial wrote "Rejoice evermore," and at the hour of midnight in the Philippian jail he sang praises to God. The martyr can be happy though his flesh crackle in the flames. The clouds of gloom may hover low, but the child of God delights in the clear rays of the Sun of Righteousness. The floods of trouble may roll high and rage fearfully, but the christian rejoices in security with his feet planted on the Rock of Eternal Ages. Persecution may come with cyclonic force, but in blissful safety the divine heir has refuge in "the covert from the tempest." The saint can rejoice in "poverty's vale or abounding in wealth." He is content in the sunshine of prosperity and in the shadows of adversity. His sources of joy are abundant as he treads the path of duty. And when life's toil is over, he sinks peacefully into the embrace of death. Happy is the lot of the christian who receives on earth this joy supreme.

3. Another legacy is *heaven*. Each heir is entitled to a home in the skies. "I go to prepare a place for you." The mansions above are capacious and costly. The streets of the city are paved with gold, its walls are of jasper, and its gates of pearl. The river of life proceeds from the throne of God. There is the tree of life with its fruit and "leaves for the healing of the nations." Heaven is enduring. It is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." No foul thief is there entertained. No fraudulent speculator finds habitation within its walls. None but true heirs are admitted to the "building of God eternal in the heavens." They are given harps of praise, crowns of victory, and mansions of everlasting bliss. They spend eternity surrounded by glories indescribable and joys beyond conception. And all through the endless ages they cluster around the great Testator in devout and ceaseless thanksgiving for the bequests of himself, happiness, and heaven so generously given to rebellious man.

III. HIS HEIRS.

A prince, hunting in the forests of Germany years ago, found a poor blind orphan boy, shivering, hungry, and homeless. His heart throbbled with tenderest sympathy. He carried the boy at once to his court and supplied him with every possible comfort. He secured the highest medical skill, and soon the youth recovered his vision. Then he adopted the boy as his own son and gave him all his property. Years passed, and the ragged waif grew to be a mighty prince. Thus man was wandering in the wilderness of earth without spiritual sight, home, wealth, or friends. Then Jesus with infinite compassion came "to seek and to save the lost." In melting tenderness he spake to groping millions, saying, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Strangers receive a hearty welcome. They are adopted into the divine family and become "heirs," entitled to the treasures of the kingdom of heaven.

But not all are adopted. Why? There are conditions to be met and only those who comply enter the palace of the King. The heirs are possessed of a peculiar nature and history.

1. They are characterized by heart crushing *penitence*. This was enjoined by patriarch and prophet. "Repent ye" was the life-long theme of Christ and his forerunner. The apostles in flood and flame tenaciously held forth the same doctrine. Martyrs went to the rack and the stake in its advocacy. They grasped the great truth that penitence precedes adoption.

There is a story that God offered a man entrance into heaven for the most precious

thing on earth. The man then secured the purest gold and flew to the gates of pearl, but they were bolted against him. He went again, gathered the finest jewelry and most precious stones, and bore them up, but the gates were still barred. A third time he went forth on his search. Walking on the beach, he saw a little child lying under the shade of the trees asleep. A robber came up and bending over the child thought of its innocence in contrast with his own wicked and reckless life. Then he drew a deep sigh of regret for sin and a tear dropped from his eye. The searcher caught it and again flew to the celestial gates. He found them wide open and a chorus of heavenly voices rang out, "Yes, you have brought us the most precious thing in all the world—the tear of penitence." It is shed by the children of God. It moves the heart of Jehovah. It is a passport into the realms of bliss.

2. Repentance goes hand in hand with *faith*. They are inseparably linked together. "Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Every truly penitent soul is a believing soul. Like repentance, faith is an element in the character of the heavenly heir.

Abraham "believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." David, the Psalmist, sweetly sang, "In thee, O God, do I put my trust." Job said in accents of strongest faith, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Isaiah was commanded to say to wayward Israel, "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land." Paul declares, "The just shall live by faith," and "without faith it is impossible to please God."

Then arching o'er the gates of the celestial city, these words glow in full view of men, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." In Bunyan's allegory, Ignorance knocked for admittance without the roll of faith in his bosom. As an intruder he was borne away and lodged in the cavern of woe. Only those who have faith can enter and be crowned heirs of eternal joy.

3. True penitence and living faith are productive of *energy*. There is no penitence without exertion and "faith without works is dead." Paul of Tarsus, penitent and believing, cries out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do!" The command was given and obeyed, and the chief of sinners became the chief of the apostles in conflict, suffering, success. How earnestly he toiled! How nobly he suffered! How fiercely he fought in Immanuel's army! And when he had expended all the energies of his being in the Master's cause he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith; there is laid up for me a crown."

And so with every heir of God. They are never to cherish a spirit of idleness and indifference. There is labor to perform: "Go work to day in my vineyard." There is fighting to be done: "Fight the good fight of faith." There is a race-course to pursue: "So run that ye may obtain." In a world of ceaseless activity, the christian must not be inactive. With fiery energy he must press on from achievement to achievement.

IV. HIS EXECUTORS.

The will has been made. The legatees have been named. The heirs have been described. The Testator has expired on the tree. Before his death Christ in a prayer to the Father said, "All mine are thine," and he promised the heirs a Comforter, declaring "He will guide you into all truth." The executors, then, are the Father and the Holy Spirit. Notice,

1. They are *qualified* for the position. They have infinite knowledge and skill. They thoroughly understand all the wishes of the Testator. All the circumstances of the legatees are known to them. They will keep all the treasures in absolute safety. "No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

2. They are *faithful*. They are interested in the heirs. They will carry out the will in every particular. No loss shall be sustained. The envious may present their groundless claims, but divine wealth goes only to the rightful heirs. A jealous Father guards the interests of his children with unswerving fidelity.

Christ stands before us, the divine Testator. Are you one of his heirs? "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." Toil earnestly in his vineyard. Fight valiantly in his army. Die, if need be, in the advocacy of his cause. Are you without a title to the privileges of the kingdom of heaven? Then, I invite you in his name to become a member of his family and an heir of his wealth. Delay no longer. Your eternal interests are at stake. He will receive you. No one has ever been turned away. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Preparation to Meet the Lord.

BY REV. J. R. JONES.

Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh—Matt. 24: 44.

Here we have an exhortation, and the reason why it should be heeded. The exhortation is: "Be ye also ready." The reason why it should be heeded: "For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

If you or I were looking for a very distinguished guest, and did not know at what hour he would come, we would spare no pains to keep everything in readiness for his coming. The Lord is coming. No doctrine of the Bible is more clearly taught. He is

coming finally to judge the world, to gather his people together and receive them up into glory, and to cast the wicked into everlasting perdition. But, practically to us, his coming will be at our death. If we shall be found ready, there will be no event in our lives up to that time fraught with such happiness as his coming will be to us. On the other hand, if we are not ready, especially so far as faith and repentance are concerned, there can be no event in our lives up to that time that will compare to the dread and terror that will lay hold upon us. Death to the impenitent is the beginning of that death "whose pangs outlast the fleeting years." To them it is the transition point from their state here to one of indescribable woe and misery. Let us notice

1. What we must do to be ready. There are four things to be done; and if death comes and finds us with any one of these undone, we shall not be fully ready for it. First of all we must repent of our sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Whatever else we may do, without repentance and faith the Lord will not accept us. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." On the day of Pentecost when the convicted people cried, "What shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

From these and other like passages we see that the first thing to be done in order to be ready for the coming of the Lord is to repent and believe.

Repentance is heartfelt sorrow on account of sin, and turning away from it in mind and heart, being followed by conversion, that is, change in the life or conduct. The things Paul loved as an impenitent sinner against Jesus, he hated after repentance; and the zeal with which he served the Lord Jesus whom he persecuted before his repentance, was conversion. To "quit your meanness and do good" is not repentance, but conversion, and may be the fruit of genuine, evangelical repentance, and it may not be. Unless it is such, there is no readiness in it for the coming of the Lord. Faith is belief in the truthfulness of God's word, and trust in the Saviour presented to us in that word. It commits the soul to the keeping of the love and power of Jesus, feeling that he will do for us all that he has promised. Have you repented, and are you trusting Jesus? If so, in the most important particular, you are ready. But this, while the most important, is only the beginning of the christian life, and the work of preparation for the coming of the Lord. In all respects the christian life must be worthy of emulation, and the more worthy it is the more ready will the christian be to meet the Lord. This leads me to say

2. That to be ready we must constantly strive after holiness of life, and be ever active in christian work.

Peter exhorts us "to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord;" and that means to increase in piety-spirituality, and in favor with God, to let the image of the Saviour be more and more clearly seen in us, and to be constantly learning more and more of him. Paul exhorts us to "grow up into Christ in all things." The newly regenerated are regarded in the Scriptures as "babes in Christ." They ought to grow. They need to grow, and must be found growing when the Lord comes if they would be ready to meet him. This growth is kept up by using the means of grace we have, such as prayer, church privileges, the Bible, and religious conversation. To neglect these means to cease to grow, and to become cold and worldly minded. And worldly mindedness is the dry rot that is eating out the life of and destroying the power of many christians and churches. The more nearly we are like Christ when he comes the more we shall enjoy his coming. Again, we must be found active in christian work. I think we would feel sadly unready if the Lord were to come and find us doing nothing for him, and that we had done nothing, or but very little. A young man lay dying. Suddenly a look of sadness crossed his face. To the query of a friend he exclaimed, "No, I am not afraid; Jesus saves me now. But oh, must I go and empty handed?" Ah, brother, are you going to meet Jesus empty handed? Will you have no sheaves to lay at his feet? An aged servant of the Lord, and one of the best men I ever knew, said in conversation with a friend just a day or two before he died, "If I knew the judgment would come this evening I would not change my course." How many of us can say that? The Lord says to you and to me, "Occupy till I come." Be busy in the use of the powers, privileges and opportunities that he has given us. To be active in the protracted meeting and on Sunday, and idle the balance of the time, will not do. The Lord may not come to us in the protracted meeting, nor on Sunday. Religion is an every-day, an all-the-time, business. If we wish to be ready, let us keep busy at work for the Lord. We notice

3. That to be ready we must be square with the world. And that means to have all accounts with

those with whom we have had dealings settled, or provision made for their settlement. There is a deplorable indifference on the part of many, and even of some church members, about paying debts, and most especially when the debts have become old. They seem to forget that old claims are as binding as new ones, and are blind to the force of the Bible injunction, "Owe no man anything, but to love him." &c., and go right along as if there were no danger of bringing their character under suspicion by such indifference, and forfeiting the confidence of their fellowmen. No one with debts upon him unprovided for is fully ready to meet death. If adverse circumstances, over which he has no control, render it impossible for him to pay them, or to have provision made for their payment, he can die with a clear conscience, but he will not have a quiet, undisturbed frame of mind; for while he may have the satisfaction of knowing that he has done his best, there will be the thought, and at that time a most unpleasant thought it will be to him, that somebody will lose by him. Another thought there will be to trouble him, and that is, to have to go down to the grave with his character under suspicion. While in his case the suspicion would be without foundation and unjust, yet it would exist. It arises in this way. If a person can, and will not pay his debts, he is dishonest. We all know that. Now, whether the man's failure to pay his debts be the result of extravagant living, bad management, neglect, misfortune, or sheer dishonesty, there will be some who will suspect his character. This thought, to any one who wishes to leave behind him a reputation for strict integrity, a name that would be a blessing to his family and an inspiration to uprighteness of life, would be as bitterness in the soul. And if this is true of one, who, on account of misfortune, fails to pay his debts, what do you think, my brother, will be your experience in your last days if your failure is on account of extravagant living, or mere indifference? You will be sadly unready. The thing for us to do, then, is to try to keep out of debt, and when it becomes necessary, as it sometimes does, to go in debt, to use every possible effort, exercising the most rigid economy, and even self-denial, to get out as quickly as possible. Taking great risks in speculations, in the hope of realizing large profits, is not wise, when disappointment would result in direct loss to others. Let us all endeavor to so live that when we come to die there will be no claims against us that cannot be satisfied.

4. Another thing we must do to be ready is to get our business matters in such shape that their settlement will not bring trouble and discord into our families.

"Set your house in order, for thou shalt surely die." Many family estrangements have been caused by the settlement of estates left in a confused condition. I have no doubt but that many have been rendered uncomfortable in their last hours by the thought that the division of their property would most likely cause serious trouble in their families. Every one knows what disposition he wants made of his property after he is dead; and he owes it to himself and to his family to have such disposition put in writing, and in terms so plain as to preclude the possibility of misconstruction. This we must do to be fully ready to meet the Lord in death.

5. The reason the Saviour gives why we should be ready at all times, is that we do not know when he is coming.

"Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

We do not know what night the thief will come, and therefore we lock up our goods every night. While the rich man was rejoicing over his bountiful harvest, and thinking of the royal good time he was going to have for many years, the Lord said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." At the very moment when Belshazzar was reveling and drinking himself drunk at the great feast he had given, Cyrus, at the head of a great army, was marching into the city, and almost before Belshazzar knew it, the city was taken, and he in the hands of his conqueror. Ah, friends, while making your plans for pleasure or wealth, do not forget the all important matter of being ready for death; for it may be nearer than you think. A young lady went to her room one night much concerned about her soul's condition. She sat down at her table and wrote: "One year from to-night I will try to become a christian." And then, as it appears, she thought that was too long to put it off, and wrote under the first line: "Six months from to-night I will try to become a christian." But it seems that she was afraid to wait that long, and wrote again: "One month from to-night I will try to become a christian." So short a time as a month seemed to satisfy her, and she retired. The next morning she did not come down to breakfast. A servant was sent to her room to see what was the matter, and found her cold in death. Death was so near, and yet she thought it was surely a month off. The only way to be sure of being ready to meet the Lord is to be ready all the time. Somewhere before us is death. We know not how far off it is. Beyond it is long, long eternity, and how we shall spend it depends on whether or not we are ready when death comes. How important, then, to be ready. Are you ready, my friend, are you? If not, get ready without delay. May the Lord help you.

Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.