

The Nobleman

Explanation of the Picture

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The Eighth in the Series of Eight

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1. “JESUS” - The royal blue letters represent royalty. He has always been the King and will always be the King. He has always been the King of all the kings. He is not interested in establishing an eternal democracy or republic. His is a dictatorship - but one of justice and righteousness. He acknowledged to Pilate that He was indeed a King, but, *“My Kingdom is not of this world”* (Jn 18:36). But it will soon be the only Kingdom of this world when He creates the new heavens and earth.

When Jesus was before Pilate, this acknowledgment of being a King is what sealed His fate. Pilate could not allow a professed king to run around. And that was the secular charge the Jews made ... putting Pilate on the spot. Earlier charges had not moved Pilate. At one point, he was ready to dismiss the whole thing, saying, *“Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your own Law”* (Jn 18:31). He knew the charges being brought against Jesus were religious wranglings motivated by envy (Mk 15:10). But when the charge of Jesus claiming to be a King arose, Pilate’s ears perked up. He questioned Jesus in private, and Jesus acknowledged that was correct. Pilate still wanted to release Him, but the Jews had “a winner” of a charge and had Pilate hemmed in. The Jews were ready to report Pilate to Rome if he allowed a professing king - a rival to Caesar - to freely roam the land. And Pilate knew they were capable of such activity as they had done it before (twice at least). When Pilate asked what should be done with their King - they insisted He be crucified. *“We have no king but Caesar!”* (Jn 19:15). Built into that declaration was the challenge to Pilate, *“How many kings do you have? Let us know and we will be happy to inform Rome of your position!”* By placing the sign on the cross in three languages, *“Jesus the Nazarene, The King of the Jews”* (Jn 19:19-22), Pilate made sure that a charge of this nature could not even get started. And as the crucifixion took place close to the city, that probably gave additional comfort as this occurred at the busy Passover season. Visitors from all over the Empire could see the fate of other kings in Pilate's domain. He extracted himself quite aggressively from this trap of the Jews ... and in the process the Jews got what they wanted. But, a Problem arose three days later. All those “wins” were annulled. The King walked out of His grave alive. Jesus always complicates matters for His ill-wishers.

But here is one of the most amazing things about this King. Even though I myself would enter human history, and soon become His enemy, He had already decided that was not how my story would end. *“He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death of a cross. Therefore, also God highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father”* (Phil 2:6-11). He laid aside the perks of Kingship, for a season, to come and effectively expunge violations against Him - on the cross. After accomplishing that mission, He reassumed His proper station – having created the grounds whereby He could extend mercy. Praise God for the power to turn to Him.

2. Me

a) I am giving my allegiance to the Lord, and by His grace, my remaining earthly days ... I even now commit to Him. I “*have been bought with a price*” and I am not my own (1Cor 6:19,20). He bought me with His blood and I am His. As Creator, He always did have full rights to me - even before I became a Christian. As Maker, He owns the “product.” One might reject this, but that does not altar the reality. (No one can prove the preceding statements are false. The best one can do is say, “*I do not believe them*”). But now, having been bought by the blood of God (Ac 20:28), He has a *double* claim on me. The first claim is understandable, but the second one? He knows me much better than I know myself, and I can assure you, it is remarkable that the likes of Him would have any reason to associate Himself with the likes of me. This is not a statement of self effacing humility where I am fishing for a sympathetic pat on the back - this is an objective, unemotional, statement of fact.

b) I am facing north - toward Mount Zion in the far north (Ps 48:1,2). Jesus resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51), and I desire to steadfastly set mine, by faith, toward Mount Zion in the far north. That is where I want to go. “*Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God*” (Ac 14:22). But, what is the alternative, brethren?

3. Stairs

a) When a person becomes a Christian, the rest of this life is a *sanctifying process*. God uses events and experiences to accomplish His primary goal - transforming us into the image of the Son, Jesus Christ (Ro 8:29). Many wonderful things do happen *at conversion*. Our sins are forgiven (Col 2:13), God’s Spirit comes to live in us (Jn 14:17), eternal life is bestowed (1Jn 5:13), plus many *positions* are freely granted. We become His son or daughter (2Cor 6:17,18), a priest (part of the royal priesthood of Melchizedek’s order - Heb 7:17 and 1Pet 2:9), and a saint (1Cor 1:2). We are even destined to stand with Him *as a judge* of men and angels (1Cor 6:2,3)! But conversion is just the beginning of a “mass overhaul” of our mind, will, and emotions. This overhaul is called, “sanctification” and starts at conversion and continues until our life in this present age concludes. Our *mind* needs to be renewed - or rewired, you might say (Ro 12:1,2). Our *will* needs to be redirected so as to agree with His. Our *emotions* need to be challenged and reworked as we gain *godly* angers, jealousies, loves - and hatreds. All areas of our life will be “visited” by God - and we are going to be changed one way or the other. Sometimes He uses His Word, and at other times disciplines, scourging, or tests - all determined by *our* need. He knows how to successfully navigate our morass. He gears everything to move us toward holiness. Without this sanctification process, to one degree or another, “*no one will see the Lord*” (Heb 12:14). We grow in this process *one step at a time* and that is what the stairs represent. I currently have no idea how many steps I have climbed. God help me not to go back down any of the steps. Forward only!

b) The steps start in this lower level - this present age. But the stairs transcend this age reaching into His kingdom - into eternity. Godliness holds promise not only for this life, but also for the life to come (1Tim 4:8).

c) Our last steps either land us into Paradise (body still not resurrected as the age here is still continuing) – or if He returned before we died – into a new heavens and earth (following our personal judgment). There will be many radical changes in that final step into heaven. The

Bible refers to this moment as “glorification” (Ro 8:30). For starters, we will be granted immortal bodies in a new, flawless world – morally and physically. The actual reality of this coming state is beyond our comprehension (1Cor 2:9). But, our internal glorification is really just the completion of a heart beat that cries out, “*Lord, make me perfect in holiness forever!*” If you are not interested in God’s things *now*, what makes you think that when you exit this life - you will all of a sudden be interested *then*? If you have no interest in His word *now*, what makes you think you will be interested in His communications *then*? If you don’t spend time talking to Him *now* (that is what prayer is), what makes you think you will want to talk to Him *then*? If you are not interested in His agenda *now*, what makes you think you will be suddenly interested *then*? The truth is, everyone who ends up in Hell would be “out of place” in Heaven anyway. They will not be interested in the activities *there* just as they are not interested in His activities *here*. They may want *the benefits* found in the coming state - but not *the agenda* of that state. But, it will not be an option to have the benefits of heaven without the agenda. The agenda will have God placed first and foremost in everything forever and ever. The Hell bound have no real interest in that aspect of the coming state. “*Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!*” (2Cor 13:5).

4. My Books on the Stairs

All my “projects” are on the stairs - committed to God for His use or non-use; whatever He decides. My job is to complete my works in the sight of my God (Rev 3:2). He will decide what to use, when and how. I seek to do faith-inspired works, which means I work on whatever I want to unless I know I am sinning (2Thes 1:11,12). God works in us “*both to will and to do*” His good pleasure (Phil 2:13). He works **in** us in such a way that we *want to do the very things He wants us to do* - and then grants the opportunity to do those things! He is amazing! I ask Him to direct me, knowing there will be some refuse (Pr 14:4), but my labors are not in vain, in the Lord (1Cor 15:58). None of them are.

On my right side are my input books and on my left are the “output” books. A couple of the “output” works are in the embryo stage at present.

5. The Earth

a) The fire: The earth is reserved for fire, real fire (2Pet 3:10-13). Today the grass is in the field but tomorrow in a furnace (Lk 12:28). All the elements will melt with intense heat. Forget the nuclear weapons. Man’s death tools are not anything like God’s thorough cleansing and melting. God is going to melt *all* the elements. The fire over the whole earth also represents how the earth is already burning - wars, prides, famines, plagues - tiny precursors to God’s great fire. Oppressors all over this earth gleefully warm their hands by the fires they have set. God says to them, “*Behold all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with fire brands, walk in the light of your fire, and among the brands you have set ablaze (go on and walk in your devices with your cohorts); this you will have from My hand and you will lie down in torment*” (Isa 50:11). Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be their lot (Ps 11:6).

b) The cracks: The cracks in the earth are part of the great earthquake that is coming (apparently during the great tribulation that is ahead) and this earth will reel and totter like a drunken man (Rev 16:17-21 and Isa 24).

6. The Black Sky

This universe is beautiful, but it is dark, cold, and hostile to the support of present life. It, and its host, are passing away to be replaced by the new heavens that have no sun or moon as it is illumined by the light of God Himself. The yellow sky above The Throne represents His eternal illumining (Rev 22:5).

7. The Moon

It is red - turned to blood. Tribulation time. Powers in the heavens are shaken.

8. The Throne

My first destination. Because of the blood of Christ, I will find no condemnation there (Ro 8:1). There will be plenty of wood, hay and stubble - life errors to be burned up - but no condemnation. Each of us shall give a full accounting of ourselves to God (Ro 14:12). This does not thrill me too much sometimes, but like it or not, that is an appointment I will not be able to sidestep. All shall appear before Him to give account of deeds done in the body, whether good or bad (2Cor 5:10). Stated another way, every life's journey ends with Him at the end of it. Even most Christians live with very little true realization of this coming moment. If we lived in the light of our soon and inevitable appearing before Christ, how different we would be - how different the Church would be! We say, "*I have come to know Him!*" - yet we walk in much darkness. I am speaking to me.

9. Around the Throne

Elders, lamp stands, glassy sea, lightning, and the rainbow, with the throne at the center of all these things - for Him who sits upon it ... the great, "I AM." Justice is a central focus in the damnation of the unregenerate ... as well as the redemption of the elect. Jesus satisfied the demands of justice, for the elect of God, at the cross. They have received mercy and will not get what they deserve. But the unregenerate, at the throne, will receive justice. At that time, there is no hope for acquittal. That can only be gained in this current life - and it is granted through our faith - faith in the Jesus of the Bible. Don't wait!

This present evil age will soon pass away,
Then accounting by all at the Great Judgment Day.
For the goats on the left, nothing but terror and dread.
For the sheep on the right, undeserved pardon instead.

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