Hebrews 11:39-40 (James A. Taylor) 54713

Christian Truth: Volume 31, Some Better Thing (11:39-40)

Heb. 11:39, 40

There are three things alluded to in these verses that claim our attention. The promise not received by those spoken of in the chapter; "some better thing" for us; and our being perfected together in resurrection. First, as to the promise. The great principle of faith as the power of the just man's life had been wonderfully illustrated in those who had gone before, and that in a great variety of testing circumstances. For like those addressed in the epistle, they had not received—that is, enjoyed possession of—what had been promised them. Even if the patriarch's faith went beyond the promise, and looked for the city which hath foundations, that God had prepared for them, they had not entered into it; it has not come yet. God would not bring them into their promised portion without us. They, like us, had to live by the faith of it.

But meanwhile some better thing had been foreseen by God for us. It is not the object of the epistle to develop this better thing in all its extent, for it does not bring out the Church's place as united to Christ in glory. But the heavens are opened now to faith as they were not to them; and Christ who has passed into the heavens has become the present Object of faith, having taken His place there, on the ground of accomplished redemption. Thus heavenly things are revealed as the present portion of Christians. Our citizenship is there. God has come out of the thick darkness of Sinai, in the full revelation of Himself in the Son, and we have unhindered access to Him in the sanctuary of His presence by the perfect work of the Son of God. All this wonderful place of privilege belongs to the calling of the Christian, that is, to those called in this time of Christ's rejection from the earth, as it did not belong to saints before He came and died and rose again.

If it be remembered that Christ is in the heavenly glory, and the Holy Spirit came down from it to dwell in the believers and unite us to Him there, the difference between saints now and those of the Old Testament times will be more and more understood. But the last clause carries us on to the time of the full accomplishment of God's eternal counsels for us all—"that they without us should not be made perfect." There is no perfection, as such, short of resurrection, and bearing the image of Christ in glory. For this we wait. It may be realized at any moment by the coming of the Lord, and without death for us who are alive at His coming. For if the dead in Christ (all that are Christ's) shall rise first at His shout, and in bodies of glory, we who are alive and remain shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we be perfected together, though even in the eternal glory, the Church—embracing all who are Christ's between Pentecost and His coming—will never lose its distinctive place and relationship to Christ as His body and bride, as we see from Rev. 21:2, 3: "And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them."