

# The Creator's Grand Design

Chapter 1

## MAN'S MONUMENTAL FAILURE

ASTRONAUTS hurtling through space at unbelievable speeds are awed as they look at the earth on which we humans live. While from their vantage point they can get an impressive view of this little planet, they cannot observe the activities of the countless millions of small creatures who live on its surface, creatures whom we call humans. Nor can we who remain on the earth's surface comprehend fully the significance of what is taking place around us. There was a time when so-called civilized man thought he understood the meaning of life as well as the destiny of mankind, but today this sense of understanding has almost vanished from the earth.

Actually, what has happened to the world since the beginning of the century proves that the previously accepted view was incorrect. It was believed and proclaimed that man was making steady progress toward peace and security. It was believed, vaguely perhaps, that in some way God was directing this progress. Most of Europe was ruled by church-state governments, and in this country it was held that in some way God was directing the affairs of government.

The so-called civilized world consisted largely of the white race. It was known, of course, that in other parts of the earth, millions of black, brown, red, and yellow people existed. But very few ever thought of these as belonging to our world. They were people to be used and exploited. For the churches, they were people to be converted and, as was supposed, thereby saved from being tortured in hell-fire forever. True, slavery had been abolished in America, but the Negroes even here were still looked upon generally as a second-class species of the race, designed by God to be menial servants of the whites.

It was supposed by the wisdom of this world that this status quo would continue. It was known, of course, that white nations were antagonistic to one another and that all of them maintained large armies and an abundant supply of whatever weapons of war were then available. Britain was proud to be the mistress of the sea, while others envied her in this position. However, it was argued that advancing knowledge and understanding would prevent the use of arms to settle disputes; so the world went on complacently unaware of the horrendous upheavals which were about to take place in human society.

### The World Ended

In the year 1913 the old world of white supremacy and glory claimed to have reached its goal of goodwill among men, for that year was designated an international peace year. It was during 1913 that the Peace Palace at The Hague was dedicated. Throughout the world the rulers and diplomats were wined and dined in celebration of the glorious human attainment of peace. It did not seem to matter much to these that millions of people in Asia, Africa, and many other places were without food, clothing, and homes. Their own world had attained peace, and they were happy.

But their rejoicing was not destined to last very long for in August of the next year, 1914, the First World War of history broke out with fury in Europe. This signaled the virtual end of the pre-1914 social order and a collapse of the smugness with which the so-called civilized rulers of that era viewed their establishment and its future. The results of that holocaust were not immediately apparent; but looking back upon it from our vantage point, we can see the tremendous changes it triggered, not only in the framework of governments but in the viewpoints of the people, both civil and religious.

As a result of that war came the collapse of the powerful hereditary church - state governments of Europe. Communism was established in Russia. For a short time Germany became a republic, later to succumb to

dictatorship. This was true also in Italy. The British Empire began to deteriorate and has now virtually vanished. All in all, the social order of Europe today is as different from the pre-1914 social order as day is different from night.

It was in 1917, shortly before the close of the First World War, that communism took over in Russia, bringing an end to that country's age-old monarchy. While America and other nations did what they could to destroy this budding menace, they failed, and now essentially every major decision in world politics is made with a view to either hindering or helping communism. Not only have communist nations become a powerful factor in international affairs of the post-1914 world but their anti-God teachings have made millions of atheists, not alone in Russia and other communist countries but throughout the earth.

### **Changed Religious Outlook**

In the world that was before 1914 the Catholic and Protestant churches were widely separated and, in many instances, antagonistic to each other. Each was striving to promote its own interests in the world around them, and all were energetically fostering missionary efforts in heathen lands. Today the differences between the denominations are being more and more set aside. The growth of materialism and atheism is threatening the very existence of religion, and the denominations feel they must either work together or else die together.

While efforts are still being made in some areas to continue foreign missions, the fact is that the larger of the heathen countries, such as China and India, are making it more and more difficult for missionaries even to live within their borders. Turmoil among the struggling new nations of Africa makes missionary work there most difficult and hazardous. In short, the churches now recognize that their pre-1914 objective of converting the world to their concepts of Christianity has proved to be a complete failure and has been abandoned as a major project of the denominational churches.

Religious influence is on the wane throughout Europe and the Americas. Shortly after the Second World War as an outgrowth of fears for the future, there was an upsurge of church attendance in America; this has continued to a degree among the fundamentalists while there are millions of upright people in the world today the moral standards of the masses are at a low ebb. This is evidenced by the rapid and steady increase of petty and major crimes.

### **World War II**

With all the devastation and horror of World War I the rulers of the world failed to learn that war is no solution to national and international problems. Nor did they learn that being prepared for war does not prevent war. So, in a little over twenty years from the close of the war to end wars, the nations of Europe were at one another's throats again. Call it aggression on the part of some if we will, but the end result is the same. Soon, as in the previous struggle, the whole world became involved.

Through the irony of circumstances, the most powerful capitalistic nations of earth were fighting side by side with the communist nations. The one great objective then was to destroy Nazism, Fascism, and the Japanese aggressors. Meanwhile new and more deadly instruments of destruction came into use, the climax of which, at that time, was the atomic bomb. The dropping of these on two Japanese cities blasted the world into peace. When the smoke of battle had cleared and agreements had been made, Germany was divided, and Berlin, located in the Red Sea, called East Germany, was much partitioned; and this situation has continued through the years to be a festering threat to lasting world peace, that unhappy and jittery peace into which the nations had been hurled by atomic destruction.

The Second World War left most of the nations of earth in a state of near bankruptcy. There would have been a total collapse of the European economy but for the fact that the United States began pouring in

millions of American dollars. This was done under what was called the Marshall Plan, named after the then United States Secretary of State who recommended it in 1947. Later, the designation Marshall Plan was dropped, and it is now called Foreign Aid. To begin with, these American dollars were intended to help build up the peacetime economy of foreign countries; now the funds are also provided for helping nations on our side to be prepared for war.

Nor has the United States neglected being prepared for war. This nation of isolation in the pre-1914 world now has the earth ringed with military bases of one sort or another. The atomic bomb has developed into the hydrogen, or fusion, bomb, and it is said that this nation has manufactured a stockpile of these sufficient to destroy the entire population of earth twenty-five times. Russia has a similar stockpile, almost as large. It is these that the rulers are now depending upon to keep the peace.

The Second World War, like the first, did not solve any of the world's problems. Instead, it stirred up more problems, so that today there is not a spot on earth where there is genuine peace and prosperity. Look where we will, there is discontent, agitation, strife, and in many instances, bloodshed. And there seems to be nothing that can be done about it. The United Nations, another outgrowth of war, is helping where it can in the fields of education, medicine, etc., but it is quite incapable of solving the main problems which arise among its members.

### **Good Efforts**

We are not attempting to give the impression that in the post-1914 world everything is wrong, or evil. It is good that the church-state governments of Europe are no longer ruling the people in that old Roman world. It is good that circumstances have developed which have curtailed the preaching of Dark-Age superstitions among the heathen. Indeed, there is much in the world today that is preferable to conditions prior to 1914. The coming alive of human conscience as seen in the civil rights movement is commendable and good. It is just that human efforts along all good lines, even endeavors to establish lasting peace, seem to engender so much more strife, and many times these efforts fail so miserably that thinking people cannot help asking why this is so.

There is a fomentation in the world today all over the world that is frightening, unless we can find the reason for it. Perhaps that reason is to be found, in part, in the inequalities which everywhere exist. Take a look within India and there see the teeming millions of the starving, living in squalor which many farmers in America would consider too horrible even for their livestock. Look at the substandard living to which the majority in many countries are subjected. And there is a large minority even in America that is no better off. Seventy-five percent of the earth's population is ill clad and underfed.

And then there is the prejudice between the races and nations. As an outgrowth of the last war, the Jewish people were granted possession of part of their ancient homeland. This was good. But because of prejudice between Jews and Arabs, Israel must remain armed to the teeth for protection and live constantly under the threat of being forced into the sea and destroyed. How will this distressing problem be solved?

### **Population Explosion**

One of the paradoxes of our chaotic times is highlighted by the new expression, population explosion. The reason this is paradoxical is that medical science, particularly since 1914, and more especially since the close of the last war, has developed ways and means of prolonging human life so that the human life span has greatly increased. And now experts in the field declare that the birth rate must be greatly diminished, else in a remarkably short time the earth will become overpopulated.

It is not our desire to argue with the statisticians. We are merely calling attention to the fact that here is a problem which did not exist in the pre-1914 world. None of the oldsters who lived in that period will

recall that a population explosion was then feared. Yet today, although not of immediate concern to many people, this is, nevertheless, a situation which even in the next generation could very well be a baffling one. It is a problem, therefore, which in the long-range planning of world economists must be taken into consideration. Will human selfishness prevent a successful solution of this problem, even as it is preventing a solution of all the various and immediate problems of our day?

### **Advancing Knowledge**

In the pre-1914 world the railway train was the fastest means of mass travel. Traveling by air was just beginning. Sixty miles an hour was considered extremely fast. It was in that era that the expression *like sixty* came into use to describe exceedingly rapid motion. But in the new world of today this has changed. Going *like sixty* today would be comparatively slow. The speedup of air, sea, and land travel in the post-1914 world reflects but part of the incredible advances which are being made in the field of science and invention.

But this is not helping to solve the problems of the world, for scientific knowledge does not remove selfishness from the human heart; and in many instances it leads to a pride of attainment which spurns the need of God. The claim by many is that the universe came into existence by chance and that now man is learning to conquer the elements which produced him and the universe. These forget that they are unable even to solve the problems of human relationship which their own folly and selfishness have produced.

The greatest basic problem of all now facing the human race is the fact that more than 150,000 are dying every twenty-four hours. Sickness and death have posed a problem for man ever since he has been on earth. Medical scientists are now doing the best they can to conquer the major killing diseases, and this is good; but no one expects that these scientists will be able to conquer death. Undertakers will continue to be much needed in this world of woe. Those who believe in God, and in the Bible as his inspired Word, know that in his grand design for his human creatures death will ultimately be destroyed. Rev. 21: 4

As a matter of fact, our claim is that the only satisfactory explanation of the present chaotic, suffering, fear-filled, and dying world is to be found in the Bible. But so many ask, who is the God of the Bible, and where can we find him? A Russian cosmonaut, returning from a flight through space, said that he saw nothing of God out there. But is that the place and the way to find God? Obviously, if we are to find satisfaction in the message of the Bible, we must believe that God exists and is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

To be assured that the plan of God as revealed in the Bible will actually solve the many problems of human limitation and selfishness, it is necessary to believe that miracles will be performed in order to carry out that plan. But this should not be difficult for those who believe the miracles of the Bible, miracles which were wrought by the power of the great Creator whose design for his human creatures is outlined in the Bible.

One of the characteristics of the professed Christian world today is lack of faith in the miracles recorded in the Bible. The religious philosophers of our time explain away these miracles. They call them merely allegories, interesting stories, designed, not to relate facts, but to illustrate lessons. Those who hold such views concerning these miracles are not prepared to accept the Bible's promises that reveal the manner in which God's plan will provide for the human race that peace, happiness, and life for which all have longed throughout the ages. It is only as we comprehend the beautiful harmony of the Bible in its revelation of the Creator's grand design that we can see the full importance and necessity of all the miracles for which that design calls, and can have faith that God will make good all his wonderful promises. Our next chapter will begin an examination of the details of the divine plan, a plan which reveals the Creator's infinite wisdom, unbounding love, exact justice, and unlimited power.

A knowledge of these four cardinal attributes of the Creator's character reveals his glory, a glory which the Bible declares is yet to fill the earth, and a glory which all flesh will see. (Isa. 40: 5) Again we read, The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9) So, while today all human plans are failing, we rejoice to realize that God has a plan for peace and life here on earth which will not fail, and that mankind in general will eventually love and serve him.

## Chapter 2

# THE CREATOR REVEALS HIMSELF

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork. Psalm 19

MANY great scientists of modern times have openly stated their belief in the existence of a supreme, intelligent Creator. A. Creasey Morrison, in the book, *Man Does Not Stand Alone*, says, By unwavering mathematical law we can prove that our universe was designed and executed by a great engineering intelligence. Prof. Louis Pasteur, the noted French chemist, testified that he prayed while he worked.

Throughout all the centuries the wise and the learned have endeavored to pry into the secrets of creation and explain how the great universe came into existence. While these have discovered many of the laws which govern nature and are able, up to a point, to utilize this knowledge, they cannot explain how, out of nothing, there came into existence countless billions of planetary systems and myriad forms of life plant and animal \_ and why law and order are so unmistakably displayed in these creations. Happy are they who, by faith, based on reason, are able to accept the plain testimony found in the first verse of the Bible, In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Gen. 1:1

Yes, there is a God! All nature testifies to this. This testimony is everywhere displayed throughout the earth, in the air, the seas, the skies. The Creator himself calls attention to this in a revealing dialogue with the Prophet Job, as recorded in chapters 38 through 41 of the Book of Job. Job was a faithful servant of God, the God who, in the beginning, created the heavens (Gen. 2:1) and the earth; but the Creator permitted calamities to come upon him. He lost almost everything in life which contributes to happiness, including his health. Job's friends insisted that he was being punished for gross sins which he had secretly committed. Job denied this yet was unable to understand why his God was allowing him to suffer. However, in faith he exclaimed, He knows the way that I take. Job 23:10

The controversy between Job and his friends continues throughout many chapters of the book. Then, as the record states: The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now your loins like a man; for I will demand of you, and answer you me. (Job 38: 1-3) The long series of questions which God asks Job brings out the many points which, because human wisdom does not know the answers, should help even the most skeptical to realize the truthfulness of David's words, The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. (Ps. 14:1) The wise know that belief in the existence of God leads to the only reasonable answer to many of our questions.

Where were you, God asked Job, when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if you have understanding. Who has laid the measures thereof, if you know? or who has stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened, or who laid the cornerstone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (vs. 4-7) Job was a wise man; he knew that everything made by man required planning and skill. This was true of buildings. In our day it is true of intricate machinery, of television, jet planes, and other modern marvels. These things do not just happen.

The earth, the home of all mankind, had been created without Job or other men having anything to do with it. Job was not present when the foundations were laid. He had no part in the architectural design and measurements. Nevertheless, he knew that it existed. This marvelous display of wisdom and design

should help us, as doubtless it did Job, to realize that there must have been a divine Architect and Builder with intelligence and power far superior to that possessed by man

Then the Lord reminded Job of some of the details connected with the creation of the earth. He asked,

Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, ...and set bars and doors, and said Hitherto will you come, but no further: and here will your proud waves be stayed? vs. 8-11

### **Marvels of the Sea**

How seldom we think of the miracle-working power of God in connection with the ebb and flow of the ocean's tides. Oh yes, we know how to explain it. The tides, we say, are controlled largely by the gravitational pull of the moon. But what does that mean? What is gravitation? Sir Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravitation, but who framed that law and implemented it? There are times when locally the winds increase the height of the tides a number of feet, and those living near the shore must temporarily seek higher ground; but seldom do men and women realize that ordinarily they can dwell safely by the sea only because God has decreed, Hitherto will you come, but no further: and here will your proud waves be stayed. vs. 11

Next Job was asked: Have you commanded the morning since your days; and caused the dayspring to know his place? (vs. 12) Seemingly Job was a prominent man in his community and one who exercised considerable authority, but he had no control over the rising of the sun. Have you commanded the morning since your days? No, of course not! Job knew that from the earliest days of his recollection the sun had risen and set without his having anything to do with it. He realized also that this was true of the generations before him. He knew that at no time had man ever had any control over the movements of the sun, the moon, the stars, or the earth. This was far beyond the ability of man. This was the work of God.

### **The Gates of Death**

Have the gates of death been opened unto you? Job was asked, or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death? (vs. 17) Men and women of all ages have endeavored to peer beyond death, to know what lies beyond the grave. Apart from the revelation given to us in the Word of God, which assures us of a resurrection of the dead, no one has obtained any satisfactory information. Just as the mystery of creation is explainable only in the light of the fact that there is a supreme intelligent Creator, so the desire for life after death becomes a genuine hope only because the One who created life has promised to restore the dead to life. The various incidents recorded in the Bible of the awakening of certain ones from the sleep of death are therefore proofs of the existence of God, the God who created the heavens and the earth. Gen. 2:1

### **Further Questions**

Here is another intriguing question: Where is the way where light dwells? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, that you should take it to the bound thereof, and that you should know the paths to the house thereof? Know you it, because you were then born? or because the number of your days is great? (vss. 19-21) What is light, what is darkness? The light of day replaces the darkness of night, but where does the one go when the other takes its place? God asked Job if he knew the dwelling place of light, just where it stayed while its place was occupied by darkness. A foolish question? By no means! With all our modern scientific knowledge, no one has yet been able to give an adequate definition of light, or of darkness. Like electricity, which we know exists but cannot clearly define, so are light and darkness inexplicable. But God knows, for he created both the darkness and the light. It was God who said, Let there be light: and there was light. Gen. 1:3

The Lord continued to question Job, asking him about a number of things described by unbelievers as the works of nature things which, to those who believe in God, are frequently overlooked as proofs of his existence. We quote Who has divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; to cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? Has the rain a father? or who has begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? and the frost of heaven, who has given birth to it? vss. 25-29

The obvious answer to all these questions is that there must be a supreme, intelligent Creator who designed and created water and who also planned the means by which it would reach the ground and give life to vegetation. Most of us have witnessed with pleasure the revival of plants, or of grass, when water is provided; but do we realize that the process which accomplishes this is miraculous, made possible because all the elements involved were designed and made by God, who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth?

And how marvelous is the arrangement by which the water created by God reaches the dry places. (Ps. 105:41) As we know, it is by the evaporation of the water of oceans and lakes, the moisture ascending to form clouds, which are distributed over the land and which, by changes of temperature in the air currents, are caused to release their refreshing waters in the form of rain and snow. Reaching the earth, the water finds its way back into the oceans and lakes to continue the marvelous cycle. Scientific instruments of today tell us how all this happens, but the real power, or forces, which contribute to make it possible are still unexplainable.

### **The Heavenly Bodies**

Shifting the focus of his questions from purely mundane things to heavenly bodies, God asked Job: Can you bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Can you bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or can you guide Arcturus with his sons? Know you the ordinances of heaven? can you set the dominion thereof in the earth? vss. 31-33

The lesson implied in these questions is more striking today than it was to Job. Job was a wise man for his time, but the knowledge of astronomy had not advanced in his day to the present degree. Calculations now made possible by powerful telescopes have revealed the minute accuracy of time and distance involved in the movement of the heavenly bodies, giving evidence that they are held in their orbits, and at constant speeds, by the power and design of a supreme Intelligence inexplicable by man.

Without going into detail as to the particular references to Pleiades, Orion, Mazzaroth, and Arcturus, the main point of the lesson is that neither Job nor we can possibly change the course of a single planet, sun, or star. Nor do we understand the governing forces which control the ordinances of heaven or the manner in which their influences are felt in the earth. But God knows, for he created both the heavens and the earth and designed their relationship to each other.

### **In God's Image**

One of the most difficult questions which God asked Job was, Who has put wisdom in the inward parts? or who has given understanding to the heart? (vs. 36) The lower animal creations are governed largely by what we call instinct. From the time of their birth they seem naturally to follow a certain pattern, and while many of them can be trained to obey to a certain degree the directives of their human masters, there is no evidence that they really understand why. Certainly, as implied in the question asked Job, the lower animals do not possess a heart knowledge, or mental appreciation, of their existence or of their course of action.

But with man it is different. He is able to reason, at least to a limited degree, from the known to the unknown. He knows that some things are right and other things are wrong. He has a conscience which is pricked when he does wrong and affords peace and contentment of mind when he does right. Many have advanced theories concerning the alleged ascent of man from protoplasm to his present state. They have attempted to explain what has brought about the various changes in the anatomy of animals in the evolutionary process which has led to man; but no one has even attempted to answer the question put to Job, Who has put wisdom in the inward parts of man, or who has given understanding to the heart?

There is only one answer to this question. It is God's answer, recorded in his own inspired Word for our instruction and encouragement. It is found in the very first chapter of the Bible, verses 27 and 28. Here we are informed that man, as constituted, is far superior to even the highest forms of lower animals, capable of reasoning, of planning, of inventing, of knowing right from wrong, because he was created in the image of God. Evolutionists cannot find a reasonable, valid, provable explanation of how this difference between man and his alleged nearest of kin among the brute creation came about.

### **Instincts Display Creative Wisdom**

Throughout chapter 39 of the Book of Job a number of other questions are recorded, the answers to which must also be negative as far as human wisdom is concerned. These questions pertain to the marvelous instincts displayed by various animals and birds. The chapter begins with these questions: Know you the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or can you mark when the hinds do calve? Can you number the months that they fulfill? or know you the time when they bring forth? They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them. vss. 1

Then the Lord called attention to the different characteristics of other animals: Who has sent out the wild ass free? or who has loosed the bands of the wild ass? whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. He scorns the multitude of the city, neither regards he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searches after every green thing. vss. 5-8

Again: Will the unicorn [wild ox] be willing to serve you, or abide by the crib? Can you bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after you? Will you trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt you leave your labor to him? Will you believe him, that he will bring home your seed, and gather it into your barn? (vss. 9-12) There are what we speak of as domestic animals which, with little effort, can be trained to serve man. But here God called Job's attention to other varieties of animals which are wild and refuse to submit to human training. Who is responsible for these differences?

Neither Job nor we are wise enough to understand the creative processes which brought about the almost endless varieties of creation. There is a poem by Joyce Kilmer entitled, *Trees*, which states that only God can make a tree; and this fact is even more striking when we consider the thousands of varieties of trees, plants, and flowers, as well as the great variety found in the animal kingdom. Only a supreme, intelligent Creator could produce this endless array of created things, with each in its own wonderful way displaying the wisdom and power of its Creator.

### **Additional Questions**

Indicating that Job did not yet realize how little he understood of the wisdom and power of the Creator, further questions were asked him. Gave you the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? the Lord inquired. (vs. 13) All birds have feathers and wings, but how vastly different they are. The peacock is noted for the beauty of its plumage; hence it is used as a contrasting example with the ostrich, which is rather plain in appearance. What made the difference between the two? The fortuitousness of evolution? No, the wisdom and power of the Creator!



In most cases the birds and lower animals instinctively exercise great care over the young. The birds even watch over and nest on the eggs from which their offspring are hatched. If this maternal instinct of the lower creations was the product of evolution, reason tells us that there would be no exceptions, for the same influences would have governed the evolutionary processes of all. But there are exceptions, and in questioning Job the Creator called attention to one. Referring to what the translators call an ostrich, the Lord said [Which leaves her eggs in the earth, and warms them in dust instead of sitting on them], and forgets that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labor is in vain without fear; because God has deprived her of wisdom, neither has he imparted to her understanding. What time she lifted up herself on high, she scorns the horse and his rider. vss. 14-18

Evolutionists would be at a loss to explain why this mother bird takes no interest in her young. God's explanation alone reveals the reason for this paradox of nature, that explanation being that he has deprived her of wisdom, neither has he imparted to her understanding. But he did give the ostrich swiftness and strength so that she scorns the horse and his rider. If we remove God from creation, we would here have another unanswered question.

### **Instinct or Endowment**

In the closing verses of chapter 39 another convincing thought is brought to our attention. Job is asked: Does the hawk fly by your wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Does the eagle mount up at your command, and make her nest on high? She dwells and abides on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeks the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she. vss. 26-30

In calling our attention to the habits of the hawk and the eagle, the Lord reminds us again of the numberless peculiarities which exist in the life habits of the bird and animal kingdoms. There are the migratory birds which move from north to south and from south to north with the changing seasons. There are the swimming birds, and the singing birds, the screech owls and talking parrots, the gorgeously handsome birds, and the drab, colorless ones.

But why stop with birds? The same variety exists among land animals, trees, flowers, and insects. There is only one thing common to them all, which is that they have life—either animate or inanimate. Unbelieving human reasoning, in its folly, contends that all these myriad forms of plant and animal life just happened to develop as they did; but no one has ever been able to explain how they live. The origin of life is unknown, apart from the explanation given to us in the Scriptures that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Accepting this fact, as the many otherwise unanswerable questions asked Job impel us to do, ??? then we know the answer to them all. And the answer is simple, which is that the infinite wisdom and almighty power of a personal God and Creator is responsible for the awe-inspiring works of creation which are so marvelously displayed in the heavens, on the earth, and in the sea.

Job also reached the conclusion that the only answer to all the mysteries of creation is that they are the work of an intelligent Creator. For Job, this was also the answer to the problem of human suffering. How could he question the wisdom of the great Creator in permitting him to suffer for a while? Surely the infinite wisdom displayed in all the creative works of God knew what was best for him. Should we not all reach that conclusion, and especially so if we would know the meaning of our existence and be inspired with hope as we contemplate the eternal destiny which the Creator has designed for his human creation?

Job said to God, I know that you can do everything. (chap. 42:2) If we know this, then we have a foundation of faith upon which we can build a true knowledge of God and of his all-wise and loving design in man's creation. If we believe that he can do everything, no explanation of his plans and

purposes which he has given in his Word will be disbelieved; no instructions will go unheeded or disobeyed; and no promise he has made, regardless of how far-reaching, or seemingly impossible of accomplishment, will be doubted.

The wisdom and power of God are wonderfully displayed in his created works with which we are surrounded. However, had we no further revelation of God than these, we would have many reasons to wonder about his justice and love. God reveals these attributes to us through his written Word, and in this revelation we also find many reassurances of his wisdom and power. Indeed, it is the revelation of his grand design for his human creation which we find in the Bible that stamps this marvelous Book as The Word of God, his revelation to his servants here on earth.

Chapter 3

## **THE DAYS OF CREATION**

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. Genesis 1:31

THROUGHOUT the centuries the wise and learned have endeavored to pry into the secrets of creation and discover how the great universe came into existence. They have not been able to understand how out of nothing there came countless billions of worlds; myriad forms of life plant and animal and why law and order is displayed in it all. And try as they may, human wisdom has not been able to offer an explanation so simple, yet so profound and full of meaning, as that contained in the first verse of the Bible: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Gen. 1:1

The truthfulness of these words has been acknowledged in our day by prominent scientists. While many scientists imagine the universe as having come into existence by sheer chance, others do not. Even the great Prof. Einstein, once an agnostic, in the later years of his life confessed that his increasing scientific knowledge had led him to the conviction that there is an Intelligence displayed throughout the universe which he was glad to acknowledge and honor. Einstein was unable to accept the crude conceptions of God handed down to a credulous world from the Dark Ages; however, he came to see unmistakable evidence of supreme Intelligence in what he formerly considered to be but the works of nature. And this is true of others of our great scientists today.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. This is a simple statement of fact. Few will deny that the heavens and the earth did have a beginning, and in these few words we are informed that the Creator was responsible for it. God does not attempt to tell us how the universe was created, for he knew that it would be quite beyond our ability to comprehend how the creative forces he put into motion had brought into being the countless millions of suns and sent them spinning forth through space under orderly control.

Nor have our most brilliant scientists discovered any worthwhile information other than is contained in the simple statement that God created the heaven and the earth. There are many theories of creation, but they are only theories. Until recently, one theory quite generally accepted by the scientists was that of a continuously expanding universe. More recently many scientists have turned to the pulsating theory, which holds that the universe began with a great explosion billions of years ago and that it has been expanding since and is now about ready to go into reverse and contract. After a few more billions of years, according to this theory, all the material will again become compressed into a great center. Then there will be another big bang, and another pulsation will begin. Sooner or later this theory will probably be discarded in favor of still another. The point is that man just does not know how God created the heaven and the earth.

It is true that modern man has acquired a great deal of knowledge. He even knows how to split an atom. But since man does not know how to make an atom, or how atoms were made, he has little whereof to

boast. Atoms, we are told, are the building blocks of nature, but to know this still does not take us beyond the simple statement that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. However, in conjunction with the information furnished in the rest of this opening chapter of the Bible, the statement is very meaningful, for it reveals that the work outlined in the remainder of the chapter was not the bringing of the universe into existence but the preparation of the earth for the habitation of man.

Yes, the earth already existed, having been created by God in the beginning. But, as verse 2 of the chapter explains, it was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. This indicates that the fixed contour of the earth, as designed by God, had not yet been reached. There were neither mountains nor valleys, trees nor shrubs, rivers nor oceans. The earth was void, or empty of all forms of life.

### **Not Twenty-four Hour Days**

The creative work outlined in this chapter was accomplished in six days. We are not to suppose, however, that these days of creation were twenty-four hours in length. The Hebrew word here translated day is *yowm* pronounced yome. While in many instances in the Old Testament it is applied to a literal day of twelve or twenty-four hours, the sacred writers did not thus limit its use. In Exodus 13:10, Leviticus 25:29, Numbers 9:22, and in other places, the same Hebrew word is translated year. In Genesis 4:3 and 26:8, and many other places, *yowm* is translated time. A careful study of these references reveals clearly that the meaning of this Hebrew word is not limited to a twenty-four hour day.

Besides, the Bible often uses the word day in a broader sense. The period of forty years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness is referred to as the day of temptation in the wilderness. (Ps. 95:8-10) Isaiah refers to the era of Christ's kingdom on the earth as a day. (Isa. 11:10) While six days are mentioned in connection with the preparation of the earth for man, in Genesis 2:4 the entire period of creation is referred to as the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. It seems clear, then, that *yowm* cannot be limited in its application to any specific length of time, such as a twenty-four hour day, but simply denotes a time, season, or era, during which certain events take place or a particular work is accomplished.

### **The First Day**

It was at the beginning of the first day of creation that God's Spirit, his almighty power, moved upon the face of the waters. (Gen. 1:2) The Hebrew word here translated moved means to brood, as a bird brooding over its nest. In a general way this is a fitting illustration of how the Spirit, or power, of God, brooded over the waters of earth, that a home might eventually be made ready for all the myriad creatures he had in mind for the earth, and especially for man. That brooding began at the outset of the first day, and was to continue until man, male and female, was brought forth in the divine image at the close of the sixth day.

When God's Spirit began to brood over the waters, darkness was upon the face of the deep. Since this was prior to the time when the land and the water were divided, the earth's surface was one vast ocean. God asked Job: Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it? Job 38:8, 9

God's question might well suggest the manner in which the sea came into being. Scientists agree that as the earthmass cooled, a more or less solid crust formed on the outside. For a time this crust kept the hot gases confined, or, as God's question suggests, shut up ...with doors. But the confined gas would build up a tremendous pressure and brake forth through innumerable small craters, spread over the earth's entire surface and in cooling, condense and fall upon the hot surface of the earth. Thus the sea was born, God likening it to an issuing out of the womb.

And at its birth clothing was provided. The Lord said, I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband. A tremendous quantity of vapor arose from the hot sea, which resulted in complete darkness surrounding the whole earth as a swaddlingband. How beautifully and realistically the Lord describes this phase of the creative work!

Much was accomplished during that first day, or era. The Creator said, Let there be light, and as a result of this decree there was light. It seems clearly established by scientists that the sun was created long before the earth and probably was the light referred to in the Creator's decree, although it did not penetrate the clouds of vapor and gas that encircled the earth with the same degree of brightness that it did later. The Bible states that God divided between the light and between the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. (Gen. 1:4, 5, margin) It was the earth itself that made the division between the darkness and the light. Even as now, the side of the earth that faced the sun would be light—light, that is, in comparison with the darkness on the other side of the globe. As the light of the sun began dimly to penetrate the dense canopy of moisture that surrounded the earth, the first era of God's brooding came to an end.

We read that the evening and the morning were the first day. (Gen. 1:5) The marginal translation states, The evening was, and the morning was. The Hebrew word here translated evening literally means dusk, or darkness. What the Creator evidently wants us to understand is that each of the creative periods had an obscure, dark beginning and that the completion of the work of each age was a morning of brightness. It was literally true of the first day that it began in darkness and ended with the divine decree, Let there be light.

### **The Second "Day"**

It was during the second creative period that the earth's atmosphere was formed. The word expansion is used in the marginal translation of Genesis 1: 6—And God said, Let there be an expansion in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. In this division of the waters by the expansion, the main body of water probably remained on the earth, while a tremendous quantity of water vapor was held suspended in the upper atmosphere.

Scientists tell us that the remaining gases which came from the hot earth, much of which condensed to form the ocean of boiling water which at one time covered the earth, were now used to make the atmosphere. Probably so, but can the scientists explain just how these gases happened to so adjust themselves as to provide exactly the right amount of oxygen that would be necessary for the many breathing creatures of earth which later were to be created? Besides, provision had to be made to maintain the proper mixture of nitrogen and oxygen throughout the future ages in order for both the vegetation and the breathing creatures of earth to continue to exist.

The Creator alone was capable of accomplishing this. Concerning this great One the Prophet Isaiah wrote:

It is he that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in. (Isa. 40:22) What a beautiful way of describing the expanse of atmosphere that surrounds the earth! It is as a tent in which to dwell! And truly, every living creature on earth does live in this oxygen tent.

The earth's atmosphere is also vital to life because it is so integral a part of the circulatory system by which the earth is supplied with the water needed for its vegetation and for drinking purposes. The sun continues to turn the waters of the oceans into vapor, and it is lifted up into the atmosphere. In due time it returns to earth in the form of rain or snow.

We are told that the atmosphere holds billions of tons of water in suspension, ready to be sprinkled upon the earth. What a marvelous watering system! How it reveals the wisdom of the Divine Architect!

And how strengthening to faith it should be to realize that the Bible described this arrangement so long ago, long before the wisdom of this world understood anything about it.

How simply it is described—God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. (Gen. 1:7, 8) The Hebrew word here translated heaven is the same one which is also translated air in this chapter. It would therefore be just as correct to say that God called the firmament air. With the forming of earth's atmosphere completed, that era came to an end—And the evening and the morning were the second day. Gen. 1:8

### **The Third “Day”**

It was during the third day, or epoch, that the land surfaces of the earth appeared. God said, Let the waters under the heaven [or air] be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth: and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. Gen. 1:9, 10

In Proverbs 8:29 we read of the time when the Lord gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth. We are told that if all the continental land masses of the earth would be leveled off, the entire land surface of the earth would be from one to two miles under the ocean. Apparently this was the situation prior to the third creative day.

Obviously by divine design and under the control of divine power, there began a buckling of the earth's surface, which was as yet a somewhat soft crust, deepening the ocean beds and heaving up our continents. Speaking of the wisdom, power, and majesty of the Lord, the psalmist wrote: Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever. You covered it with the deep as with a garment [a reference to the time when the newborn ocean covered the entire planet]: the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they fled; at the voice of your thunder they hurried away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which you have founded for them [by the buckling of the earth's crust]. You have set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth [as the oceans originally did]. Ps. 104:5-9

### **Species Fixed**

Also in the third creative period God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. (Gen. 1.11) Thus are described the earlier forms of vegetation. But let us pause here to note the profound and scientific significance of the expression after his kind. This is the Lord's way of saying that all species of life are fixed that there is no evolving from one to the other, even though there may be many varieties of each species. Darwin himself, in his Origin of Species, made this frank admission: In spite of all the efforts of trained observers, not one change of species into another is on record.

The third creative era embraced what scientists describe as the Carboniferous and early Permian Periods. It was at this time that the rank vegetation growing up into veritable forests furnished the material for the coal deposits of the earth. The climatic conditions were such as to produce a rapid and continual growth of forests. It is claimed that during this period eighteen layers of forest-like vegetation were deposited. With the amazing display of divine wisdom in creating the earlier forms of plant life, the third creative day came to an end: The evening and the morning were the third day. Gen. 1:13

### **The Fourth “Day”**

The work of the Creator during the fourth day pertained to the sun and the moon. The casual reader might easily suppose that it was during this period that the sun and the moon were created, but this is not

the case. Both the sun and moon were created in the beginning, when God created the heaven and the earth. They are a part of the heaven.

God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years. (vs. 14) Verse 16 reads, God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. In the statement that God made two great lights the thought is that he appointed the sun and the moon to rule the day and the night. In verses 17 and 18 we are informed that the Creator set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night.

The Hebrew word translated made in the statement that God made two great lights, is translated appointed in Psalm 104 :19. Here the psalmist informs us that God appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knows his going down. Thus we have the Bible's own interpretation of God's work in the fourth day : that it was not the creating of the sun and the moon but the appointing of them to rule over the day and over the night, and also that they might be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years.

As we have noted earlier, it was evidently the light of the sun which dimly penetrated the swaddlingband of darkness that surrounded the earth at the time in the first creative epoch when God said, Let there be light. While the light of the sun got through to the earth sufficiently at that time to make a difference between day and night, it did not rule. It is doubtful if the moon was visible then at all.

It is evident, we think, that some sunlight reached the earth prior to the fourth creative day, for it would be needed by the vegetation that was created in the third epoch. But that the sun and the moon did not then rule in the sense of producing seasons and marking off the literal days so definitely that years and seasons could be reckoned, is evident by the fact that the huge trees that were deposited to form coal beds do not show any rings to denote the years of their growth. It was after the sun began to rule that yearly rings were produced in growing trees.

### **The Fifth "Day"**

The fifth epoch in the preparation of the earth as a suitable habitation for man was devoted to the bringing forth of marine life and the fowl that may fly above the earth. (vs. 20) In the King James Version we read that God created great whales, and every living creature that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind. The Revised Version gives us the words sea monsters instead of whales, and Prof. Strong informs us that the Hebrew word here translated whales could also be properly translated land monsters. It is reasonable to conclude that the reference in verse 21 is to those huge monsters to which scientists have given such names as Dinosaur, Diplodocus, and Tyrannosaurus, meaning huge lizards. The word Dinosaur means terrible lizard.

Scientists suggest that while these huge monsters could live on land, their tremendous weight made it easier for them to move about in the water, for the water would help to bear up their weight. However, all the other myriad forms of marine life were also brought forth during the fifth day.

It was during this epoch also that birds were created. The expression every winged fowl need not be limited in its application to the feathered birds. (vs. 21) Prof. Strong indicates that the word here translated fowl means primarily a bird covered with wings, the emphasis being on wings rather than feathers. The reason we call attention to this is that geologists tell us that during this period there were huge winged creatures that were not feathered, their wings being constructed somewhat like those of a bat.

Whether it be the huge lizards of this period, the creatures which lived exclusively in the sea, or the feathered or unfeathered birds of the air, each species was created after its kind. This is confirmed by geologists, who freely acknowledge that from the testimony found in The Book of the Rocks each of these species appeared suddenly and with no evidence of having climbed an evolutionary ladder.

### **The Sixth “Day”**

It was at the close of the sixth day that God created man in his own image. Appropriately, it was also during this era that the land animals which were to contribute to human needs were also created. We read: And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind: ...and cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps upon the earth after his kind.... and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. vss. 24-26

Man was created to be king of earth; and when the grand design of the Creator concerning him is completed the earth will be filled with perfect humans, exercising their original God-given dominion. Man is now a fallen creature, and Paul wrote that we see not yet all things put under him. But as we continue, we will discover the Scriptures abundantly testifying that ultimately man's dominion over the earth will be restored, to the glory of God, and to the eternal joy of his human creation. Heb. 2:8

#### Chapter 4

### **MAN IN THE PLAN OF GOD**

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You visit him? Palm 8:3, 4

MAN was created toward the close of the sixth creative day, or epoch. There are two accounts of his creation. One is presented in Genesis 1:26-28, and the other in Genesis 2:7. The first of these is a general statement of the fact that man was created, together with an explanation of the place he was to occupy in God's arrangement for the earth. The second is a more detailed account of just how he was created. Some say that the account of Genesis 1:26-28 pertains to a pre-adamic race, but there is no scriptural foundation for this theory.

This first account of man's creation reveals certain important facts concerning him: he was created in the image of God, and he was to fill the earth with his progeny. He was also to have dominion over the earth and over the lower forms of God's earthly creation. The fact that man was created in the image of God is a strong refutation of the theory of human evolution. Darwinists are adept at calling attention to the various ways in which the evolutionary ladder may have been climbed throughout the millions of years they claim there has been life on the earth, beginning with protoplasm. But no one has hazarded a guess at what rung in this ladder an ape, or a missing link, became conscious of right and wrong and was able to reason the difference between the two. Nor has any one of them been able to suggest a set of circumstances that would prod an ape into thinking on the human level.

In high circles of professorship in and out of the church, and among our government leaders from the President down, nearly all profess to believe that man was created in the image of God. In the free world it is this viewpoint that constitutes the basis for the dignity of man doctrine, and for the zealous fight to maintain the individual rights of man. This is good, but let us remind ourselves that this biblical viewpoint cannot be harmonized with the Darwin theory of human evolution.

If man is a product of evolution, and not the direct creation of God, then there is no basis for the claim that he is in the image of God. If God did not create man and give him his law, then he has no divine law to guide him in his behavior. From the standpoint of evolution it might be argued, indeed, that what we suppose to be a law against sin is only a mistakenly conceived repressive measure which in reality is keeping man back from the next great step in evolution.

But thank God for the realization that the plain statements of his Word express that sacred truth which all right-thinking men and women instinctively espouse and declare many of them despite their acceptance of unproved theories of natural selection and evolution. The full beauty of the Bible's teaching on this subject stands out even more brilliantly when we note the detailed manner in which man is so completely set apart from the beasts; and it is further enhanced when we become acquainted with the Creator's design for this human creature created in his image.

### **Not a Physical Image**

This is not a physical image, but a moral and intellectual image. Man has the ability to know right from wrong, and he is able to think, to reason. He cannot think on the same high plane as his Creator. His thinking is confined to a realm in which he was created to live, that is, the earthly. Speaking to man, God said, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:9) But man is able to reason with God on matters pertaining to his relationship with his Creator. God invites man to do this, saying, "Come now, and let us reason together, ...though your sins be as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they will be as wool." Isa. 1:18

Man's ability to think and reason out the ways and problems of life, rather than to be guided merely by instinct, manifests itself in many ways. We see this from the very beginning of human experience. When our first parents disobeyed, they immediately felt a sense of guilt and were afraid. Then, to cover their shame, they donned leaves. In other words, they clothed themselves. Adam and Eve were probably not too adept at garment-making, but which of the lower animals in Eden would even have thought of putting on clothing to cover its nakedness? In fact, God provided a protective covering for the lower animals, but man was left to provide his own.

Man soon began to make and use tools, which is something else the lower animals have never shown any inclination or ability to do. Archeological discoveries reveal that the earliest known man manufactured and used tools. Today this difference between man and the lower animals is more striking than ever. Think of the intricacy of tools and instruments of all sorts which are now in use, including electronic computers. And there are even greater marvels in the making. In modes of travel, communication, and manufacture we are daily witnessing miracles but the pig merely keeps on grunting. When we consider man's ability to think, to plan, to invent, we recognize striking evidence of the fact that he was created in the image of God.

Someone has written that "monkeys have no music in their souls," and thus we are reminded of another wide gap between man and the very highest species of the lower animals. Music is harmony of sound, and on earth apparently only the human ear can distinguish the difference between harmony and discord. Man, created in the image of God, finds one of his greatest delights in the field of music. Many times in the Bible reference is made to the joy experienced by man in singing praises to God his Maker.

### **Man's Dominion**

Genesis 1:26 uses the word "likeness" as well as "image" in describing man's similarity to his Creator. We read, "God said, Let us make man ...after our likeness: and let them have dominion." This would seem to imply that man's likeness to God included the fact that he was given a dominion. God is the supreme Ruler of all his great universe; and on earth he delegated authority to man, whom he had created in his



image. No such grant was given to any of the lower animals, nor would they be capable of exercising dominion.

Man was also commanded to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. His dominion was not merely to be over that one little garden spot in Eden but was to be extended over the entire earth; and every necessary provision was made by the Creator to enable this divine arrangement for the earth to function as planned. God said Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it will be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. vss. 29-31

### **Man's Home**

It is clear from the record that man was created to live on the earth and that the earth was created to be his home not temporarily, but forever. Throughout the Scriptures this fact continues to be emphasized. Isaiah 45:18 reads Thus says the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he has established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited. In Psalm 78:69 we are told that the Lord has established the earth forever. Psalm 115:16 declares, The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord s: but the earth has he given to the children of men. Man forfeited his right to live and enjoy the blessing which God provided for him, but as we will later see, his lost inheritance has been redeemed by Christ and will in due time be restored.

### **A Living Soul**

If we are to understand and appreciate the Creator s grand design for his human creation, it is essential to take into consideration what man really is. We have already noted that man was created in the image of God and given dominion over the earth; and now, in the 2nd chapter of Genesis, verse 7, we are given further information. This text reads, And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

This is God s way of explaining that man s organism, his body, was made up of various chemical elements found in the earth. Medical science today knows this to be true. But Adam s perfect body was not yet a living being. It had eyes, but they saw nothing; a nose, but it did not sense the fragrant odors of the edenic garden in which this marvelous piece of workmanship was lying. It had a tongue, but it tasted not; and ears to which all sound was but as silence. It had hands which enjoyed no sense of touch. The perfect heart, with its co-ordinating valves and its connections with the arteries and veins of that perfect body, was motionless. Its lungs were immobile. It was a perfect organism, with all its intricate parts correctly assembled, as only a master workman, the Creator, could do. But it was a dead, lifeless body.

If man was to live, something more than just a perfect body was needed, and this God supplied. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and instantly that lifeless organism became alive. The breath of life carried oxygen to the lungs, and they began to function. This induced the heart to start pumping blood through the arteries, returning t through the veins. This brought life pulsations to the nerves, causing the ears to hear, the eyes to see, the nose to smell, the tongue to taste, and the hands to feel. The first man was now alive he had become a living soul.

What was this magic power which God breathed into the nostrils of Adam? Some have mistakenly supposed that it was an indestructible living entity, which had life apart from the organism into which it was breathed. This alleged entity is often spoken of as an immortal soul. But the expression immortal soul does not appear anywhere in the Bible. The word soul simply means a living being, and Adam became a living soul because he was animated by the breath of life.

Adam became a living soul, the record states; he was not given a soul. That soul consisted of a body animated by the breath of life. According to Genesis 7:21, 22, where we are told of the destruction of life wrought by the Deluge, it is revealed that the lower animals as well as man possess the breath of life. We doubt that many will contend that God gave immortal souls to the lower animals.

What, then, is the breath of life? Simply stated, it is the air that we breathe and that all living earthly creatures breathe. Just how it animates bodies to make living souls is the secret of life known only to the Creator. For us it is sufficient to know that it was through the breath that God gave life to Adam and that it was not immortal life, as many have supposed. While provision was made through the life-giving fruit of Eden to sustain human life everlastingly on conditions of obedience to divine law, man was subject to death should he disobey.

### **All One Breath**

That the breath of life given to Adam was not an immortal soul is clearly shown by Solomon. In Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 there is a wonderful exposition of truth on this subject. The passage reads: That which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yea, they all one breath; so that a man has no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows [or who can prove] the spirit [Hebrew, breath] of man that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth?

The marginal translation of the closing question in this passage is a better one. Using this, the text might be paraphrased, Who knows that the spirit of man is ascending, and the spirit of the beast is descending? The wise man had already answered this question. He had explained that man has no preeminence above a beast so far as the breath of life is concerned, that they have all one breath, and all go to the same place at death. Man's preeminence over the beast lies in the fact that he was given a more refined organism, capable of reflecting the image of God. He also has been promised an awakening from death.

In Genesis 1:24 we read, God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind. Here the expression living creature is a translation of the same Hebrew word as that translated living soul in the text which informs us that man became a living soul, which the Revised Standard Version translates living being. Adam became a living being when God breathed into him the breath of life. But the combination of the organism and breath of life had to be maintained, else that living being, or soul, would die.

### **Returns to God**

In Ecclesiastes 12:7 we have another very interesting reference to the death of humans. Solomon writes, Then will the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit will return unto God who gave it. The Hebrew word here translated spirit is also frequently translated breath. Its primary meaning is invisible power. When associated with the works of God it refers to the invisible power of God.

This invisible power of God which creates and sustains life was transmitted to Adam through the breath of life. At death, the body which was created from the dust of the ground returns to dust, and the power of God returns to its source. The word return is the key to the understanding of this passage. Man has never been in heaven, so could not return to heaven. But he does get his power to live from God, through the breath of life, and at death this reverts to the Giver.

### **Male and Female**

In Genesis 1:27 we are told that in creating humans God created male and female. In Genesis 2:7 where the process of creation is outlined, only the man is mentioned. Later the Lord gives us the details of

woman's creation. Following Adam's creation he was told to name all the animals. It must have required some time to accomplish this task. Some study must have been made of their characteristics in order to give them appropriate names. This may well have been God's way of having Adam come to a realization of his own need for a suitable mate. God had commanded that man fill the earth with his progeny, and to accomplish this Adam was provided with a wife. All of God's dealings with those whom he has created in his own image are designed to awaken in them a genuine, freewill desire for the blessings which he has planned for them. God does not coerce the human mind or will.

The method God used to provide a helpmate for Adam is unique. We read: The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she will be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore will a man leave his father and his mother, and will cleave unto his wife: and they will be one flesh. Gen. 2:21-24

Many have treated this sacred passage of Scripture lightly, regarding it as absurd. The wise of this world seem to think that this was a very crude way for the Lord to create woman. Why, they ask, did he not create Eve in the same way as he did Adam? We may not understand the biological reasons why the Lord adopted this method, but who are we to question the wisdom of One so wise and so powerful as to be able to create the whole universe out of nothing?

God's method meant that the woman became almost literally a part of man. How much of ineffable joy has resulted from this divinely arranged oneness of the two we will probably never fully understand. God's explanation is that because woman was made from man, they become one flesh when the two are united in marriage. This is what God designed, and his wisdom arranged the method of creation so that this would be so.

### **God's Instructions**

Having now received a suitable helpmate from the Lord, Adam's joy in his garden home must have been unbounded. All his surroundings were beautiful and inspiring. There was at his disposal an abundant supply of life-sustaining food, and now he had a companion with whom he could share his joys. Among the few instructions given to him was the command to dress and keep the garden which the Lord had provided for him. Considering Adam's ideal surroundings and the perfection in which he was created, the keeping of the garden would not be laborious, but a joy.

Another command was that these godlike creatures to whom had been given an earthly dominion were to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Evidently that beautiful garden home which God had prepared for man eastward in Eden was intended merely as an example of what the whole earth was ultimately to be like, God leaving this final finishing work of his creation to be accomplished by man, and for his good.

Consider what this earth would have been like had this plan of God proceeded without interruption! The earth would have been filled with a perfect and happy human family, knowing nothing of sin, sickness, pain, wars, and the thousand-and-one other things which now plague a suffering and dying world. Besides, all would be enjoying sweet communion with the Creator, the God of heaven and earth.

But let us think on; for although darkness now covers the earth and the plague of sin and death blights much of the happiness of the people, this nighttime of darkness and fear and pain will terminate before long in a morning of joy! This is beautifully stated by the psalmist, who wrote, Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. (Ps. 30:5) Then man's fondest dreams of a golden age will come true. God, who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, assures us that divine power will again be used to restore paradise and give to all the opportunity of enjoying its blessings forever.

## Chapter 5

# THE GREAT DECEPTION

The Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die. Genesis 2:16, 17

HAVING created our first parents perfect, and in his image, God could rightly expect them to obey his law in order to continue receiving the blessings which he had so lavishly provided for them. However, they did not intuitively know what their Creator expected of them. This knowledge had to be communicated to them. Having received it, and having been created perfect, Adam and Eve had the moral strength to resist temptation to disobey God's will.

Certain instructions were given to our first parents. They were to multiply and fill the earth. They were also to subdue the earth. God's law provided that they could freely eat of all the trees in Eden with one exception, which was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Scriptures do not indicate what sort of tree this was. Perhaps it was not greatly unlike many of the other trees of the garden. It is doubtful that the fruit of this tree contained a mysterious element which, if eaten, would give one understanding that he did not previously possess. It was the act of disobedience in partaking of this tree, and the circumstances to follow, that would lead to a knowledge of good and evil.

The commandment not to partake of this forbidden tree was simple and understandable. Man-made laws are often complicated and therefore obscure in meaning. Frequently one feels a measure of insecurity as to the intent of certain laws unless a lawyer is consulted, and even these professional interpreters often disagree. Even in the Supreme Court of the United States there are frequently split decisions over the meaning of laws, and this despite the fact that the Supreme Court judges are the most highly trained men in the country in the interpretation of the law.

But Adam and Eve did not need a lawyer to interpret the plainly stated law concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were not to eat of this tree that was all. There were no obscurely stated circumstances under which they were to have the privilege of deciding whether or not they could properly eat of the forbidden fruit. There were no exceptions of any kind. You will not eat of it, was the law, for in the day that you eat thereof you will surely die.

## Temptation

This law was originally stated to Adam, but he had communicated it to Eve, and of Eve it is written:

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (Gen. 3:6) Eve noted that the forbidden tree was pleasant to the eye and good for food. This was true of the other fruit-bearing trees of the garden. But it was also to be desired, as Eve thought, because it would make one wise. Certainly there is nothing wrong with being wise, if wisdom is used along proper lines. So it is obvious that the Creator did not explain to our first parents why the fruit of this particular tree was forbidden.

It was wrong to partake of this tree simply because God had forbidden it. This was the supreme test of obedience which the Creator placed upon our first parents. It was, in reality, a test of their faith and confidence in him. But more importantly, it was a proper test. If man were to obey God's laws only when he decided that they were proper, we can see what chaos would result. God does not always arbitrarily withhold information from his people concerning his reasons for his commandments, but he does expect

us to obey even when in his wisdom he does not reveal the reason. This was the test which confronted Eve, and later Adam.

A part of the image of God in man was his freedom of choice. God desired man's obedience, but only if man, because of his trust in his Creator, desired to obey. If such an objective could not be attained, man would have to be destroyed. In the day that you eat thereof you will surely die. Eve yielded to the temptation. She offered the fruit of the forbidden tree to Adam, and he too partook.

### **Deceived**

The Apostle Paul wrote, Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (I Tim. 2:14) Eve's deception was apparently in believing the serpent's assurance that death would not result from disobedience. (Gen. 3:4) Adam was not deceived by this falsehood; nevertheless he joined his wife in the transgression. Now Adam and Eve were to learn that God meant it when he said, In the day that you eat thereof you will surely die. (Gen. 2:17) In the marginal translation of this text God's warning of the death penalty reads In the day that you eat thereof, dying you will die. This suggests not an instantaneous snuffing out of life, but a gradual process of dying, and that is the way it happened.

Adam and Eve were driven from their garden home and prevented from having access to the trees of life with the result that they began to die. Adam, starting on the downward course from the top of perfection's scale lived 930 years before he returned to the dust from which he was taken. When he died, the full penalty for his sin had been exacted. Adam was not deceived as to the nature of the penalty; nor has there since been any change in the divine penalty for sin. More than four thousand years after the decree was issued, Dust you are, and unto dust will you return, (Gen. 3:19) the Apostle Paul wrote, The wages of sin is death, (Rom. 6:23) and in Ezekiel 18:4 we read, The soul that sins, it will die.

### **What Is Death?**

Webster's Dictionary defines death as the state of being dead. Webster also uses the word extinction. These definitions are fully in harmony with the teachings of the Bible. In Ecclesiastes 9:10 we read:

Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go. This is in agreement with Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, which reads, The living know that they will die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished. Clearly, then, death is a state of oblivion.

### **Satan's Lie**

As we have noted, the Scriptures declare that Eve was deceived. Without doubt it was the statement made by the serpent, You will not surely die, that deceived her. In Revelation 20:2 we find the expression, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan. This is a reference to the serpent which appeared to and deceived mother Eve. Evidently Satan, who is a powerful although invisible spirit being, spoke through the serpent. Just how he conveyed his message to Eve is not important. For our present purpose we will consider that it was the Devil who deceived Eve, ignoring whatever part the serpent may have played in it.

Concerning the Devil, Jesus said: He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:44) Here Jesus takes us back to the events in Eden. He states that Satan was actually a murderer; for it was under his influence that our first parents transgressed God's law, and this resulted in their death. Our Lord further identifies Satan's treachery in Eden by saying that he was a liar, and the father of it.

Yes, it was Satan who fathered the sin of lying, his first lie being his statement to Eve, "You will not surely die." God had made it plain that death would result from disobedience, but Satan denied this. And not only was he successful in deceiving Eve on this point, but he has successfully carried on his campaign of deception ever since, with the result that only a few throughout the ages have believed God on the subject of death. The vast majority unwittingly believe Satan and continue to insist that there is no death. This work of deception will be allowed to continue until the time in God's plan when Satan will be bound, that he should deceive the nations no more. He will be bound for a thousand years, and then destroyed. Rev. 20:1-3

It was not difficult for Eve to believe that she would not die as a result of disobedience. After all, she had had no experience with death. She had seen no one die. Doubtless she took Satan's denial of the Lord's statement very literally and believed that despite her disobedience she would continue to live and to enjoy all the blessings of Eden and also have the added advantage of being much wiser. How bitterly disappointed she must have been when, debarred from the tree of life in Eden, she realized from year to year that the seeds of death were working in her and that she would become feeble and die. Adam had no illusions on the matter, for he was not deceived. He knew from the beginning that eventually he would die.

The fact that the human race began to die despite Satan's assertion, "You will not surely die," proved that he was a liar, just as Jesus said. But having foisted this deception upon Eve, Satan did not propose to allow subsequent circumstances to prove him wrong; so his next great deception was that death is not what it seems to be, but rather that in reality those whom we call dead are more alive than ever. It is held by Satan, and by those who espouse his great deception, that only the body dies. The claim is made that there is a separate entity within humans which cannot die, and that at death this escapes from the body and lives on in another realm. The great power of this deception is in the fact that no one wants to die. It is pleasant to believe that there is no death.

In continuing to foster this deception, Satan has introduced into the minds of men almost innumerable theories as to what happens to the "never dying" part of man when the body dies. There are the theories of reincarnation and the transmigration of souls. Reincarnationists believe that every time a child is begotten, or born they are not sure which a departed spirit enters into it, there finding a home until this newest body dies, when the disembodied spirit is again homeless until it has an opportunity to find refuge in another infant. The theory is that most of us have made many of these excursions and will probably keep on doing so. Just how the reincarnationists explain the constantly increasing population of the earth we have not yet learned; for according to this no-death theory there are more spirits reaching earth each year than are departing. Where do the extra ones come from?

The transmigration of souls theory is somewhat different, and not quite so pleasing. This theory also calls for continuous cycles of the soul, but the soul does not always succeed in finding refuge in a human body. While, according to this theory, during our present visit to earth we may be human beings, the last time we were here we may have been a dog, or a cat, or an elephant, or a spider; and the next time we come we may find that our soul is flitting through the air in the body of a bird, or hopping around in the body of a croaking frog. The bodily form we will possess each time we come depends upon how well we have conducted ourselves on the previous visit. There is an end to this, for finally the soul departs for the last time, and after that, in due course, it finds rest in a mythical Nirvana, meaning extinction of the flame of life, or loss of all personal consciousness by absorption into the divine.

This satanic method of endeavoring to prove true the lie, "You will not surely die," has been adopted into most heathen religions in one form or another. This is why a Hindu tries to avoid stepping on an insect, or killing a fly, lest perhaps he injure the feelings of an ancestor. To many it may seem difficult to

understand how anyone could believe such ideas, but really these are no more unreasonable than the no-death theories which have found their way into the professed Christian religions.

### **The “Wages of Sin”**

All the religions of the world attempt, each in its own way, to deal with the problem of sin. Rewards are held out to the righteous, and there are punishments for the wicked. A faithful Hindu might not have to come back to the earth as a dog, and he will reach Nirvana with fewer earth cycles than those less faithful. Also, in the creeds of the churches, account is taken of the fact that there are saints and sinners, believers and unbelievers, faithful and unfaithful; and attempts are made to explain how the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished.

In all this theorizing, the simple fact of the Bible that the wages of sin is death is ignored. (Rom. 6:23) How could one believe that the wages of sin is death, and at the same time insist that there is no death? Besides, when God's penalty for sin is denied, his reward for righteousness cannot be understood and appreciated. Paul wrote that the gift of God is eternal life. (Rom. 6:23) How could eternal life be a special gift for believers if it is true that saint and sinner alike must live eternally whether they want to or not?

Refusing to accept the reality of death, the creed makers invented their own conceptions of God's punishment for sinners—the souls of sinners, that is. The creeds of the Dark Ages set forth two general views—the Catholic and the Protestant. According to the Catholic view there are two places to which wicked souls go when they depart from the bodies in which they lived as humans. One of these is called hell, and the other purgatory. Hell, it is alleged, is only for willfully wicked sinners, those who defy the church and turn their backs upon all its rules and regulations. Many heretics, it is claimed, fall into this category and therefore are doomed to spend the endless ages of eternity in hell. In this hell the wicked are said to be tortured in burning flames many times hotter than any fire ever produced by man.

From the humane standpoint the teachings of the heathen seem better than the hell dogma. But the Catholic Church does have an alternative. If one wishes, he can avoid being wicked enough to go to hell and go instead to purgatory. Purgatory, it is claimed, is just what its name implies, a place of purgation, or cleansing, from sin and defilement, so that one is eventually made pure enough to enter into the bliss of heaven. The purging methods in purgatory are, of course, very strenuous. The tortures in purgatory are different from those of hell, mainly in the claim that they are not eternal.

In the Middle Ages various reformers discovered that the doctrine of purgatory is not taught in the Bible, that the word purgatory does not even appear in the sacred record; so they protested against this teaching. This, however, created a problem, for by doing away with purgatory there was no place for the partially wicked souls to go except to hell. From the standpoint of mercy, the Protestants really worsened the outlook for sinners, particularly the partially wicked among them.

### **Not in the Bible**

The doctrines of purgatory and of eternal torture are not taught in the Bible. Some have reasoned, If there is a heaven, there must be a hell. There is, indeed, a heaven that we will discuss in a later chapter. However, the alternatives set before us in the Bible are not heaven and hell, but life and death. Death is the penalty for sin, and life is the gift of God. This marvelous gift was proffered to our first parents and was available to them on the condition of obedience to God's law. They disobeyed, and the penalty of death came upon them.

Satan's deception has been so great that it has robbed language of its meaning. Ordinarily everyone would know the meaning of the words die and death; but Satan's lie, You will not surely die, has been so deceptive that in theological circles these words are twisted to mean separation from God, and

separation from God means torture in a fiery hell. It is man's earnest desire to live that makes him so readily susceptible to Satan's no-death deception. Even under the abnormal conditions of sin, sickness, and war, life is considered by most people a boon, a blessing, and it is hard to believe millions refuse to believe that when the heart stops beating there is no more life. Possessing this determination to live, mankind has fallen ready prey to Satan's lie, "You will not surely die." (Gen. 3:4) They are glad to believe that there is no death.

This human attitude toward life is one of the things which sets man apart from the lower animals. God created man with the intention that he should live, not temporarily, but forever. Death, therefore, was the severest penalty that could have been attached to sin. Little wonder that we shrink from it, and it is not surprising that so many are willing to insist that it is not real, but rather that what we call death is merely a means of escape into another life.

### **A Future Life**

Severe though the death penalty is, the Scriptures emphasize its reality. Nevertheless the Bible does hold out a hope for a future life, based not on the illusion that there is no death, but on the promises of God to restore the dead to life in the resurrection. When the Prophet Job had suffered beyond the point of ordinary human endurance, he asked God to let him die. Having thus prayed for death, Job raised the question, "If a man die, will he live again?" (Job 14:14) Job did not ask, "If a man die, is he really dead?" Job knew that those who die are dead and not suffering the tortures of a supposed fiery hell. It is because he knew this that he asked God to let him die, for this, he believed, was the only way he could be free from suffering.

What concerned Job was whether or not God would restore him to life at a later time. Answering his own question under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he said: "All the days of my appointed time [in death] will I wait, till my change come, [then] you will call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire unto the work of your hands." (vss. 14, 15)

In the New Testament Jesus confirms this hope of being called forth from death in God's due time, using as an example the death of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary of Bethany. This account is recorded in the 11th chapter of John, verses 1 to 16. When Jesus heard that Lazarus had died, he said to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." The disciples did not understand the import of this remark. They thought Jesus referred to the taking of rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead." (vss. 11-14) A very fundamental truth of the Bible is set forth in this conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Actually, as Jesus said, Lazarus was dead; but because he expected to restore him to life, Jesus spoke of death as being merely a sleep. The same thing is true of all mankind—the dead, and those who will yet die. Death as the penalty for sin would have been eternal oblivion for all of Adam's children but for the provision of divine love through Christ who gave himself in death as a substitute for the forfeited life of Adam. Paul wrote, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ will all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22)

A little later Jesus awakened Lazarus from the sleep of death as an illustration of the divine purpose for all mankind. When awakened from death, the people will know that God spoke the truth when he said that death would be the penalty for sin, because they will have experienced it. They will know that while dead they were not in a hell of torture, nor a purgatory of pain. They will know that they had not been in a heaven of bliss. The Hindu believer will know that he had not been a butterfly or a tiger while he was dead. All will know that they knew nothing while they were dead and will thank God for the opportunity he has given them through Christ, the Redeemer, to live again!

Chapter 6

## **DELIVERANCE PROMISED**



The Lord God said, ...I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel. Genesis 3:14,15

MAN, the highest of all God's earthly creatures, endowed with faculties reflecting the image of the Creator, failed to pass the simple test of obedience to which he was subjected. He had transgressed the law of God and now must die: Dust you are, and unto dust will you return. (Gen. 3:19) In the divine wisdom all of Adam's progeny inherited the death penalty. All are born imperfect and, unable to resist the ravages of disease, ultimately die, for the wages of sin is death. Rom. 6:23

But God still loved his errant human children, and even when sentencing Adam and Eve to death, he gave an indication that an opportunity of deliverance from the penalty would be provided. This promise of deliverance is not plainly stated, but it is clearly implied in the statement to the serpent that the Seed of the woman would bruise his head. But even this obscure assurance seemed to give our first parents a measure of hope that the Creator would remedy their plight, for when Seth was born Eve said, God ...has appointed me another Seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. Gen. 4:25

Eve, of course, did not understand that the Seed mentioned by God was the great Deliverer, the Messiah of promise and prophecy, and that it would be more than six thousand years before the head of the serpent would be bruised by this Seed. As the Creator's plan unfolds throughout his Word, it becomes clear that the work of deliverance implied by God's statement to the serpent will be accomplished by a powerful government, or kingdom, under the control of the Seed of promise.

In the 20th chapter of Revelation we are presented with much information concerning this kingdom and the deliverance it will bring to humanity. According to the assurance here given, even the dead are to be restored to life. But first comes the binding of that old serpent. Verses 1 and 2 read: I saw an angel come down from heaven....And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. This language recalls to mind the serpent's activity in Eden and, together with the remaining verses of the chapter, assures us that the bruising mentioned by the Lord implies a complete deliverance from the miasma of sin and death into which humanity was plunged when induced by Satan to disobey God's law. Sin and death are not to continue forever.

### **Promise to Abraham**

A more definite promise of deliverance was given to Abraham. To him God said, In your Seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 22:18) In the New Testament reference is made to this promise to Abraham and the explanation given that in reality Christ is the Seed. (Gal. 3:8, 16) What is the blessing that God promised would come to all the families of the earth through the Seed of Abraham, which is Christ?

This question is answered by the Apostle Peter in Acts 3:19-25. This passage of scripture is a report of a sermon delivered by Peter in which he drew a lesson from the miracle just performed by him and John, the miracle of healing a man who had been lame from his birth. He explains in his sermon that following the second coming of Christ there would be a time of general restoration, or restitution, as it is translated in our Authorized Version Bibles; that just as this one man was restored to health, so all are to be restored in the due time of the divine plan. Then he concludes, You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in your Seed will all the families of the earth be blessed.

### **Jacob's Prophecy**

The promise of deliverance which God made to Abraham was reiterated to his son Isaac and to his grandson Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons, and toward the end of his life he gathered them around him and

pronounced blessings upon them individually. These parental blessings took the form of prophecies. To his son Judah, Jacob said: Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, you are gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who will rouse him up? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him will the gathering of the people be. Gen. 49:9, 10

This prophecy was uttered by Jacob while he was living in Egypt, and the reference to the couched lion reflects this. In Egypt at that time the claimed royal right of the pharaohs to rule was symbolized by a couched lion. By thus employing this symbol Jacob was saying in his prophecy that the scepter, the right to rule so far as the promises of God are concerned, belonged to his son Judah, and that in due time there would be born a descendant of Judah whose name would be Shiloh. To him would the gathering of the people be; that is, through Shiloh all the families of the earth would be blessed.

The name Shiloh means tranquil, or peaceful. It is one of the Old Testament titles assigned to Christ the Messiah and suggests that this promised Deliverer would be a peacemaker, not only among the people who would be gathered to him, but a peacemaker also between God and men, restoring the harmony that existed before man transgressed divine law. In one of the prophecies of Jesus' birth he is referred to as The Prince of Peace, and we are assured that of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. Isa. 9:6, 7

In this same prophecy of Isaiah we are informed concerning The Prince of Peace that the government will be upon his shoulder. This is the government over which Shiloh holds the scepter, or the right to rule. It is the messianic kingdom, and in Micah 4:1 it is presented under the symbol of a mountain, the mountain ...of the Lord. We are assured that in this mountain, or kingdom, the people will learn God's ways and as a result will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks and will learn war no more.

### **Other Kingdom Blessings**

In Isaiah 25: 6-9 the Lord God presents us with another promise descriptive of the blessings which will reach the people in his mountain, the messianic kingdom. One of these blessings will be the destruction of death. He will swallow up death in victory, the promise reads, and will wipe away tears from off all faces. Another blessing to reach the people through Christ's kingdom is described as the destroying of the face of the covering cast over all people. This is a covering, or veil, of superstition and misunderstanding pertaining to God and to his loving purpose in the creation of man, and his plan for restoring him to life.

Included in this covering which hides God's truth from the people are all the God-dishonoring theories arising out of Satan's lie, You will not surely die. The majority have been pleased to believe that there is no death. But we thank God that this beclouding lie, together with all the other false notions which Satan has woven into a covering and thrown over the eyes of the people will be removed.

### **The "Sour Grape" of Sin**

Another very interesting and reassuring promise of deliverance from the result of original sin is found in Jeremiah 31:29,30. This passage reads, In those days [the days of Messiah's rule] they will say no more The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one will die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth will be set on edge. The lesson here is obvious. It was father Adam who ate the original sour grape of sin. The result has passed on to the entire human race and all have suffered from this act of disobedience; all have died or are dying.

But this is to change, the Lord assures us. In those days, when the promised Seed of Abraham is ruling as The Prince of Peace, he will also be dispensing blessings of health and life. This will be

possible because Jesus took the sinner's place in death, and during his reign will offer to every individual of the human race an opportunity to obey and live. No longer will the people die because of Adam's sin. If they die at all, it will be because they have individually eaten the sour grape of sin. This will be during the times of restitution of all things, and Peter explains that then it will be only those who disobey who will be destroyed from among the people. Acts 3:23

## **Christ is Born**

The birth of Jesus confirmed the truthfulness of the prophetic testimony concerning a coming Deliverer, and deliverance for the sin-cursed race. The angel, in announcing Jesus' birth, said: Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:10, 11, 13, 14

The expression "unto you is born this day" marks the essential difference between this angelic announcement and the promises and prophecies which the Creator had previously given through the holy prophets—these promises and prophecies now began to be fulfilled. One of the prophecies identified the city in which the promised Ruler would be born. It was to be Bethlehem, the ancient city of David. (Micah 5:2) So, when the angel announced the birth of earth's coming Ruler, he called special attention to this: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." AU of God's promises, beginning with his statement in Eden that the serpent's head would be bruised by a Seed, implied a coming deliverance from death. And now the angel confirmed this. The One who was born in Bethlehem was to be a Savior, and this Savior was Christ, the Messiah of promise.

It was a dramatic moment for those shepherds on the Judean hills to whom the angel announced the birth of the Savior, the Messiah. Suddenly, we are told, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. This heavenly host of angels had served God faithfully for the many centuries during which he was making his promises of a coming Seed that would bless the people. They did not understand all the implications of those promises, but they knew that they were expressions of God's goodwill toward his fallen human creatures. How enthusiastically therefore, they must have proclaimed the birth of Jesus, knowing it to be a manifestation of this foretold goodwill and the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promises.

## **Jesus Ministry**

Jesus entered upon his ministry at the age of thirty a ministry which fully harmonized with the prophetic testimony concerning him. We read that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. (Luke 8:1) These glad tidings, the angel said, were to be "unto all people." The Creator had sent a Savior, and had made provision for the establishment of a kingdom through which the blessings of salvation from sin, sickness, and death would reach the people.

It did not at once become apparent to the followers of Jesus that his kingdom would not immediately be established. Only later did they realize that it was necessary for the Savior to die for those he had come to save before they could be permanently delivered from sickness and death. True, he announced to them that he would give his flesh "for the life of the world," but they did not understand from this statement that his humanity would go into death as a substitute for the forfeited life of Adam and for the entire human race. John 6:51

The Twelve were with Jesus as he preached and showed the glad tidings of the kingdom. They had witnessed his miracles of healing the sick, cleansing lepers, casting out devils, and raising the dead. They cannot be blamed for supposing that this was the beginning of the actual foretold work of deliverance and

that his kingdom would soon be fully established and its blessings of health and life extended to all the families of the earth, as God promised would be done through the Seed, even the Messiah.

The disciples did not realize at the time that the marvelous miracles performed by Jesus were intended merely as illustrations—illustrations of the worldwide program of miracles they thought was then beginning, but which must await the accomplishment of other aspects of the Creator's grand design for deliverance. It is true—gloriously true—that in God's due time all the blind eyes will be opened, all the deaf ears unstopped, all the halt and the lame made sound of limb, and none will say, I am sick—no, not any of the people. And in that due time those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake. The sentence Dust you are, and unto dust will you return, (Gen. 3:19) having been set aside by the sacrificial death of the Savior, will no longer be effective against the teeming millions who have long been locked in the great prison of death; for all will be called forth from the grave. Dan. 12:2, John 5:28, 29; Acts 24: 15

### **No More Curse**

In the last chapter of the Bible—Revelation 22—we have the hope of deliverance through Jesus and the kingdom presented to us in meaningful symbolic language. First we see a throne—the throne of God and of the Lamb. (vs. 1) The throne symbolizes the kingdom. It was the glad tidings concerning the establishment (of this kingdom that Jesus and his disciples so faithfully preached. The Lamb is symbolic of Jesus and his sacrifice on behalf of mankind. Thus we are shown that God's promised blessings of life will reach humanity through the agencies of a divine government, being made available through the death of—the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. John 1 :29

These promised blessings are pictured by—a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, which flows from—the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street—of this river, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, ...and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (vs. 2) This language takes our minds back to Eden, when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden to prevent their partaking of the tree of life and living forever. In the messianic kingdom life will again be made available, not to Adam and Eve alone, but to all mankind.

Verse 3 declares, There will be no more curse. A terrible curse has rested upon humanity—the curse of sin and death. It has blighted the peace and happiness of all mankind. No one has been free from it. All die as a result of Adam's transgression. But God loved the race of lost and dying sinners and provided a Savior, the Seed of promise who, as the—Lamb, gave his life in sacrifice as the price of redemption. And now, in this last chapter of the Bible, we are assured that from—the throne of God and of the Lamb—water of life, clear as crystal, will flow out to all mankind. All will be invited to partake of this life-giving water. Come, ... the word will go out, and take the water of life freely. Rev. 22:17

### **The Larger Seed**

We have focused attention on Jesus as the promised Seed of blessing, the One who would bruise—the serpent's head. And certainly all honor should be given to him for the place assigned to him by the Creator in the divine plan for deliverance of the human race from sin and death. However, the Scriptures point out that Jesus will have associates in his work of ruling and blessing the people. The Apostle Paul reveals this. After telling us in Galatians 3 :16 that Jesus is the promised Seed of Abraham through whom the people would be blessed, he explains further, saying, If you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Gal. 3:27-29

There are many texts of Scripture which corroborate this point. Paul wrote that those who suffer and die with Jesus will live and reign with him. (II Tim. 2:11, 12) This group of faithful followers of the Master is identified in Revelation 20:4, 6, and here we are told that they will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. In order that these might live and reign with Christ, they are brought forth from death in what the Scriptures describe as—the first resurrection.

## **A Mystery**

The fact that the Messiah of promise would have associates who would share his messianic name and glory had been kept secret by the Lord throughout all the ages prior to the coming of Jesus at his first advent. Writing to the Colossian believers, the Apostle Paul said, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Col. 1:27

In I Corinthians, chapter 12, Paul uses a human body to illustrate the relationship between Jesus and those associated with him in the messianic arrangement. In this illustration Jesus is the Head, and his faithful followers are the members of the body. One of the main points of the lesson set forth in this chapter is, as Paul states it, that you are the body of Christ [the Messiah], and members in particular. (I Cor. 12:27) As we have seen, the Messiah is the Seed that was mentioned by God in Eden when he said that this Seed would bruise the serpent's head; and the Apostle Paul wrote, The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Rom. 16:20

Jesus' original disciples believed that he was the promised Messiah, and that he would establish his kingdom at his first advent. Not until after being enlightened by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost did they understand that before the kingdom could be established, those to be associated with Jesus as rulers in that kingdom would have to be called from the world, tested, and otherwise made ready for their exalted position with Jesus as rulers in his kingdom.

This preparation of the body members of Christ has been the work of the Lord in the earth throughout the centuries since Jesus' first advent. It has been accomplished largely through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ; the Gospel itself containing the invitation to those who hear and believe to take up their cross and follow the Master into sacrificial death. Jesus commissioned his followers to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, and this commission has been carried out by the faithful in each generation. These have rejoiced in their privilege of making known the glad tidings.

## **A Spiritual Hope**

Man's deliverance from sin and death through the agencies of Christ's kingdom will see mankind restored to life as perfect humans here on the earth. This is in keeping with the Creator's original design. But those who qualify during this present Gospel Age through obedience and sacrifice to live and reign with Christ in his kingdom will receive a spiritual, or heavenly reward. Jesus said to his disciples, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, ...I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also. John 14:2, 3

Jesus prefaced his promise to prepare a place for his followers with the statement, In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. (John 14:2) Jesus did not promise these particular mansions to his followers but said that he would prepare a special place for them. As for the mansions, he simply observed that they already existed in his Father's house. It seems reasonable to conclude that the Father's house is the entire universe. It all belongs to him and is all his domain. In this domain are various mansions, or dwelling places—planes of existence or spheres of life.

The earth is one of these spheres of life. This is the sphere of life in which God designed that his human creatures should spend eternity—the mansion which God created for man. And he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited. (Isa. 45:18) But as Jesus promised his disciples, he went away to prepare a place for them. Much is said in the Bible concerning this place. It is vaguely foretold in the Old Testament and described in the New Testament as an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven. (1 Pet. 1:4) Those for whom this place is prepared are said to be partakers of the heavenly calling. Heb. 3:1

In our study of the Bible it is essential to keep in mind that its heavenly promises are only to the footstep followers of Jesus and that these followers are to be associated with Jesus in the grand work of restoring all mankind to life on the earth. Keeping this distinction in mind, we will find harmony in the many wonderful promises of the sacred Word and will rejoice as we look forward to the deliverance of mankind from sin and death through the promised Seed which is to bind and ultimately destroy Satan and bless all the families of the earth.

Chapter 7

## **JESUS, REDEEMER AND SAVIOR**

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John 1:14

NO DISCUSSION of God's grand design for the deliverance of his human creatures from sin and death would be complete without taking into consideration the One chosen by the Heavenly Father to be the Redeemer and Deliverer. Who is this great One, and from whence did he come? Why is he, above all others, qualified to be the Savior of a condemned and dying race? The Bible alone furnishes us with the answers to these questions, and if we do not attempt to be wise above that which is written, we will find the testimony of the Bible on this subject marvelously satisfying and harmonious.

In the above text the Apostle John refers to Jesus as the Word (Greek, Logo). In verse 1 of this opening chapter of John's Gospel we are informed that the Word, the Logo, was with God in the beginning and that he was a god, a mighty one. Although the English translation does not show it, the Greek text reveals a distinction between the God, the great Creator, and the Logos, who is indicated to be a god. If this basic fact of truth is ignored, we are at once confronted with the incongruous idea that the Father and the Son are one in person, which in turn would mean that much in the life and teachings of Jesus would be absurd. His prayers, for example, would be to himself and not to his Heavenly Father, for he would be his own father. Actually, the thought does not merit serious consideration.

The name Logos means Word, or mouthpiece in a broader sense, one who speaks for or represents another. This was the relationship of the Logos, the Son of God, to his Father, the Creator. John explains that the Logos was in the beginning with God. In Revelation 3:14 Jesus is referred to as the beginning of the creation of God. John informs us that all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:3) Paul confirms this in Colossians 1:15-17, where we read concerning Jesus that he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.

Since the Logos was the beginning of the creation of God, it is obvious that his own creation is excepted in the statement that all things were made by him, for he could make nothing before his own beginning. The harmony of this combined testimony is seen when we recognize that the Logos, being the beginning of God's creation, was also the Creator's exclusive creation (John 1:14; 3:16; I John 4:9), the Logos being the Creator's agent, or representative, in all the remaining works of creation. This illuminates the expression in Genesis 1:26, where the Creator, speaking to the Logos, his Son, is quoted as saying, Let US make man in OUR image.

From these various texts of Scripture it is clear that Jesus had a prehuman existence. This is also indicated in Micah 5:2, in a prophecy showing that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and concerning him adds, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting that is, from the beginning, when there existed only the Logos and his Father. Jesus himself declared, I came down from heaven. And again, I am the living bread which came down from heaven. (John 6:38, 51) To the Pharisees Jesus said,

I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. (John 8:42) Jesus also said, Before Abraham was, I am ; that is, he existed. John 8:58

## **Made Flesh**

Our text states that the Logos, the only begotten of the Father, was made flesh. The Apostle Paul wrote of Jesus, Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor. (II Cor. 8:9) John observes that Jesus was full of grace and truth ; and Paul calls our attention to the glorious virtue of humility possessed by Jesus, saying: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped [RSV] but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-7

Paul adds, And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:8) Paul writes concerning Jesus that he was made a little lower than the angels [made flesh, that is,] for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Heb. 2:9

## **A Ransom**

In stating that Jesus was made a little lower than angels, Paul is calling our attention to Psalm 8:5, where this expression is also used concerning man in his original creation. Thus Jesus was in a position to give his human life as a corresponding price for the forfeited life of Adam and, through Adam, for the entire human race. (Rom. 5:18,19) Paul refers to this as a ransom, the word in the original Greek meaning a price to correspond. Paul wrote: There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (I Tim. 2:5, 6) This gives meaning to the great emphasis the Bible places on the fact that the Logos was made flesh. It was a fleshly being, Adam, whose transgression of the divine law brought death upon himself and upon his offspring, and only another fleshly being could be a corresponding price in death for Adam.

But more than this, Adam was a perfect man when he sinned, and therefore none of his imperfect offspring could be a corresponding price for him. Speaking of the members of the fallen and dying race, the psalmist wrote, None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. (Ps. 49:7) For Adam and his children to be redeemed from death, a perfect man would have to be provided, one who would be willing to lay down his life in sacrifice for this purpose. In his love the Heavenly Father made this provision, for he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, and the Son was humbly obedient unto death, giving himself a ransom for all. Phil. 2:8

## **Not an Assumed Body**

John 1:14 emphasizes that Jesus was made flesh. The point is that he did not merely assume a body of flesh. His body was developed as all human bodies are. Concerning Jesus, Paul wrote, When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman. (Gal. 4:4) In his limitless power and infinite wisdom God could have created a perfect man to redeem Adam, even as he had originally created Adam. But he chose not to do this. God could also have created a wife for Adam without removing a part of Adam's body. But Adam, knowing the circumstances under which Eve was created, could say of her, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she will be called Woman because she was taken out of Man. (Gen. 2:23) Likewise, concerning Jesus we read, Since then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise partook [Diaglott] of the same. (Heb. 2:14) And again, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Rom. 8:3

Just as God in creating Eve designed the vital relationship that should exist between her and Adam, in his wisdom he also decreed that the One who was to redeem the children of men should likewise become a vital partaker of the nature of those he came to redeem. That God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful

flesh does not mean that Jesus was himself a sinner. He proceeded forth and came from God. His human organism was received from his mother, but in the divine arrangement he did not partake of her imperfections. Thus it could be said of him that he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Heb. 7:26

How the life of the Logos was transferred to the womb of Mary to be born as a babe in Bethlehem is beyond human comprehension. There is much in the outworking of the divine purposes which we can neither explain nor understand. To us life itself is a mystery. The begetting and birth of a child in a so-called natural way is a miracle, so far as we are concerned. But the Creator of all life and its functions can easily change what we have come to regard as the normal procedures of nature, because he designed them in the first place. In order to appreciate God's plan of salvation through Jesus, it is necessary to believe that he was raised from the dead; but we cannot explain how this was done, either, except that it was a miracle, even as his being made flesh by being born of a human mother was a miracle.

Nor is it necessary to believe that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was herself free from adamic imperfection. The doctrine of the immaculate conception of the mother of Jesus is not taught in the Bible. The Scriptures do teach the virgin birth of Jesus, which means that by the power of God's Spirit, and without the necessity of a human father, the life of the Logos was transferred, through Mary, to the human plane, and, as the Apostle Paul writes, he was found in fashion as a man, but free from any taint of sin because it was so designed by the Creator. Phil. 2:8

### **Offered in Sacrifice**

When Jesus was thirty years of age he entered upon the ministry for which his Heavenly Father had sent him to earth. David penned a prophecy descriptive of Jesus' spirit of devotion at this time, which reads: Sacrifice and offering you did not desire; my ears have you opened: burnt offering and sin offering have you not required. Then I said, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart. Ps. 40:6-9

Under the great lawgiver, Moses, and in connection with the services of Israel's tabernacle, certain animal sacrifices were required. These could not actually take away sin. In Hebrews 10:1 we read, The Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. Jesus, and the sacrifice he was to offer in place of the typical bullock, was one of the good things foreshadowed by the tabernacle and its services.

Jesus himself knew this. Realizing that the animal sacrifices under the Law did not take away sin but merely foreshadowed the better sacrifice which he had come to earth to make, he gladly said, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me [that is; foreshadowed and foretold in the Old Testament], I delight to do your will, O my God. These words describe Jesus' attitude of consecration to his Heavenly Father when he presented himself to John at Jordan to be baptized.

John the Baptist at first declined to baptize Jesus, saying, I have need to be baptized of you. (Matt. 3:14) John recognized the purity of Jesus, and said, He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose sandals I am not worthy to unloose. (John 1:27) In John 1:29 we read, The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.

The title, Lamb of God, as applied to Jesus, is most significant. In Eden God had said that there would come a Seed which would bruise the serpent's head. Probably Eve supposed that this would be one of her children, perhaps her firstborn, for when Cain was born she said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. (Gen. 4:1) Then Abel was born. In due course the two men brought sacrifices to the Lord. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. (Gen. 4:3, 4) In Hebrews 11:4 we read, By faith



Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. How Abel knew that a lamb would be more excellent we may not understand, but evidently the Lord's hand was in the matter, and we can see a connection between this and the promised Seed.

The promise of the Seed was in reality an assurance of deliverance from sin and death for Adam and his race. But sin had brought God's just condemnation upon humanity, and for this penalty to be set aside, sin must be remitted. So, having indicated his purpose to provide deliverance, the Lord also began to point forward to the method by which it would be accomplished—that it would be by a human flesh and blood sacrifice. In Hebrews 9:22 we are informed that without shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin.

### **God Provides a Lamb**

When God promised to Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed, the patriarch doubtless believed that Isaac would be that seed of blessing. But when Isaac was grown to manhood, God directed his father to offer him in sacrifice. Abraham proceeded to obey and had Isaac bound on an altar and his knife raised to slay him when an angel intervened, directing him not to slay Isaac. Abraham then saw a ram caught in the bushes nearby, and he offered it as a substitute for Isaac.

In this way the Lord tells us that before all the families of the earth could be blessed through a Seed, a loving Father must give up in sacrifice his beloved Son. In reality it is the Heavenly Father who does this, giving his only begotten Son that through his sacrifice the world might live. The lamb being used as a substitute for Isaac may well have indicated that the beloved Son of God would become known as the Lamb of God, which, as John the Baptist announced, takes away the sin of the world.

### **The Lord's "Arm"**

In Isaiah, chapter 53, we are presented with a stirring account of the suffering and death of Jesus. In verse 1 he is referred to as the arm of the Lord. Verse 10 of the preceding chapter also refers to Jesus as the arm of the Lord. This verse reads, The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. What a gloriously reassuring promise this is! The thought of making bare the holy arm suggests that the glory and saving power of this mighty representative of the Creator is to be revealed worldwide: All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

But with the opening of the next chapter the question is raised, To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Instead of being revealed in his glory and saving power, he is seen by Isaiah as despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him.... We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (vs. 3, 4) Continuing the description of Jesus rejection, affliction, and death, verse 7 reads, He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opens not his mouth.

Thus it was foretold that Jehovah's arm, who was to bring deliverance and salvation to all the ends of the earth, must first be led as a lamb to the slaughter. So it was that when John the Baptist announced the presence of Jesus he said, Behold the Lamb of God—the One foretold in the Old Testament by both type and prophecy. (John 1:29) He is the One who will take away the sin of the world and open the way for all mankind to return to health and life.

### **Jesus Gives His Flesh**

Through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, Jesus knew that he was to give his flesh, his humanity, for the life of the world. Jesus said, I am the living bread which came down from heaven: ...the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6: 51) It was for this purpose that

Jesus was made flesh, born into the world as a perfect human. In Matthew 20:28 we read, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

In the text last quoted the title "Son of man" is used. This title does not imply that Jesus was the son of Joseph. He was the "Son of man" in the sense that he is the seed of David and the seed of Abraham. He was also the seed of Adam, through his mother. As we continue our examination of Jesus and his high position in the plan of salvation, we will find that many titles are applied to him and that each of these calls attention to a particular aspect of his work as the Redeemer and Deliverer of the sin-cursed and dying race. Thus the title "Son of man" describes his humiliation in taking on the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man.

And this title will always belong to Jesus, although he gave his flesh, his humanity, in sacrifice. It is a title of high honor and a perpetual reminder of his great victory in humbling himself in obedience to all the Heavenly Father's arrangements for him, including his cruel death on the cross. And this was indeed a glorious victory! We read, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. (Heb. 12:3) This contradiction of sinners against Jesus is manifested more or less throughout the entire course of his faithful ministry but is particularly apparent near its close, when he was tried, condemned, and crucified.

Jesus was the glorious Son of God, but he was charged with blasphemy because he acknowledged this fact. He was born to be the greatest of all kings, but in irony a crown of thorns was cruelly placed upon his head. He was spat upon and beaten. He was nailed to a cross, over which was placed the inscription "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." While Jesus was hanging there in agony his enemies shouted, "If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross." (Matt. 27:37, 40) And again, "He saved others; himself he cannot save." (Matt. 27:42) How little did Jesus' enemies realize that by refusing to save himself he was providing salvation for them and for all the families of the earth.

## **He Died**

So Jesus died. On the cross, as prophesied in Psalm 22, Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1; Matt. 27:46) In death, Jesus took the sinner's place. For this reason it was essential that his Heavenly Father momentarily withdraw his smile of approval from his Son, even as he had from Adam and his offspring. What a terrible moment this must have been for Jesus! It was the last crushing blow that hastened his death. The jeerings and contradictions of his enemies were as nothing compared with the loss of his Father's approving smile.

But despite this, Jesus' faith and confidence rallied, and his dying words were, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit [my life]." The record is that having said this, he gave up the ghost [his breath]. (Luke 23:46) While the English translation of this text is faulty, the thought simply is that Jesus surrendered his life, placing it entirely in the hands of the Heavenly Father. Jesus knew that he had been promised a resurrection from the dead, and he was willing to trust his Father to fulfill his promises.

While hanging on the cross Jesus also used the expression, "It is finished." (John 19:30) Jesus knew that the purpose of his having been made flesh had been served. Since the death of his humanity was now a certainty, he could very well feel that he had given his flesh for the life of the world, even as he had previously said he would. It was by this willing sacrifice of his perfect humanity that he became the propitiation, the satisfaction, for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. I John 2:2

## **God's Love Manifested**

In this, wrote John, was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but

that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9, 10) Jesus' love was equally manifested in this sacrifice for sins, because he gladly acquiesced in his Father's plan for him. I and my Father are one, Jesus affirmed. (John 10:30) When Philip requested, Lord, show us the Father, Jesus replied, He that has seen me has seen the Father. John 14:8, 9

Jesus did not mean by these statements that he and the Father were one in person. It was his way of emphasizing his complete oneness with his Father's plans and purposes. The words he spoke, the works he did, were not his own, but the Father's. No one can actually see the Creator of the universe, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, our Heavenly Father, and live. Just as the perfect Adam had been created in the image of God, so the perfect man Jesus was in the divine image and, besides, so fully devoted to his God that his every word and act were just what God would have him say and do.

Therefore, those who saw Jesus and were acquainted with his words and ways, saw the characteristics of the Heavenly Father manifested in him. Thus they saw the Father in the only sense it is possible for a human to see him. That Jesus' oneness with his Father was simply a oneness of purpose is revealed in his prayer when he asked his Father that his disciples might be made one with him, even as he and the Father were one. Notice the similarity of language, That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us. (John 17:21) On another occasion Jesus said to his disciples, My Father is greater than I. John 14:28

### **Love and Justice**

As we have seen, it was divine love that provided a way for setting aside the just penalty for sin, which is death. Worldly wisdom is prone to take an erroneous view of this. It is claimed that a loving God would not demand the bloody sacrifice of his Son. In their opposition to the Bible's teachings on the subject of redemption through the blood of Jesus (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:22), it is insisted that a loving God overlooks sin and all that is necessary to obtain divine forgiveness is to repent of sin and seek God's forgiveness.

But think where such a liberal viewpoint leads! We believe all will agree that God may properly establish laws for governing his creatures. It was proper that he should expect Adam to obey his law. It was proper also that a penalty should be attached to disobedience. But we may well imagine the consequences if the Creator had not enforced the penalty after having given Adam his law and warned him as to the penalty for disobedience. If, after having disobeyed, our first parents would simply have expressed repentance and been granted divine forgiveness, how much dependence could they thereafter have put in the word of their Creator? Both men and angels soon would have supposed that the infraction of divine law was of little consequence, and would there not have ensued chaos and rebellion throughout the universe? Besides, if the foretold punishment for sin was not imposed, how could anyone know that God's promises of blessing would be fulfilled?

The penalty for sin was not merely a few years of confinement in a prison or of isolation from friends. Such a penalty could have been paid by the individual involved, and then he could justly go free. But the penalty for sin was death—not merely dying, but eternal death. The only way anyone could pay that penalty himself was to remain dead forever. If he was ever to be released from the great prison of death, the penalty would have to be paid by another. And this was the loving arrangement which the Creator made through Jesus.

### **“God Is Love”**

Herein both the justice and the love of God are manifested. His justice could not free the human sinner from death; so at great cost to himself he gave his Son to be man's Redeemer. None can say that God changed his mind about the penalty for sin. All that could be said is that he had such great love for his human creatures that he was willing to give the dearest treasure of his heart as a payment of the penalty which his wisdom decreed was just. No wonder the Bible proclaims that God is love.

And, as we have seen, God's beloved Son willingly and gladly cooperated with the Father in this plan of redemption, at great cost to himself. And why should we not adore and worship the Son for his great sacrifice? Today, the world over, one who risks his own life in rescuing another from death through an act of heroism is properly honored. From this standpoint Jesus is the greatest hero of all time. He did not merely risk his life, but he gave his life, and under the most trying circumstances.

What modernist can properly say that this was anything else than an outstanding manifestation of divine love on behalf of a sin-cursed and dying race? And think how the Heavenly Father himself must have suffered while Jesus was thus painfully laying down his life as a ransom for all! The Heavenly Father and his beloved Son both suffered, thus demonstrating their great love for the entire human race. Together they had created man, and now, through the death of Jesus, their love had provided for release from the just penalty of death which had come upon him when the Creator said, "Dust you are, and unto dust will you return." Gen. 3:19

Chapter 8

## THE RESURRECTED AND EXALTED JESUS

To whom also He showed himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days Acts 1:3

WHEN Jesus was taken away from his disciples and cruelly put to death on the cross, they were bewildered. They believed that he was the One sent by God to establish a government which would release Israel from her yoke of bondage and spread its influence throughout all the earth. They believed that he was the great King of promise who was to sit upon the throne of David to extend blessings of peace, health, and life to the people of all nations. They believed that he was the Seed of Abraham who was destined to bless all the families of the earth. How could Jesus be and do these things, now that he had been put to death?

But the disciples were not to be kept in suspense for too long, for on the third day God raised his beloved Son from the dead. The two Marys were the first to know about this. They were early at Jesus tomb toward the close of the Sabbath and were surprised to find that the stone had been rolled ...from the door and that an angel was sitting upon it. The countenance of the angel was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. This angel said to the women, "I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Matt. 28:1-6

Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead, continued the angel, and, behold, he goes before you into Galilee; there will you see him: lo, I have told you. (vs. 7) The Marys were filled with mixed feelings of fear and joy as they did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there will they see me. vs. 8-10

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. (vss. 16, 17) It was here in a Galilean mountain that Jesus announced to the eleven, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (vs. 18) While Jesus was with his disciples in the flesh he did not possess all power. From the human standpoint he seemed to lack power to overthrow the governments of this world and establish the long-promised kingdom of Christ. This was one reason so few were able to believe that he was the King of promise.

But now Jesus announced definitely that he possessed all power in heaven and in earth. In the performance of his miracles prior to his resurrection, Jesus invoked the power of his Heavenly Father, and now that power had been given to him to use in the carrying out of the Father's design. Among the first uses of this all power were his several appearances to his disciples before he returned to his Father in heaven. One of his first appearances was to Mary. She saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus said unto her, Woman, why are you crying? who are you looking for? She, supposing him to be the gardener, said unto him, Sir, if you have borne him hence, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away, Jesus said unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and said unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. John 20:14-16

### **Power Exercised**

When Jesus was crucified his clothing was divided among the Roman soldiers on guard, and lots were cast for his seamless robe. He was wrapped in linen clothes for burial. Now he suddenly appeared to Mary dressed as a gardener. She did not recognize his features. Not until he spoke her name in the old familiar manner to which she was accustomed did she realize that it was her Master. Whence came the clothes of a gardener? The only answer is that the all power which Jesus possessed included an ability to create. He also used this power to assume a body in which he could appear to, and communicate with Mary.

Then there was the experience of the two disciples who, while on the way to Emmaus, were joined by the resurrected Jesus. But they did not recognize him. Not until he asked the blessing at the evening meal did they realize who their journeying companion had been; then he vanished from their sight. It was evidently his familiar way of asking the blessing upon the meal that revealed his identity to them. Here, then, was a different-appearing body and different clothing. Here, also was the ability to vanish out of their sight. Luke 24:13-31

### **Doubting Thomas**

But Thomas doubted. He said that he would not believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead unless he could see the nail prints in his hands and feet and the spear wound in his side. Eight days later, while they were gathered in a room with the doors closed, Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst. He addressed Thomas, inviting him to examine his hands and feet and to thrust his hand into the wound in his side. Thomas was thereby convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

But how did Jesus know that Thomas doubted? He was nowhere in sight when those doubts were expressed. And there were no nail prints in Jesus' hands and feet when Mary thought he was the gardener or when the two disciples journeying to Emmaus thought he was a stranger in Israel. John explains this demonstration to Thomas, saying, Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples. (John 20:30) This was a sign, a demonstration, designed to meet a need. It was not Jesus' real body which Thomas saw, for Jesus had given his fleshly body for the life of the world. This was not Jesus' resurrected body any more than was the body of the gardener seen by Mary, or of the stranger with whom the two disciples conversed on the way to Emmaus. These were demonstrations, or proofs, of his resurrection which the now all-powerful Jesus could present to his disciples.

### **Born Again**

During his earthly ministry Jesus had explained to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3) Here Jesus is referring to the position of rulership in the kingdom of God, not to those who will be blessed as subjects of that kingdom. Nicodemus asked, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? (vs. 4) Jesus then explained that he referred to a birth of the Spirit, saying, That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. vs. 6

Jesus had been born into the world a fleshly being. It was by being born of a woman that he was made flesh for the suffering of death. (Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:9) But to Nicodemus he mentioned another birth, a birth of the Spirit, and the great change it would bring to one's experience and ability. He said, "The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell where it comes from, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (vs. 8) The wind is both invisible and powerful. It moves about unseen by human eyes, its presence being recognized by various manifestations of its strength, such as the swaying of trees and the mountainous waves of the ocean.

By this illustration Jesus taught that one born of the Spirit would be invisible to human eyes yet possess mighty power. And now Jesus was born of the Spirit. That is why he could be present with his disciples without their realizing he was in their midst. That is why he could create a different body each time he appeared to them. That is why he could vanish from their sight as he did after asking the blessing upon the evening meal in Emmaus.

The Apostle Peter explains this point further, saying "Christ also has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, ...being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." (I Pet. 3:18) The Revised Version reads, "in the Spirit." Jesus was put to death in the flesh and made alive in the Spirit, no longer a fleshly being, but born of the Spirit and, as the Scriptures reveal, to the very highest plane of spiritual life—the divine. It was to this highly exalted Jesus that all power had been given in heaven and in earth.

### **His Titles**

The Apostle John wrote, "The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." (I John 4:14) Much is involved in saving the world from the thralldom of sin and death. In one of the prophecies of Jesus' birth a number of titles are given to him, and these titles suggest the wide scope of the work to be accomplished by him in addition to laying down his life as the world's Redeemer. This prophecy reads: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government will be upon his shoulder: and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor [RSV, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end." Isa. 9:6, 7

### **“Wonderful Counselor”**

In the Hebrew text the word translated "Counselor" means "to advise." Who could be better fitted to give advice to the people than Jesus? In chapter 11, Isaiah writes further concerning Jesus, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; ...and he will not judge after the sight of the eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears." vs. 2, 3

The brightest minds of the world marvel at the wisdom displayed by Jesus and the splendor of his ethical and moral teachings. What profound advice is given in his Sermon on the Mount! What keenness of perception is manifested in his encounters with his enemies and in answering the questions of his friends! The chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to bring Jesus to them, but they returned without him, explaining, "Never man spoke like this man." John 7:46

All these qualities of wisdom, perception, kindness and understanding were possessed by the man Jesus. How much they have all been enhanced in the highly exalted Jesus, to whom has been given all power! Truly, a Wonderful Counselor he will be to all mankind who, under his beneficent rulership, learn to put their trust in him!

### **“The Mighty God”**

Isaiah informs us that Jesus would also be The Mighty God. The Hebrew word here translated God simply means strength and is applied in the Bible to any deity, even to human princes and rulers. The name Jehovah, on the other hand, is applied exclusively to the Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

That Jesus is a Mighty God is apparent from all the scriptural testimony concerning him since he was raised from the dead and highly exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Even during his pre-human existence as the Logos, or representative of Jehovah, he was a mighty god, and now he is exalted far above the nature and position he enjoyed with his Father before he was made flesh. How appropriate, then, that one of his titles should be The Mighty God.

Jesus said that it is the Heavenly Father's desire that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. (John 5:23) In Hebrews 1:6 we learn that all the angels have been commanded to worship the Son. In the 8th and 9th verses of this same chapter, prophecies are quoted from the Old Testament concerning the highly exalted Jesus which read Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even your God [Jehovah], has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows.

### **“The Everlasting Father”**

Another title Isaiah applies to Jesus in the prophecy of his birth and its purpose is The Everlasting Father. (Isa. 9:6) The literal meaning of the word father is one who has begotten a child. Implied, therefore, is the thought of lifegiver. Jesus will be the Lifegiver to the world during the thousand years of his reign. The hour is coming, Jesus said, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear will live. (John 5:25) Jesus will give life by restoring the dead to life. Marvel not at this, Jesus further said, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves will hear his voice, and will come forth. John 5: 28, 29

In Isaiah 53:8-10 we are informed that although Jesus was cut off out of the land of the living, with none to declare his generation, yet he will see his seed, that is, his offspring; and that offspring will be the whole world of mankind, awakened from the sleep of death. The willing and obedient will be restored to perfection and enabled to live everlastingly. Thus Jesus will not only be a Lifegiver, but to all who pass the tests of that time he will give everlasting life, and thus he will be The Everlasting Father.

And what an encouraging fact this is! Life is precious to all normal persons. During the present century the average length of human life has greatly increased, and medical science is encouraging people to believe that it will continue to increase. This is accepted as good news. Now many are looking forward to living a hundred years. But God's provision is far better; for through Christ, The Everlasting Father, it will soon be possible to keep on living forever. It was to make this possible that Jesus gave his flesh, his humanity, for the life of the world; and now, highly exalted to the divine nature, The Everlasting Father will, in his kingdom now near, be making the blessings of eternal human life available to all for whom he died.

### **“The Prince of Peace”**

The Prince of Peace is perhaps the best known of all the titles which the Bible assigns to Jesus. (Isa. 9:6) Although this title was not used by the angel who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds on the Judean hills, the chorus of the heavenly host praising God and saying peace on earth has been a continuous reminder of it. Ordinarily we think of peace in contrast with war, and we know that as a result of the rulership of Christ war will be abolished: They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation will not lift up a sword against nation, neither will they learn war any more. Micah 4:3

But, as *The Prince of Peace*, Jesus will do much more for mankind than abolish war and instruct the people in the arts and advantages of peace. He will also establish peace between God and men. When our first parents transgressed God's law and were sentenced to death, divine favor was withdrawn from them. Sin and selfishness began to rule in the hearts of men. This led to bitterness and hatred toward one another in families, in communities, within nations, and among nations. This has resulted in bloodshed, murder, and on the national level, war.

Basic to this prevalence of strife among men has been their alienation from God. They have been in rebellion against him and his laws of righteousness and love. When God sent his Son to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world, it was an expression of his goodwill, an evidence that he was taking the first step toward reestablishing a peaceful relationship between himself and his errant human creation.

In Romans 5:1 Paul uses the expression *peace with God* to describe the blessed relationship that exists between God and those who now, by faith, accept Christ and become his disciples. Very few during the present age have risen above their superstitions and their fears and by faith entered into this blessed relationship of *peace with God*. Contradictions and confusion concerning God and his wonderful plan of salvation have hindered the vast majority from finding him, even though they may have sought him.

This does not mean that God's plan of salvation through Christ has failed. It simply indicates that the time in that plan for the enlightenment of the people has not yet come. It will be during the thousand-year reign of Christ that this will be accomplished. It will be then that the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9) It will be then that the *veil* of superstition pertaining to God will be removed, permitting the people to understand his loving plan for their eternal happiness; and it will be upon the basis of an understanding of, and obedience to, this plan that Jesus will establish peace between mankind and the Heavenly Father.

Closely associated with the title *Prince of Peace* is the title *Mediator*, a title Paul uses in one of his explanations of the redeeming work of Christ. We quote: *This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* I Tim. 2:3

A mediator is one who makes peace by assisting those who are estranged to reach an understanding. Thus will Jesus serve as *The Prince of Peace* in establishing peace between God and men. But let no one suppose that the necessity for this arises from vindictiveness on the part of God toward his erring human creatures, for it was God who provided Jesus to be the Mediator. This is why Paul refers to the Heavenly Father as *God our Savior*. God is the Author of the great plan of human salvation, and Jesus is the One who carries out that plan. Jesus is the Redeemer and Deliverer of mankind from sin and death.

And truly Jesus is a Savior, and a great One, who, in giving his humanity for the life of the world, prepared the way for the reconciliation of the people to his Heavenly Father. It will be during the thousand years of his reign as *King of kings and Lord of lords* that he will deliver from death those for whom he died, enlighten them, and give them an opportunity to accept the provisions of divine grace, obey the laws of his kingdom, and live forever. The exalted Jesus will, of course, have associates in the great future work of recovery and reconciliation.

Chapter 9

## **JESUS' ASSOCIATE RULERS**

THE disciples of Jesus became convinced that their beloved Master had been raised from the dead, and when he appeared to them for the last time before returning to his Father in heaven, they made bold to ask about his kingdom. This was a natural question. During his various appearances to them he had



talked about the kingdom – the kingdom in which they believed he would be the great King. He had told them that all power had been given unto him in heaven and in earth, and they wondered if he would use this power to set up his kingdom; so they asked, Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? Acts 1:6

Jesus' reply to his disciples was: It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power. But you will receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and you will be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:7, 8) Not yet having received the Holy Spirit, the disciples did not have a clear idea of what the kingdom of the Messiah would be like, but they must have sensed from Jesus' reply that it would not be established immediately; for first they were to be his witnesses to the world of mankind, and even to their unenlightened minds this must have implied a considerable lapse of time, for our modern means of communication were not then in existence.

### **The Purpose of Preaching**

Preaching the Gospel of Christ, as his witnesses, was a far cry from being associated with him in a powerful kingdom which they believed was destined to rule the world. What was to be accomplished by this preaching? Many have supposed that the objective of this missionary effort was to convert the whole world to Christ and thus to bring the people into his kingdom. These suppose that the kingdom of Christ was established at Pentecost and that it has been gradually expanding ever since.

But this is not what the Bible teaches. If this had been God's design, then it has miserably failed, for now, nearly two thousand years after Pentecost, the larger portion of the world is in heathen darkness, with the remainder almost wholly under the influence of the evolutionary theory of creation and other forms of unbelief. The great masses of mankind today do not give any thought to the kingdom of Christ as a solution for the problems of the world, and the nations have no inclination to follow the precepts of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

What, then, is the purpose of preaching the Gospel of Christ and his kingdom? An indication of this purpose is given in Acts 2:47, where we read concerning those who had responded to the witness given by the apostles at Pentecost and later, that the Lord added to the church. Jesus had spoken of building his church, and now we learn how this was to be accomplished – that it was to be through the spread of the Gospel of the kingdom by the witnesses of Jesus.

But what is the church? This English word is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means a calling out, or a called-out class. The church of Christ, then, is made up of a class that is called out of the world, called to be separate from the world. This thought has a number of implications, one of them being that it is not God's purpose to bring the whole world into the church and that the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ is not designed in the plan of God to convert the world.

The witness work began with the Jewish people and later was extended to the Gentiles, and it is in connection with this enlargement of the work that we are given a further explanation of what the Lord expected would be accomplished by the effort. At an apostolic conference in Jerusalem James said, God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. (Acts 15:14) Here again we have the thought of a people being taken out from the world, rather than the conversion of all.

### **“For His Name”**

These called-out ones, James explains, were to be a people for God's name. This indicates that they were to become members of his family. These are the sons of God mentioned throughout the New Testament. Paul wrote: The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. Rom. 8 : 16,17

It will be recalled that Jesus invited his disciples to take up their cross and follow him. This implied suffering and dying with him, and on this point the Apostle Paul wrote: It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we will also live with him: if we suffer, we will also reign with him. (II Tim. 2: 11, 12) These inspired statements of the Word reveal that when Jesus' kingdom is established, he will have associate kings reigning with him—individuals selected from the human race who have proved their worthiness of this high position by their willingness to suffer and to die with him.

In Revelation 14: 1- 5 these joint-heirs with Christ are pictured as being on Mount Zion with him. In this symbolic presentation Jesus is represented by a Lamb. This is because he sacrificed his life that the world might live. The Revelator explains that those who are with the Lamb on Mount Zion are those who followed him; followed him, that is, into death. We are informed that these have the Father's name written in their foreheads. In other words, they are the children of God who will live and reign with Christ.

In Revelation 19:7 these same followers of the Lamb are spoken of as becoming united with him in marriage. Thus in this further sense they are a people for his name. In Revelation 22:1 the kingdom is depicted as the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is from this throne that the water of life will flow out for the blessing of the people. And when the kingdom is thus set up and functioning, the Spirit and the bride will say, Come, ...take the water of life freely. vs. 17

### **Rulers in the Kingdom**

The way that leads to joint heirship with Jesus in his kingdom is a difficult one. It is a way of suffering that terminates eventually in death. Jesus knew that those who walked in this way would need encouragement, so he said, Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32) This is a promise to the prospective rulers in the kingdom of Christ—not to those who later will become subjects in that kingdom. It is important to keep this distinction in mind, for the kingdom of Christ will have both rulers and subjects.

Jesus is, of course, the King of kings in his kingdom. Having been put to death in the flesh to redeem mankind from death, it was necessary that Jesus be raised from the dead in order to be the world's Ruler; and this is also true with respect to his footstep followers. Throughout the age from Pentecost until now these have, one by one, finished their course of faithfulness in death, and at the end of the age they are restored to life in what the Bible terms the first resurrection. Rev. 20:4, 6

### **“Called, Chosen, and Faithful”**

Those who are to live and reign with Christ are, as we have seen, called to this high position through the Gospel, the Word of life. This has been the main objective of the preaching of the Gospel throughout the age, beginning with Pentecost. True, others have heard the message, and to the extent they have understood and responded they have been blessed. But only a few in the entire age, literally a hundred and forty-four thousand, have responded in full devotion to the Lord and his cause, a devotion that has led to the laying down of their lives in sacrifice.

In Revelation 17:14 we are informed that those who are qualified to be with the Lamb are called, and chosen, and faithful. To be called to this high position in the kingdom as associate rulers with Jesus is not enough. There must be a response to that call by a complete surrender to the doing of God's will. Upon the basis of this consecration the called ones become chosen. Thereafter it is necessary to make one's calling and choosing sure by a lifetime of faithfulness. Jesus said, Be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. Rev. 2:10

Faithfulness to the Lord involves willingness to serve him in whatever way he may indicate to be his will. It means loyalty to his Word of truth. The Apostle Peter speaks of still other aspects of faithfulness. Reminding us that we are called to be partakers of the divine nature, Peter writes: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you will never fall: for so an entrance will be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. II Pet. 1:4-11

### **A Heavenly Calling**

In Hebrews 3 :1 the Apostle Paul addresses the church class as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. A misunderstanding of the promises of God to those who are partakers of this calling has given rise to the erroneous idea that his plan for the world of mankind is to take as many of them to heaven as possible. Those advocating this theory have failed to see that the Lord is simply calling a few, a little flock, to this high position, to be associated with Jesus in the rulership of his kingdom, and that this kingdom, when prepared and established, will extend the blessings of human life to all the remainder of the world of mankind.

In writing about the sons of God who are called to live and reign with Christ, the Apostle John said: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we will be: but we know that, when he will appear, we will be like him; for we will see him as he is. (I John 3:2) Following his resurrection Jesus manifested himself to his disciples by various signs signs which took the form of different bodies. He appeared as a gardener, a stranger, a fisherman, and, to Thomas, as one who had been crucified. The disciples did not see Jesus glorified, divine body, for he could not thus be seen with human eyes. But John informs us that the faithful sons of God will see Jesus as he is, because they will be made like him. These, then, will also be invisible to human eyes.

### **Human Representatives**

Jesus, together with those called out from the world and proved worthy to live and reign with him, will constitute the spiritual, or invisible, phase of the messianic kingdom. But there will also be an earthly ruling phase of Christ's kingdom which will represent the spiritual phase. Who will be the human representatives of the messianic kingdom? The Scriptures answer this question clearly. Luke 13:28, 29 speaks of the time when the people will see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God. And we are told that then the people will come from the east, west, north, and south, and sit down with these ancient faithful ones in the kingdom.

In Psalm 45:16 this same group is spoken of as the fathers in Israel, and the explanation is given that in the kingdom these fathers will become the children of The Christ and that they will be made princes in all the earth. Jesus as the great King in his kingdom is mentioned in Isaiah 32:1, and we are told that he will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in judgment.

These princes will not be ordinary, imperfect humans, governed largely by selfishness. Paul tells us that they are to be brought forth from death in a better resurrection, and made perfect. (Heb. 11:35, 40) From the beginning of their administration under Christ they will doubtless be recognized as superior in every way, and well equipped to direct the affairs of men as the visible representatives of the spiritual

Christ. While these human princes will not be the kingdom in the full sense of the word, they will be so fully the representatives of it that they will be so recognized by men.

### **Specially Tested**

Just as it was God's design to specially test those ultimately chosen to reign with Christ in the spiritual phase of his kingdom, so he also tested those who will serve as its human representatives. Their testing was upon the basis of their faith and obedience. During that long period of time from Abel to John the Baptist approximately four thousand years this testing continued. And God overshadowed his faithful people of old with his love and care, even as has been true of his people during the present age. When the people scoffed at Noah's belief in the coming Flood they did not realize that they were being used to test his worthiness of a better resurrection, to be one of the princes in all the earth who will represent the messianic kingdom.

And think of the great lawgiver, Moses! At the age of forty he thought to take matters into his own hands and deliver his people, but his plans miscarried, and he fled from Egypt in fear. For forty years more he waited for some indication from the Lord as to his future course, meanwhile working at the humble occupation of caring for his father-in-law's flocks. What a test this must have been upon Moses' patience; yet he passed that test and was ready to do the Lord's bidding when the time came and the divine will was clearly pointed out to him.

The next forty years of hardship and toil, for which Moses received little gratitude from the people, further tested his fidelity to God. The experiences through which he passed in the wilderness served as valuable training in preparation for his future position as one of the princes in all the earth. Even though Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land, his faith and confidence in his God were not shaken. When Moses is raised from the dead, the Lord will be able to entrust him with great responsibility, knowing that every detail of work which might be assigned to him will be carried out faithfully and with an eye single to the glory of God.

And consider Daniel, a Hebrew captive in Babylon, who became Prime Minister of the Babylonian Empire! Daniel attained this high position despite his loyalty to Jehovah and his high principles of righteousness, which irked his enemies. How many have there been through the ages who, if threatened with death in a lion's den, would have remained true to their God? It was through this and other faith-testing experiences that Daniel proved worthy of the better resurrection and qualified to serve as one of the princes in all the earth.

To quote Paul: What will 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. Heb. 11:32-35

### **Experiences Utilized**

Throughout all the centuries God was utilizing the experiences of these Ancient Worthies to prepare them to be the human representatives of Christ's kingdom. During all that time the world in general did not even believe there was a God. They knew about their gods of wood and stone and superstitiously bowed down in fear before their hideous idols. But they did not know that a living God, the Creator of heaven and earth, was training personnel for a future government through whom they, when awakened from the sleep of death, would be enlightened and blessed.

It is doubtful if the Ancient Worthies themselves understood clearly just what their future position in the arrangements of God would be. They believed the promises of God that a powerful kingdom would be established through a Messiah he would send, and they hoped that in some way they would be the servants of God in that government that then they could serve God without fear of persecution, violence, or death. Isaiah taught that under the jurisdiction of that government the rebuke of God's people would be taken from off all the earth. Isa. 25:8

But regardless of the reward, the Ancient Worthies were committed to God and were faithful to him. The attitude of all the Ancient Worthies who qualified to be princes in all the earth was well-expressed by the three Hebrew captives in Babylon. When threatened with death in a fiery furnace if they did not bow down to the great image of the king, they replied: If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up. Dan. 3:17, 18

This also has been the attitude of the Lord's true people during the present age, as they, through much tribulation, prove themselves worthy to reign with Christ. Thus the associate rulers in Christ's kingdom those on the spiritual plane, as well as those on the earthly plane of life will all have been thoroughly tested. No one will be in either of these groups who has not previously demonstrated his full obedience to God under test. This, indeed, was also true of Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords in his kingdom.

When all in both these classes are brought forth in the resurrection the spiritual class in the first resurrection, and the earthly class in the better resurrection the kingdom will begin to function for the blessing of all the families of the earth. Christ and his church will be the lawgivers in that kingdom, and the princes will administer the law and be the instructors of the people in the true meaning and application of all the divine requirements.

These two phases of the kingdom are referred to by the Prophet Micah, and symbolized as Zion the spiritual phase, and Jerusalem, the earthly phase. The kingdom as a whole is symbolized by a mountain. The people are represented as going up to this mountain of the Lord and being taught by him through the kingdom agencies. As a result, they beat their swords into Jesus' Associate Rulers' plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks, and they learn war no more. Then, we are assured, every man will dwell under his vine and fig tree, and none will make them afraid. (Micah 4:4) What a blessed prospect!

## Chapter 10

# CHRIST'S RETURN AND THE END OF THE WORLD

THE second coming of Christ and the end of the world are both taught in the Bible, but these teachings became greatly distorted during the Dark Ages. It is quite generally believed that Christ returns in the flesh and that as he approaches the earth it will become enveloped in flames and be completely destroyed. This is presumed to occur within a period of twenty-four hours, and in this same short space of time the righteous will be caught up into heaven, while the wicked are consigned to a hell of torment. This crude conception of Christ's return and the end of the world has turned many away from the study of the Bible.

It is true that the end of the world follows, and is the result of Christ's second advent, but the foretold end of the world as described in the Bible does not mean the destruction of the earth. We are assured by the Bible that the earth will never come to an end, that it abides forever. (Eccl. 1:4) We are also informed that the earth was not created in vain, but formed to be inhabited. (Isa. 45:18) In Acts 3:19-21 we find the Apostle Peter declaring that following Christ's return there will be times of restitution of all things, not the destruction of everything, and that this future time of restoration has been foretold by the mouth of all

God's holy prophets since the world began. These promises of God concerning the restoration of the human race to health and life could not be fulfilled if the earth is destroyed.

In the prophecies of the Bible the word "world" is often used to indicate a social order, and in the New Testament it is a translation of the Greek word kosmos. In other instances "world" means an age, or a period of time, and is a translation of the Greek word eion. There are three main periods of time, or worlds, in God's grand design for the redemption and recovery of the human race from death. One of these began with man's creation and came to an end at the time of the Flood. Peter speaks of this era as "the world that was." (II Pet. 3:6) We refer to it as "the world of yesterday."

Another "world" began with the Flood, and the Bible teaches that this world comes to an end with the return of Christ to establish his kingdom. We speak of this period as "the world of today." Paul describes it as "this present evil world." It is appropriate that it should be called evil, for Satan is its god and prince. Its complete destruction will be a great blessing to mankind.

Then there is "the world of tomorrow." Paul speaks of this as "the world to come." (Heb. 2:5) It is not an "earth" to come but a new social order on this earth which God created to be man's eternal home. The spiritual rulers in that new social order will be Christ and his faithful followers; and the Ancient Worthies, restored to human perfection, will be the human representatives of the highly exalted Jesus and his followers.

God's work in the earth during the first two worlds has been largely the selection and preparation of those who will manage the affairs of the messianic kingdom, which will rule throughout the earth during the first thousand years of the world of tomorrow. Throughout the time of the first two worlds, the people of God have been a persecuted and suffering people. It will be in the third world that the rebuke of God's people will be taken away. Then the righteous will flourish, and all the willfully wicked will be destroyed from among the people. Acts 3:23

## **The End of the World**

The Bible's prophecies show clearly that the present evil world does come to an end as a result of Christ's second coming, but this is the ending of a social order, not of the earth. In the prophecies much symbolic language is used to portray the end of the world. Literally the world of today is destroyed by what the Prophet Daniel described as "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1) Jesus referred to this same trouble as a great tribulation that would come upon the people of the earth. (Matt. 24:21, 22) He described this tribulation as "distress of nations, with perplexity, and said that men's hearts would fail them for fear." Luke 21:26

This time of distress and trouble which destroys what men call civilization is symbolized in the prophecies by fire, earthquakes, storms, etc. In the Dark Ages the symbol "fire" was seized upon by the creedmakers and used in an effort to prove that the earth would be burned up, thus giving an entirely wrong understanding of the Bible's prophecies pertaining to the end of the world.

The Apostle John saw the new heavens and new earth, that is, the coming new social order, in his vision on the Isle of Patmos; and among other things he tells us that in this new social order under Christ "there will be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither will there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:1-4) This will be the consummation of the Creator's grand design, when that which was lost through Adam will be restored through Christ.

## **The Second Advent**

But this glorious consummation of the divine plan had to wait for the return of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom. Not understanding this, leaders developed the erroneous theory that

Christ's kingdom was established at Pentecost and that it has been increasing with each new conversion to Christ. One of the texts used to establish this error is the one which, in the King James Version reads, "The kingdom of heaven is within you." (Luke 17:21) A better translation would be, "The kingdom of heaven is among you," and the passage is thus translated in many versions. The Emphatic Diaglott translation makes it even clearer. It reads, "God's royal majesty is among you." These words were addressed to the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day, and our Lord would hardly say that the kingdom of heaven was within them. But he was the prospective King of kings in his coming kingdom; and even though the time had not come for him to reign, he could say that "God's royal majesty" was among them, or in their midst.

John the Baptist preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and so did Jesus. They simply meant that the preparatory work for the kingdom was beginning, that the King had come, not to begin his reign at once, but to lay down his life to redeem the world from death. Throughout the age since, further preparatory work for the kingdom has been in progress, in that those to be associate rulers with Jesus in his kingdom were being selected and proved worth/. However, the kingdom in "power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30; Luke 21:27) had to wait for the return of the King. To see this great truth is essential to our understanding of the plan of God as a whole.

### **No Longer a Man**

But many who believed that Jesus would return to set up his kingdom have had an erroneous understanding of the manner of his return. They have supposed that he would return as a human, with wounds in his hands and feet and in his side. The Scriptures teach that when Jesus was raised from the dead he was no longer a human, but a powerful divine being "the image of the invisible God." (Col. 1:15, II Cor. 5:16- I Pet. 3:18) This means that by nature Jesus is now invisible. It is this divine Christ who returns to earth at the second advent; hence the fact of his return will have to be recognized otherwise than by seeing him with the natural eye. In Romans 1:20 we read concerning God, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." Here is a key which will help us to understand the significance of the prophecies pertaining to the second coming of Christ. Christ is now invisible to human eyes, even as is the Heavenly Father; hence at his second advent he can be recognized only by the visible things which transpire and which can be identified through the prophetic pages of the divine Word as the "signs" which were to mark his return.

We have another illustration of this in the works of Satan. The Bible teaches that there is a personal Devil, yet no human has ever seen him. But we have all seen the results of his nefarious influence. The Apostle Paul tells us that Satan is "the god of this world," (II Cor. 4:4) the one who "now works in the children of disobedience." And he also explains that Satan is a spirit who is "the prince of the power of the air." (Eph. 2:2) Jesus speaks of Satan as "the prince of this world." (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) If we believe the Bible we must believe that this powerful, invisible being has, throughout the centuries, been exercising control over the affairs of men.

It is the highly exalted, divine, and invisible Jesus who returns to set up his kingdom, and that kingdom will constitute a new world, a new social order. That Christ's second presence would be invisible to human eyes has long been concealed by a mistranslation. As we all know, the Bible was not written originally in the English language; hence we who use the English language must depend upon translations from the original Hebrew of the Old Testament and from the Greek of the New Testament. While in most instances in our English Bibles very little of the exactness of meaning has been lost through mistranslation, there are exceptions in which faulty translations have helped to conceal true and important teachings. As an example of this, we call attention to a Greek word which appears a number of times in the New Testament prophecies pertaining to Christ's second visit to earth. It is the word *parousia*. In our Authorized English Version of the Bible this word is often mistranslated "coming," whereas it should always be translated "presence." Thus the prophetic signs of Christ's second presence

outlined in the prophecies were incorrectly interpreted as signs that his coming was near. This has led to a serious misunderstanding of the manner and purpose of our Lord's return.

When, for example, the disciples inquired of Jesus, "What will be the sign of your coming [parousia, presence]?" (Matt. 24:3) they were not asking how they might know in advance when he would come but how they could know when he had come. In harmony with Romans 1:20 they wanted to know what visible things they were to look for as evidence that the invisible Christ had returned to establish his kingdom.

Archaeological discoveries reveal that the Greek word *parousia* was used in ancient times to describe the visits of kings and emperors to various cities and provinces of their realms. One discovery reveals that taxes to pay the expenses of such a visit were raised by issuing a special *parousia* coin. How appropriate, then, that this word should be used in connection with the visit to earth of the King of kings and Lord of lords! But, as in the case of the earthly rulers whose visits were thus described, so with Jesus, *parousia* does not mean the moment of arrival but covers the entire duration of the visit.

Jesus described the manner of his presence when he said to his disciples, "Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning [Greek *astrape*, bright shining] comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so will also the coming [parousia, presence] of the Son of man be. (Matt. 24: 26, 27) When I return, Jesus is saying, you will not find me hidden away in some secret chamber, as you might find a man or a woman. Rather, you will discern my presence even as you discern the existence of God, and that is by the great things which you ascribe to him.

We behold the sunshine and the rain, warming and watering the earth that it might bring forth and provide for those upon it, and we say that this is evidence that God exists. So, Jesus explains, we will know of his second presence because it will be like a bright shining, similar to the sun which comes out of the east and shines even unto the west.

This suggests the dawning of a new day, and this is what Christ's second presence will mean to the world of mankind. Jesus is prophetically referred to as "the Sun of Righteousness" which arises "with healing in his wings." (Mal. 4:2) Because of the shining of this "Sun," the knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole earth "as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9) From pole to pole that Sun will shine, and upon every continent and the isles of the sea. Its light- and life-giving powers will be felt for good everywhere.

## **Solving World Problems**

There will be no unsolved problems anywhere not taken care of by the bright shining of the Master's presence, for nothing short of an east-to-west dispensation of this glorious Sun's healing rays can fulfill Jesus' own promise concerning the manner and object of his coming. Consider the problem of war. When the kingdom first begins to function, it will find mankind devastated by the ravages of war, revolution, and anarchy. But in due time the Lord will say to the raging nations, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen [Gentiles], I will be exalted in the earth." (Ps. 46:10) It will be then that the nations will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks, and nations will learn war no more." Micah 4:1-4

We hear much these days about "war on poverty." Poverty is indeed one of the major problems in the world. But through the agencies of Christ's kingdom a "feast of fat things" will be made "unto all people, and every man will dwell under his vine and fig tree, and there will be none to molest nor make afraid." (Isa. 25:6; Micah 4:4) We read further concerning this problem that "he [Christ] will judge the poor of the people, he will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.... For he will deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper [the forgotten man]." Ps. 72:4,



The problems of religion will also then be solved. Today earth's millions worship a multiplicity of gods, and even those who attempt to worship the true God are hopelessly divided into factional groups from which there comes a jargon of conflicting claims, dogmas, and doctrines, some even claiming that God is dead. But all this will be changed, for the promise is that the Lord will ...turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. Zeph. 3:9

Then there is the major problem of sickness and death. Unless this problem can be solved, mankind would still need to travel through the valley of the shadow of death. In such an event there could be no lasting peace and happiness anywhere, for every peaceful and happy home would be intermittently blighted by that dread enemy which counts its victims by the millions. But this problem will also be solved through Christ's presence and kingdom.

In the solution of the problem of death none are to be overlooked, for even those who have fallen asleep in death are to be awakened from that sleep. This means that no one will need to lament the fact that Christ's kingdom did not come sooner, before their father, mother, or other dear ones died, because these will all be restored to life. The power of that blessed One who broke up funerals in Judea more than nineteen centuries ago simply by raising the dead to life will again be exercised, not on behalf of a limited few, but for the restoration of all the families of the earth. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Only those who render obedience to the laws of the new kingdom will be saved from death everlastingly. Full obedience will be required, for full enlightenment will be provided. There will be no misunderstanding of the Lord's requirements, all of which will be just and righteous. And those who willfully disobey will be destroyed from among the people. (Acts 3:23) Nothing will be permitted to mar the perfection of God's new world.

The enlightening rays of Christ's presence will fill the earth with a knowledge of the glory of God. This means that all doctrines of devils, all superstitions, all human creeds and dogmas, all human precepts by which men are taught to fear God rather than to love him, all political intrigues, as well as the thousand and one other evils which have plagued a dying world, are to be swept away, and all this replaced by a true knowledge of God and his righteous laws.

With the knowledge of the glory of God filling the earth, there will come also the destruction of all the myriad citadels of sin and vice and crime. As that glorious Sun of Righteousness forces its enlightening and healing rays into the various dens of iniquity, the satanic darkness of these rendezvous of evil will give place to the glorious enlightenment of the new day.

There will not be a nook or corner in the earth where the light from that glorious Sun will not penetrate. The warmth of its healing rays will pervade the slums of our great cities and radiate into the institutions of suffering which we call hospitals. How thankful we are for these hospitals today, but how wonderful it will be when the bright shining of the Master's presence destroys the diseases which make them necessary! The beds of sickness in the cottages of the peasants and also in the palaces of the rich will all be reached. Indeed, the distinctions between the rich and the poor will be dissolved, because all will be made rich, for the promise is that there will be a feast of fat things for all. Isa. 25 6-8

The prospect for the suffering peoples of earth is truly a glorious one. It has been well said that the hopes of the world are as bright as the promises of God, and these are very bright indeed. And not only bright, but sure. How glad we are to know that Christ does not return to destroy the earth but to bless the people with peace, health, and life, and that through the powerful agencies of his kingdom he will fulfill all the good promises of the Bible, that all the families of the earth will truly be blessed.

## SIGNS OF HIS PRESENCE

JESUS' disciples believed that he had come to be the great King and Messiah of the prophecies and that he would establish a kingdom in Jerusalem which would extend its sphere of influence until it embraced the whole world. However, toward the close of Jesus' ministry he began to say things to them which indicated that first he would go away and would return later to set up his kingdom. That he would be put to death was not clear to them, for they were much surprised and discouraged when he was taken from them and crucified.

Having these thoughts in mind, they went to Jesus on the Mount of Olives and said, "Tell us, when these things will be, and what will be the sign of your presence, and of the consummation of the age?" (Matt. 24:3) We have used the Diaglott translation of the disciples' questions because it properly uses the words "presence" and "age," instead of "coming" and "world." They were not asking for signs which would indicate that Jesus would soon return but signs which would denote his actual presence. They also wanted to know about the end of the age, not the end of the world, or earth.

The age comes to an end as a result of the return of the Master; so the signs which would denote the ending of the age would at the same time be signs indicating his presence, and it is from this standpoint that we will examine a portion of Jesus' reply to his disciples' questions. These disciples had recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah, not by his appearance, but by certain signs which accompanied his ministry and presence. They properly expected that this would also be the case when he returned to set up his kingdom, hence their desire to know what the signs would be. Naturally they desired again to be among the favored ones who would recognize his presence. They did not know that his return was to be nearly two thousand years in the future.

### All Flesh Threatened

In reply to his disciples' request for signs which would indicate his second presence, Jesus preached one of his few sermons. It is recorded in the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew. Verses 21 and 22 of chapter 24 present a very revealing sign for us who are living today. We quote: "Then will be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever will be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved."

Today we are living in a time of "great tribulation" such as the human race has never experienced before. It is a tribulation which threatens to destroy "all flesh," just as Jesus indicated in this prophetic sign of his presence and the end of the age. Never before in the experience of mankind has there been a situation like this. There was tremendous destruction of human life during the First and Second World Wars, but during those years of war the total population of the earth continued to increase.

Now the situation is different, for the great powers of earth have nuclear missiles in sufficient quantities to destroy the entire population of the earth several times over, so there is no mistaking the identity of this sign and what it means. But it should be noted that Jesus did not say that "all flesh" would be destroyed. He simply said that if this time of tribulation were allowed to continue, it would lead to the destruction of all flesh. For our encouragement he gave assurance that the tribulation would be shortened, which means that all flesh will not be destroyed.

But this does not nullify the significance of the threat of destruction which is hanging over the world today. In outlining this "sign" of his presence, Jesus actually foretold nearly two thousand years in advance what the wise men of the world are now declaring to be a reality. Thus we not only have a sign of the time in which we are living, but we have an accurate prophecy in the Word of God which increases our confidence in its forecasts pertaining to events still future in the outworking of the Creator's grand design.

## **Israel No Longer Trodden Down**

Another sign which Jesus gave to his disciples pertained to the natural descendants of Abraham, the Israelites. He said, Jerusalem will be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:24) Here Jesus is using Jerusalem to signify the Jewish polity, or nation. At the time Jesus spoke, the Jewish people had already been trodden down by the Gentiles for more than 600 years, or, specifically, since 606 B. C. It was then that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem, and took the Jewish people captive to Babylon. Although seventy years later they were permitted to return to their land and to rebuild Jerusalem, they did not regain their national independence.

Babylon was overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire, which later succumbed to Greece. Then Greece fell before the Roman armies, and Rome became the fourth in that series of Gentile world powers. The Israelites were subject to each of these in turn, and at the time of Jesus were being trodden down by the Roman Empire. And this lack of independence, he said, would continue until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Luke 21:24

This expression, times of the Gentiles, does not refer to the total number of years Gentile nations would exist in the earth but to the period during which Jerusalem would be trodden down by Gentiles. In reality it is, or was, a period of punishment upon the Hebrew people described in the Bible as seven times. This time measurement is given by Moses in a warning to Israel of what the result of continued disobedience to God's Law would be. Certain lesser punishments are mentioned, and then Moses adds:

And if you will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I [God] will punish you seven times more for your sins. Lev. 26:18

This warning of seven times more of punishment is repeated four times. The Scriptures indicate that a symbolic time is a period of 360 years, and seven of these would total 2,520 years. The biblical key to this method of reckoning is given in Ezekiel 4:4-6. We believe that it was this period of 2,520 years which began in 606 B. C., when Israel lost its national independence. If this is correct, then it would end in A. D. 1914. This was the year in which the First World War began. Out of that conflict came the ejection of the Turks from Jerusalem and Palestine by General Allenby, the famous Balfour Declaration, and the opening of the ancient homeland to Jewish refugees and prisoners from all lands.

The Jews were on their way to independence, and while there were temporary setbacks, the rehabilitation of Palestine by the Jews and their migration to their ancient homeland continued. Out of this came the birth of the new State of Israel in 1948. Thus seen, it was in 1914, after 2,520 years of subjugation, that the chain of events began to unfold which led to national independence for this biblical and historic people, proving that the prophetic times of the Gentiles had been fulfilled.

The nation of Israel today is a free nation. No longer are the Israelites without their own government. Israel is a nation among the nations of the world, no longer a vassal to Rome or to any other Gentile power. The new State of Israel is not without its difficulties, but these are the common problems of being free in a topsy-turvy world. Israel is not only free but is a full-fledged member of the United Nations. She is no longer trodden down by the Gentiles. Thus we have another outstanding sign of the Master's presence.

## **Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

In the second chapter of the prophecy of Daniel there is an account of some of the circumstances surrounding the beginning of the period of Gentile supremacy during which the Jewish people were to be trodden down. Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon at that time, and the Lord used a very dramatic way to indicate that with him began the period referred to by Jesus as the times of the Gentiles, which, as we have seen, terminated in A. D. 1914.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which he could not remember upon awakening. He was induced to send for Daniel, a Jewish captive, who was able not only to remind the king of his dream but to interpret it for him. Daniel explained that in his dream the king had seen a humanlike image. This image had a head of gold, breast of silver, thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet and toes of iron mixed with clay. As the dream progressed, the king saw a stone cut out of the mountain without hands; and this stone smote the image on its feet, causing it to fall. After the image fell it was ground to powder, and the wind blew it away as the chaff from a summer threshing floor. Then the stone that smote the image grew until it became a great mountain which filled the whole earth.

Daniel's interpretation of this dream is remarkable, in that it gives an accurate preview of Gentile history beginning with the new Babylonian supremacy, and continuing on down through the centuries even to the present day. In this divine interpretation Daniel identifies the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar as being represented by the head of gold. To the king Daniel said: You, O king, are a king of kings: for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wherever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven has he given into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all. You are this head of gold. Dan. 2:37, 38

Prior to this, God had recognized and favored none but the Jewish nation. But now the Jews had been made subjects of Babylon, and the king of Babylon was recognized by God as representing the first of that long line of Gentile powers who for 2,520 years were to hold the Jews under their control as a subject people. This was the beginning of the times of the Gentiles.

### **Other Kingdoms**

But Daniel did not close his prophecy with his identification of Babylon as the head of gold. He explained further to Nebuchadnezzar that with the downfall of his kingdom there would arise another, an empire represented by the arms and breast of the image, which were of silver. This proved to be the Medo-Persian Empire, which conquered Babylon a few years later. Daniel also told of a third empire which would arise, conquering the Medes and Persians. This was the Grecian Empire and was represented in the image picture by the thighs of brass.

Nor did Daniel stop there. He went on, and foretold the rise of the great military power of Rome. This kingdom, or empire, was represented by the legs of iron, and truly Rome was an iron kingdom. But Daniel did not make the mistake of mentioning a fifth world empire to supplant Rome. Instead, he called attention to the deterioration and divisions of the old Roman Empire, this being represented by the feet and toes of the image, which were part of iron and part of clay. The last remnants of the Roman Empire, as represented in the various states of Europe, continued down to 1914, or to the end of the times of the Gentiles, as mentioned by Jesus in Luke 21:24.

In the king's dream he saw a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, indicating a divine intervention in the affairs of these particular Gentile kingdoms, for this stone was seen to smite the feet of the image, causing it to fall. After it fell it was ground to powder, and the wind carried it away. Then the stone grew into a great mountain that filled the whole earth. Daniel explained this to mean that in the days of these kings will the God of heaven set up a kingdom—that is, in the days of the kings depicted by the toes of the image—the pre-1914 European monarchies.

### **Divine Right of Kings**

Since the various divisions of the old Roman Empire continued until the First World War, it was natural that the ideology of divine right of kings which began with Nebuchadnezzar should remain alive. Prior to the end of the times of the Gentiles, the kings of Europe did claim to rule by divine right. But this viewpoint is no longer accepted. In place of the divine-right kings there are either godless dictators or

rulers who are elected by the people. True, there are a few kings left, but they are powerless in the world today and are no longer flaunting the claim of divine right to rule.

Thus, not only did 1914, the end of the times of the Gentiles, see circumstances arise which led in a few short years to the liberation of the Israelites as a people, but it also witnessed the turn of events which led to the downfall of that system of rulership which had subjected the Jewish people throughout the centuries.

It is well to remember that the time prophecies of the Bible point out the dates for the beginning of the events which they forecast, not the completion of those events. This process of fulfillment is indicated in Daniel's description of what happened to the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream when it was smitten by a stone cut out of the mountain without hands. First it fell, but this was not the full end, for after that it was ground to powder, and subsequently the powdered bits were blown away like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors. We suggest that this is an apt illustration of the gradual disintegration of the pre-1914 social order. And the end is not yet.

### **Paul's Prophecy**

The Apostle Paul gives us further valuable information concerning the development of world events in this, the end of the age. He agrees with Jesus with respect to the destructive trouble which would come upon the world, and explains that it would come as travail upon a woman with child. Travail comes in spasms, with periods of easement between, and Paul explains that this intermittent trouble would be in conjunction with claims of peace and safety. I Thess. 5:1-3

We suggest that the first of these destructive spasms came upon the world in 1914 in that great military holocaust which toppled virtually all of the crowned heads of Europe from their thrones. It is interesting to note in this connection that 1913 was an international peace year. But before the cries of peace and safety had fully died, that great war to end wars broke out. In 1918 the war ended, and an armistice was signed; but while the nations paid lip service to the idea of peace and good will, even sinking a few outmoded battleships, preparations for the next war soon began, and it came upon the world in all its fury in 1939 another spasm of destruction.

There have, of course, been other spasms of trouble. One of these was the great depression of the 1930's. The Korean War was another. Vietnam another. Meanwhile, and as a result of these spasms, the fabric of civilization is being gradually weakened. Creeping inflation is eating at the economic security of even the most powerful nations; and the weaker ones would have succumbed long ago but for American dollars.

### **Nations Gathered**

Another aspect of the great tribulation mentioned by Jesus is foretold in Zephaniah 3:8. This text reads: Wait on me, says the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour my indignation upon them, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth will be devoured with the fire of my jealousy [Hebrew, zeal]. Note in this forecast that the worldwide association of nations is described.

Here is something that is unique to the end of the age. The 1914 World War saw the first global gathering of nations for military purposes. This is what made it a World War. Following that war there came the League of Nations another gathering, but for peaceful purposes. It was hoped that this association of nations could maintain lasting peace, but it failed.

Then came another gathering of nations for military purposes, and like the first one, it was worldwide. It was followed by the United Nations. And today there are little associations of nations, with interests

crisscrossing each other. The Lord foretold that eventually this would lead to the devouring of the symbolic earth with the fire of his zeal. Following this, the Lord will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon him to serve him with one consent. Zeph. 3: 9

The fire of God's zeal is in reality the great time of trouble, or tribulation, with which the present social order is even now being destroyed. It does not indicate that God is vindictive, but it does mean that before the long-promised messianic kingdom can be set up in the earth Satan's social order must be swept away; and this is accomplished by God's zeal, which will brook no interference, now that the due time in his grand design has arrived for the establishment of Christ's kingdom.

In a prophecy of the birth of Jesus and the purpose of his birth, recorded in Isaiah 9:6, 7, Jesus is depicted in his role of The Prince of Peace. This prophecy declares that of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, and then the prophecy concludes with these reassuring words The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. It is the zeal of the Lord of hosts that is accomplishing every detail of his grand design, and we rejoice to know that there will be no miscarriage of his plans and purposes.

### **Increase of Knowledge**

What Jesus spoke of as a great tribulation with which the age would end Daniel described as a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation. (Dan. 12:1) In the 4th verse of this same chapter we are informed that in the time of the end, that is, in the end of the age, many would run to and fro in the earth, and knowledge would be increased. It has been given to our generation also to witness the fulfillment of this prophecy. We have suddenly become a world of travelers, because there has come an unprecedented increase of knowledge, which has led to the invention of new modes of travel.

The younger members of the present generation are inclined to forget that all our wonderful blessings of invention and travel are peculiar to this generation. Our grandparents knew little or nothing about them. In the early days of railroads many otherwise intelligent people claimed that they were inventions of the Devil to carry immortal souls down to hell. But today the highest speeds of travel by railroad are slow as compared with the speed of travel by jet planes.

We mention only briefly the foretold increase of knowledge and rapid travel. The facts themselves as they unfold before us worldwide speak louder and more convincingly than words. It is another sign of our Lord's presence and the end of the age. How thankful we are that the end of the present age, or of Satan's world, signals the incoming of a new age of peace and blessing for the world. How glad we are that according to God's grand design Christ does not return to destroy the earth but to fill it with a knowledge of God's glory! So we hail his presence as the Day Star which has appeared to those who, through faith in God's promises and prophecies, are able to discern his presence and know that soon, as the glorious Sun of Righteousness, he will rise with healing in his wings. II Pet. 1:19; Mal. 4:2

### Chapter 12

## **HELL GIVES UP ITS DEAD**

IN REVELATION 20:13 we read that death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them. This is one of the ways in which the Bible describes the resurrection of the dead. The Apostle Paul, quoting an Old Testament prophecy concerning the resurrection of Jesus, wrote that he had led a multitude of captives. (Eph. 4:8, margin) Here we have the dead described as captives and their awakening as a release from captivity. Daniel 12:2 describes the dead as sleeping in the dust of the earth, and their coming forth as an awakening from sleep. Moses describes the awakening of the dead as a returning from destruction. Ps. 90:3

According to the traditions of the Dark Ages, hell was a place from which there would be no return, an abode in which, moreover, there would be eternal suffering. But this is not in agreement with the Bible. As the Apostle John wrote, hell will deliver up its dead. (Rev. 20:13 ) This is a flat contradiction of the tradition that hell is a place of eternal torment. But to appreciate the full beauty of the Bible's teachings on this subject it is essential that we examine more of its testimony on the topic of hell.

Just what is the hell that is taught in the Bible? To answer this question satisfactorily it is important to know that the English word 'hell' as used in the Bible is a translation of the Hebrew in the Old Testament and of the Greek in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word from which hell is translated is sheol. This word appears sixty-five times in the Old Testament. Thirty-one times it is translated 'grave', thirty-one times 'hell', and three times 'pit'. This variation of translation has helped to conceal what the Bible hell really is.

In Genesis 37:35 the word sheol appears for the first time in the Bible. It is used by the faithful patriarch, Jacob. His son Joseph had been sold into slavery in Egypt, and Jacob's other sons had deceived their father into believing that Joseph was dead. Mourning over the supposed death of Joseph, Jacob said, 'I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.' Here sheol is translated 'grave'. Had it been translated 'hell', as it is thirty-one times in the Old Testament, the reader would have known that Jacob, a faithful servant of God, expected to go to hell when he died, and from this he would also know that hell is not a place of torment for sinners, or for anyone else.

### **No Knowledge in Hell**

In Ecclesiastes 9:10 this same Hebrew word sheol is again used and is translated 'grave', which in reality is the Bible hell. The text reads, 'Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave [sheol, the Bible hell], where you are going.' Here is a definite statement revealing that sheol is a state of unconsciousness, agreeing with the 5th verse of the same chapter, which informs us that 'the dead know not anything.'

The Prophet Job understood this, and in a period of extreme suffering asked the Lord to let him die. Job prayed, 'O that you would hide me in the grave [sheol, hell], ...until your wrath be past. (Job 14:13 ) Suffering as he was, Job surely would not ask God to let him go to a place where he would suffer even more and where his torture would last forever. No, Job wanted release from suffering, so he asked God to let him go to sheol, to hell.'

According to tradition, hell is a place where God visits his wrath upon sinners, but in Job we have a righteous man asking to go to hell to escape God's wrath. What did he mean? The wrath of God here referred to by Job is the curse of death, which came upon all mankind through original sin. David referred to it as God's 'anger', and assures us that it endures but for a moment, and added, 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.' Ps. 30:5

Knowing that God's wrath would not continue forever upon the human race, Job prayed for release from it until it was past. Job knew that then he would be restored to life. He said, 'If a man die, will he live again? All the days of my appointed time [in death] will I wait, till my change [from death to life] come. You will call, and I will answer You :You will have a desire to the work of Your hands. (Job 14:14, 15) Here we have definite assurance that those who go into the Bible hell do not remain there, that a time will come when hell will give up its dead.'

### **Hell Destroyed**

Hosea 13:14 reads, 'I [the Lord] will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be your plagues; O grave, I will be your destruction: repentance will be hid from my eyes. Here 'grave' is again a translation of the Hebrew word sheol, the Bible hell. In this promise the

Lord reveals his intention of destroying sheol. He promises to ransom the people from the power of hell. This is a reference to God's grand design of redemption through Jesus. The destruction of hell implies the release of its prisoners of death. This is brought about by virtue of the fact that Jesus took the sinner's place in death.

In Psalm 16:10 Jesus' soul is indicated as being in hell, and Jesus' own confidence is expressed that he would not be allowed to remain in hell. In the New Testament the Apostle Peter, speaking on the Day of Pentecost concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus, quotes this promise of Jesus' resurrection and uses the Greek word *hades* to translate the Hebrew word *sheol*. Thus we know that *hades* in the New Testament has the same meaning as *sheol* in the Old.

Jesus' soul, his being, went into hell (death, the grave) when he died. He went to hell to take the sinner's place in hell. Isaiah describes this as a pouring out of his soul unto death. (Isa. 53:12) Thus he provided redemption, or a ransom from the power of death; and in God's due time this leads to a release of all mankind from death, or hell. Confirming this, Jesus said, "I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Rev. 1:18) Jesus will use the keys of hell to unlock its doors and set its prisoners free.

Jesus forecast the opening of the gates of hell in a statement to Peter. He said to him, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18) The church, as we have seen, is a company of faithful followers of the Master who are called out from the world to be associated with him in the future work of blessing the world. These are, together with Jesus their Head, the Seed of Abraham which will be God's instrument in blessing all the families of the earth Gal. 3:8, 16, 27-29

But the vast majority of the people to be blessed through Christ and the church are asleep in death. They are in the Bible hell. In order to receive the promised blessing of life, they must be awakened from death. The gates of hell must be opened for them. Jesus has the keys of hell, and he, together with his church, will open the gates of hell and set its captives free. The gates will not prevail against the accomplishment of the divine purpose through the church. Hell will give up its dead.

We are not here attempting a complete study of the hell subject as set forth in the Bible. In this discussion we are merely calling attention to the fact that, according to the Bible, hell is the condition or state of death, and that the dead are to be restored to life, as clearly stated in Revelation 20:13.

## **The Resurrection**

It is this great feature of the divine plan that is described in the Bible as the resurrection of the dead. Paul said that there would be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. (Acts 24:15) He explains in I Corinthians, chapter 15, that Jesus was the firstfruits of the resurrection, and that as a result of his resurrection all mankind are to be brought forth from death. He said, "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ will all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." vss. 20-23

While Jesus is THE firstfruits of the resurrection, those who will be associated with him are here also described by Paul as a firstfruits class. In Revelation 20:4, 6 these are shown as coming forth in the first resurrection to live and reign with Christ a thousand years. Like Jesus, these also will be highly exalted to the divine nature, and to immortality. Herein is the hope of immortality as set forth in the Word of God. Man is not inherently immortal, but those who qualify to live and reign with Christ will be given immortality in the resurrection.



Paul mentions this in I Corinthians 15:53, saying, This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. Obviously, if we possess immortality now, it could not be given to us as a reward in the resurrection. The promise of immortality is not made to all mankind but only to those who follow faithfully in the footsteps of Jesus those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life. Rom. 2:7

Those who come forth in the first resurrection are among the just referred to by Paul in Acts 24:15. Another group of the just will be those ancient servants of God who lived and died prior to our Lord's first advent. These are often referred to as the Ancient Worthies. Paul mentions a number of them in the 11th chapter of Hebrews and shows that they will be made perfect in what he describes as a better resurrection. (vss. 35, 40) These, as we have seen, will be the human representatives of the divine Christ, made up of Jesus and his church.

### **The General Resurrection**

Finally, in the outworking of God's grand design, when all the rulers and servants who will participate in Christ's kingdom are brought forth from death, including a great multitude referred to in Revelation 7:9, 10, and when the messianic kingdom is established and operative, the awakening of the remainder of the dead world of mankind will begin. This we might refer to as the general resurrection. The great work of the general resurrection will occupy much of the thousand years of Christ's kingdom.

One of the promises of the general resurrection is found in Isaiah 35:10. This text reads: The ransomed of the Lord will return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they will obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. The ransomed of the Lord includes all mankind, for, as Paul wrote, Jesus gave himself a ransom for all. (I Tim. 2:3-6) These will return from death, the Bible hell.

As the ransomed of the Lord return from death they will, as the text states, come to Zion. Zion is one of the symbols of the kingdom of Christ which is used in the Bible, representing particularly the spiritual phase of the kingdom. In Revelation 14:1 Jesus and his faithful followers who will reign with him are shown together on Mount Zion. So, the ransomed of the Lord coming to Zion will mean their recognition of the messianic kingdom authority in the earth. It will be through their obedience to the laws of this kingdom that they will obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Ezekiel 16:53 sets forth another assurance pertaining to the general resurrection. This promise mentions the people of Sodom and of Samaria, as well as those Israelites who did not qualify for the better resurrection. We quote, When I will bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of your captives in the midst of them. Here is one of the many instances in which the awakening of the dead is likened to the freeing of captives from a prison. In this case the great prison is the condition of death, which is the Bible hell.

In Jeremiah 48:47 the Moabites are assured that in the latter days they will be brought forth from their captivity in death. In the last verse of the next chapter a similar promise is made to the Elamites. Both the Moabites and the Elamites were ungodly people and are among the unjust spoken of by Paul who are to be resurrected from the dead. Acts 24:15

### **“The Latter Days”**

In the two promises just mentioned, we are informed that the resurrection is to take place in the latter days. The reference here is to the time when the grand design of the Creator for the restoration of the human race to life is being brought to a consummation. In the New Testament, Martha, the sister of Mary, used a similar expression when referring to the time of the resurrection. Her brother Lazarus had died,

and Jesus said to her that he would live again. Martha replied, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. John 11:24

In John 5:28, 29 Jesus gives us another promise of the resurrection: Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves will hear his voice, and will come forth; they that have done good [the just], unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil [the unjust], unto the resurrection of judgment. (Revised Version) Here it is indicated that in the resurrection the unjust will be judged. Note that those who have done evil are not awakened from death to be tormented.

### **Our Only Hope**

No other religion in the world except the religion of the Bible holds out the hope of the resurrection of the dead. One very good reason for this is that all other religions teach that death is not a reality. If, as the claim is, there is no death, then there could be no resurrection of the dead, for no one is dead. The Bible, on the other hand, presents the truth that death is a reality and that mankind is dying because of sin.

The wages of sin is death, wrote Paul, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 6:23) This gift of life through Christ reaches the people through a resurrection, and except for this resurrection, all the dead would remain in death. Paul stated it very emphatically when he wrote, If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. I Cor. 15:16-18

We are thankful for the many assurances of the Bible that there will be a resurrection of the dead; that hell will give up its prisoners of death; that those held in captivity to death are to be released. These assurances should be of great comfort to all who have lost loved ones in death and who has not been bereaved in this way?

Think of the mothers who have lost their children in death. The Bible gives us a special promise concerning these. We quote: Thus says the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus says the Lord; Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work will be rewarded, says the Lord; and they will come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in your end. says the Lord, that your children will come again to their own border. Jer. 31 : 15-17

Here the condition of death, the Bible hell, is described as the land of the enemy. Paul refers to death as an enemy, an enemy which is to be destroyed by the reign of Christ. (I Cor. 15:25, 26) How good to realize that all the prisoners of death will no longer be incarcerated behind its darkened and gloomy walls, that the children, and all mankind, will return from this land of the enemy !

There is hope in your end, the Lord said to mothers whose children have died. While our beloved dead are now missed and lamented, this is not the end for them, for we are given a hope that they will come again to their own border. They will cross over the border from the land of death to the land of the living, which, as far as mankind in general is concerned, the young and the old, will be here on the earth as humans. The young will then mature, and the old will renew their youth. Eventually the willing and obedient of all mankind will be restored to the original perfection lost through the sin of our first parents, with pain and death no longer afflicting them. This is the glorious prospect held out to us in the Bible concerning the sin-sick and suffering world. And what a glorious prospect it is:

Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness will be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay not even the fear

of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete. The Divine Plan of the Ages. (See Rev. 21:4)

Chapter 13

## **TIMES OF RESTITUTION**

SHORTLY after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter and John visited the temple in Jerusalem, where they came into contact with a man lame from his mother's womb. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked alms of them. Peter, fastening his eyes on him with John, said, Look on us. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. Then Peter took this man by the hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. Acts 3:1-8

We read that as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. (vs. 11) It is not surprising that the people wondered, for here was a man who they knew had been unable to walk from the time of his birth but who was suddenly walking and leaping and praising God.

Peter observed the situation and said to the people: You men of Israel, why marvel you at this? or why do you look so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his Son Jesus; whom you delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God has raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know; yea, the faith which is by him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I tell you that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he has so fulfilled. vss. 12-18

Thus Peter set squarely before his Jewish audience the fact that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead, and that it was through faith in his name that the lame man had been given soundness of limb. Then Peter presented a marvelously comprehensive lesson from this incident of divine healing, a lesson which embraces the great objective in the Creator's design for the redemption of mankind from sin and death, and the restoration of all the willing and obedient to perfect health and everlasting life.

Peter introduced this lesson by the expression, Repent you therefore. No one can receive of God's grace through Christ without repentance. In Peter's pentecostal sermon his listeners were pricked in their heart, (Acts 2:37) and asked what they could do. To these Peter said also that they should repent; and, noting that they were already in the attitude of repentance, he bid them to be baptized. But the audience which witnessed the healing of the lame man seemingly did not show this same attitude. The record does not say that they were pricked in the heart, so Peter simply outlined to them their future prospects as subjects in the kingdom of Christ. He said, Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord; and he will send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. vss. 19-21

Restitution means restoration or, as some translations state it, reconstitution. Something had been lost. One of the evidences of that loss was the condition of the lame man who through faith in Jesus had been restored to health; and Peter explained that following the second coming of Christ there would be times of restitution of all things. Jesus had healed a few of the sick in Israel during the short period of his ministry, and now Peter and John had restored another to health. But the people were not to suppose that these token blessings represented God's total design for the sin-cursed and dying race, for later in his great plan there would be times of restitution of all things.

What was lost because of sin? The answer to this question is revealed in the Genesis account of the creation and fall of man. It was life that was lost through sin. The penalty, "You will surely die," fell upon our first parents and their progeny in tragic reality. Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden to die. Their descendants have continued ever since to die. With the dying process came sickness and pain of every conceivable kind. Some have become blind, some deaf, some are not able to speak, others have been unable to walk. Millions have finished their miserable lives in institutions for the insane. Even the healthiest of humans grow old and die.

In the loss of life man also lost his God-given dominion over the earth and the lower earthly creations. (Gen. 1:28) The Prophet David wrote: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You care for him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passes through the paths of the seas." Ps. 8:3-8

The Apostle Paul quoted this prophecy in the second chapter of Hebrews, and then observed, "But now we see not yet all things put under him [man]. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (vss. 8-10) David asked, "What is man ...that You visit him?" This visit is in the person of Jesus, who came at his first advent to redeem man from death. So Paul explained that while we do not yet see all things put under man, which was the Creator's original design for him, we do see that the divine plan is progressing toward that end. We see that Jesus has visited this earthly domain and has given his life that man might be released from the penalty of death which fell upon him in Eden.

## **The Second Visit**

But, as the Scriptures reveal, it is in the plan of God for Christ to visit the earth a second time, not to die again, but to rule and, through his rulership, to restore to man that which he provided through his death at his first advent. That is why Peter wrote concerning Christ, "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things." This blessed hope for mankind is based upon the sure foundation of God's promises—promises which have been ratified by the blood of Christ. Peter explained that the times of restitution had been spoken by the mouth of all God's prophets since the world began.

Having made this sweeping statement concerning the restitution testimony of all God's holy prophets, Peter quoted an example of these prophecies in Acts 3:22: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet will the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him will you hear in all things whatsoever he will say unto you." This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 18:15. The implications of this prophecy are astounding, for the Lord instructed Moses to say unto the Israelites of that day, who were not pleasing to the Lord, that a Prophet would be raised up to them from among their brethren (a later generation) and that they would be given an opportunity to hear and obey that Prophet.

According to Peter's inspired explanation, this prophecy is to be fulfilled by Christ during the times of restitution of all things. This means that the Israelites of Moses' day will have to be awakened from the sleep of death in order to have the opportunity of obeying this foretold Prophet. It means, therefore, that

their eternal destiny was not fixed at death, but that in God's due time they will have an opportunity to participate in restitution blessings.

Peter explained further that in the times of restitution those who do not hear that Prophet will be destroyed from among the people. (Acts 3:23) This reveals how different conditions will then be from what they are now or ever have been in the past. At no time in human history has anyone been able to escape death by believing and serving God. Believers and unbelievers, the righteous and the unrighteous, have succumbed alike to the ravages of death. But in the times of restitution only those who disbelieve and disobey will be destroyed from among the people. All others will continue to live and, if they finally prove faithful, will enjoy perfect and everlasting human life.

### **The Covenant with Abraham**

In telling his Jewish audience about the times of restitution foretold by all God's prophets, Peter also said: You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed. (vs. 25) God's promise to Abraham was, as indicated by Peter, one of the assurances of the times of restitution.

God said to Abraham, In your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 22:18) The Apostle Paul refers to this promise and explains that Jesus is the Seed referred to by God. (Gal. 3:8, 16) Paul also explains that associated with Jesus as that promised Seed will be his footstep followers, those who, during the present age, suffer and die with him. (Gal. 3:27-29) It was necessary that this larger Seed be developed before the promised blessing of the people as a whole could flow out to them. This has been the work of the age in God's plan which separates the first and the second visits of Jesus. There are evidences that this work is now nearly completed; therefore the blessing of all the families of the earth will soon commence.

As we have seen, that blessing will be a restoration to the life and dominion forfeited by Adam when he transgressed God's law. As Peter explained, the times of restitution were foretold by all God's prophets. In a marvelous prayer to Jehovah, Moses said, You turn man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men. (Ps. 90:3) God turned man to destruction by pronouncing the sentence of death. He provided for his return from death through the redemptive work of Christ; and through Christ, during the times of restitution, God will say, Return [from death] you children of men.

The prophetess Hannah said, The Lord kills, and makes alive: he brings down to the grave, and brings up. (I Sam. 2:6) Again, it was the death sentence, inflicted on account of sin, that led to death; and it will be the grace of God through Christ that will result in mankind's being made alive during the times of restitution. In this text it is the Hebrew word sheol that is translated grave. This is the Hebrew word in the Old Testament which is also translated hell. Thus we have the assurance that those who are in the Bible hell are to be released. (Rev. 20:13) This is an assurance that the future of humanity is not to be one of torment but of life and happiness, as the willing and obedient are restored to human perfection in an earthly paradise.

### **To Live Again**

The Prophet Job expected to live again here on the earth. He wrote: If a man die, will he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait [in death], till my change [from death to life] come. You will call, and I will answer You: You will have a desire to the work of Your hands. (Job 14:14,15) Man is the work of God's hand. He was created in God's image. Through the thousands of years since creation, that divine image has become greatly blurred, for through all this time man has been a falling creature. But in the times of restitution, because God has a desire unto the work of his hand, he will restore man to his original perfection, and the image of God will be reflected in him as it was in the beginning.

### **Tears Wiped Away**

Tears have been a symbol of the sorrow and suffering experienced by mankind throughout the reign of sin and death; but in one of his prophecies of restitution Isaiah wrote that God would swallow up death in victory and that the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces. (Isa. 25:8) What a happy experience is waiting for the world during and after the times of restitution of all things!

Isaiah enlarged further upon this in the 35th chapter of his prophecy. There we read that blind eyes will be opened, and that deaf ears will be unstopped. Then will the lame man leap as an hart, he wrote, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness will waters break out, and streams in the desert. An highway will be there, and a way, and it will be called the way of holiness. (vss.5,6,8) This highway is the return road from death, and over it, symbolically speaking, the teeming (millions of the adamic race, guided and helped by the Lord, will make their way back to the perfection that was lost in Eden.

Writing further concerning this highway which will lead to holiness and perfection, Isaiah explained: No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast will go up thereon, it will not be found there; but the redeemed will walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord will return [from death], ...with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they will obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. vss. 9, 10

The principal lion abroad in the earth during the dark night of sin and death has been the Devil. The Apostle Peter referred to him as a roaring lion who is ever seeking whom he may devour. (I Pet. 5:8) But during the coming times of restitution Satan will be bound (Rev. 20:2); and therefore this great lion of opposition to God and to his laws of righteousness will not be able to deceive and interfere with those who are traveling over the symbolic highway on their way back to perfection of mind, heart, and body, and to everlasting life.

There are other lions and ravenous beasts which lurk about at the present time to hinder, frighten, and discourage those who would serve the Lord. There is the lion of strong drink, and the ravenous beast of adverse public opinion, and, of course, many others. The Scriptures assure us that in the times of restitution nothing will be permitted to hurt nor destroy. Isa. 11:9

Isaiah wrote, The ransomed of the Lord will return. Jesus gave himself a ransom for all, Paul explained. (I Tim. 2:3-6) This means that all mankind will return from death and progress over the highway to perfection during that glorious period of restitution. They will return with joy and singing, for of that time we are assured that sorrow and crying will pass away. (Rev. 21:4) This means that all the present causes for sorrow will be removed; and chief among these causes is death itself, which will be destroyed.

Concerning the times of restitution, Isaiah also wrote: They will build houses, and inhabit them; and they will plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They will not build, and another inhabit; they will not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and my elect will make them long enjoy the work of their hands [margin].... And it will come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the bullock: and dust will be the serpent's meat. They will not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom], saith the Lord. Isa. 65:21-25

In this beautiful picture of peace and goodwill we are reminded that when man was created he was given dominion over the animals, and without doubt that dominion will be restored during the times of restitution of all things. This, too, will add to the joy and fullness of life which mankind will experience in that glorious new day of restoration when the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in his wings. Mal. 4 : 2 ; Matt. 13 : 43

**In the Inward Part**

Through the Prophet Jeremiah, the Lord gave us another blessed assurance of restitution for mankind. The promise specifically names the Jewish people, but the Scriptures clearly show that all mankind will be included. We read: Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this will be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they will all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Jer. 31 :31-34

Through Moses, who served as mediator, God entered into a covenant with the Israelites at Mount Sinai. The Law of that covenant was written on tables of stone. The covenant promised life to the Israelites if they would be wholly obedient to its laws. But they did not obey, so they failed to gain life. In God's promise of the New Covenant, he explains that its law will be put in their inward parts and will be written in their hearts, rather than on tables of stone. This means a restoration to the fullness of the original image of God in which man was created. In other words, this is another of God's promises of restitution.

The Lord assures us that when this covenant is fully made with the people all will know him; hence the dissemination of the truth concerning him will no longer be necessary. When we think of the confusion concerning God that is in the minds of the people today, how thankful we should be that it will not continue forever. A glad new day of enlightenment is in prospect for the sinned against and benighted world of mankind!

When the New Covenant is fully made, the whole world will be at peace with God and at peace with one another. Only those who refuse to accept the provision for reconciliation through Christ, which the Creator in his love has made for them, will fail to gain the available blessings of that time. Peter explained that these will be destroyed from among the people. (Acts 3:23) Then will be fulfilled that wonderful picture painted for us in Revelation 5 :13, which reads: And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, ...and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

#### Chapter 14

### **THE WORLD'S COMING JUDGMENT DAY**

He [God] hath appointed a day, In the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Actn 17:31

IN THE minds of many the coming day of judgment is to be a period of twenty-four hours, in which the righteous and the unrighteous will be summoned before a judgment seat occupied by Jesus to hear their eternal fate declared. According to this tradition the righteous will be sent to heaven and the unrighteous to a place of torment. Since, as history indicates, the vast majority of the human race have been unbelievers, for whom it is thought that the judgment day will be one of terror, it is frequently spoken of as doomsday. However, the Bible does not support this view.

Let us repeat: This conception of the world's coming judgment day is merely a tradition, another of those misconceptions handed down to us from the Dark Ages. The judgment day which the Bible describes is a

period of one thousand years, during which mankind in general will be on probation for the purpose of proving their worthiness or unworthiness of everlasting life here on the earth.

### **A Past Judgment Day**

The need for the world's future judgment day arose more than six thousand years ago, at the time when our first parents were tested in the Garden of Eden. They failed under that test and came under condemnation to death. This condemnation was passed on to their children, and thus Adam and his descendants became a dying race. Paul wrote: By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Rom. 5:12

When Jesus came he explained that he had not come to condemn the world, but that the world through him might have life. (John 3:17) On this point Paul wrote: As by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one will many be made righteous. Rom. 5:18, 19

The life provided by the ransom sacrifice of Christ is not thrust upon anyone. It is obtainable only upon the basis of acceptance and obedience. At the present time this is upon the basis of faith, and those who receive it are called upon to lay down their lives in sacrifice, even as Jesus did. Few, indeed, have been willing to meet these rigid conditions of discipleship. In the first place, the vast majority have never had an opportunity really to know about Christ in an understandable manner. Those who died prior to the first advent had no opportunity to believe on him, and the millions in the heathen world since have likewise had no chance to know him and accept the provisions of divine love available through him and his work of redemption.

### **God's Wrath Manifested**

Paul said that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ...unrighteousness. (Rom. 1:18) This does not mean that God is vindictive. It is a reference, rather, to the death condemnation, which came upon our first parents because of their failure to obey God's law, and to the manner in which it is manifested in their children, the human race.

This death condemnation is indeed visible on every hand. We see evidences of it in every graveyard, in every undertaker's sign, in every doctor's sign, in every hospital; and we experience it in every ache and every pain. The Bible speaks of this death condemnation as an evidence of God's anger, but it also tells us that this anger endures but for a moment, then adds, Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Ps. 30:55

This foretold morning of joy is in reality the morning of the world's coming thousand-year judgment day. This coming new day is to be one of enlightenment, during which all will have a full opportunity to know the Lord. The people will then be on probation to determine whether or not they will, under those favorable conditions, turn to the Lord in belief and obedience and thus receive the provision of life made for them through Jesus, their Redeemer.

### **To Learn Righteousness**

Isaiah 26:9 declares that when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants will learn righteousness. This educational program is essential if the world of mankind is to have a full opportunity to know the Lord and to know his will concerning them. In the future judgment day the people will not be judged in their ignorance but upon the basis of an understanding of the provisions of divine grace made for them through Christ.



There is no salvation outside of Christ, but one must know Christ in order to believe on him. Paul wrote, Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how will they believe in him of whom they have not heard? (Rom. 10:13, 14) The purpose of the judgment day is to enlighten the world so that they may know and believe and obey.

In a glowing description of the people's rejoicing during the judgment day, the psalmist informs us that the Lord will judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. (Ps. 96:10-13) This is just another way of saying that the people will be judged upon the basis of the truth which will then be revealed to them—the truth concerning the provision of life made for them through the death of Jesus, and the Lord's requirements of belief and obedience.

Through another of his prophets the Lord declares, Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. (Zeph. 3:9) This text shows that the enlightenment of the people will lead to their united worship and service of the Lord. No longer will contradictory creeds and the influence of false gods hinder the people from knowing the true God and intelligently serving him.

### **Jesus' Testimony**

Jesus said: I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same will judge him in the last day. (John 12:46-48) The expressions last day and latter days are used a number of times in the Bible to describe the period of time when Christ is reigning, when the dead are being awakened from the sleep of death and when the world in general is being enlightened and given an opportunity to believe, obey, and live forever. (I Tim. 2:4) It is a period of a thousand years.

And here Jesus informs us that in this prophetic last day his word, or teachings, will be the basis upon which the people will be judged. This agrees with the other testimony of the Scriptures which we have examined indicating that the future judgment day of the world will be a time of enlightenment, when the people will learn the real truth concerning the Creator's grand design for their eternal blessing.

### **Books Opened**

This fact is further confirmed in Revelation 20:12, where the Apostle John says: I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. This is, of course, symbolic language. It does not mean that all the millions of the dead will literally stand before God. The word stand is here used in much the same way as it is today when we say that one has a standing in court.

When our first parents transgressed God's law they lost their standing before God, and without his favor they could not continue to live. They died, and so did their progeny. But God, in his love, provided redemption through Christ Jesus, and during the future judgment day all will be awakened from the sleep of death for the purpose of being judged. Through Christ they will then have a standing before God, or will stand before him, as John explains. The original condemnation will have been lifted.

And in this position they will be judged by the things contained in the books which will then be opened. Many suppose that those books contain a record of the past lives of the people. But this is not the thought at all. The Lord knows that upon the basis of their past lives these dead, small and great would not be found worthy of everlasting life. The books contain the truth by which the people are to be judged.

This is the truth concerning Jesus and his work of redemption. It is also the truth concerning God's standards of righteousness to which all worthy of life must adhere. It is the pure language which will be turned to the people at that time. It is the words, or teachings, of Jesus, which he said would judge the people in the last day. No longer will the world be shrouded in heathen and other forms of darkness.

The greatest cause of darkness and superstition in the world today is the deceptive influence of Satan. But we are assured that Satan, who has deceived all nations, will be bound during that thousand-year judgment day bound that he may deceive the nations no more. (Rev. 20: 1- 3) With the light of God's truth flooding the earth, every individual will know that only by accepting Christ as his Redeemer and then obeying the laws of the messianic kingdom can he gain eternal life.

### **The Book of Life**

The thought of attaining life in the judgment day is symbolized in Revelation 20:12 by a book of life in which the names of the worthy ones are written. Like the books of knowledge, the book of life is also said to be opened at that time. Clearly the thought of the entire text is that the people will be enlightened, and upon the basis of their response to this enlightenment they will be judged. If their response, their works, are favorable, their names will be placed in the book of life, and they will be on their way to everlasting life.

This is a book of human life, and during that future period of probation, those who prove worthy of having their names entered and remain therein will live on the earth as humans forever not imperfect, not afflicted with disease and pain, but restored to the perfection which Adam lost when he transgressed God's law in the Garden of Eden. Revelation 21:4 declares of the culmination of that future day of blessing that there will be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither will there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

### **Associate Judges**

The future judgment day of the world will not be for the purpose of determining who are Christians and who are not, for the faithful followers of Jesus will already have passed through their trial, or judgment period, and proved worthy of glory and honor and immortality. (Rom. 2:7) These will be associated with Jesus in the work of judging the world of mankind in general. Paul wrote, Do ye not know that the saints will judge the world? (I Cor. 6:2) These will be the angels (Greek, messengers) who will be with Jesus in his judgment throne of glory when all nations are being judged by him, as stated in The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. Matt. 25:31-46

In this parable those during the future judgment day who qualify for everlasting life are symbolized by sheep, while those who do not thus qualify are referred to symbolically as goats. The sheep are shown to be those who are motivated by a loving interest in their fellows and thus enter into the spirit of that new day, while the goats are those who continue, even under those favorable conditions, to pursue their selfish ways. The parable indicates that there will be such a class of willful sinners. These are the ones who Peter said would be destroyed from among the people. Acts 3 :23

Those who, through obedience to the spirit of the open books, manifest the spirit of love, will, as Jesus said, go away ...into life eternal, while the wicked will go into everlasting punishment, symbolized in the parable by the destructive element of fire. Many have misinterpreted the statement everlasting punishment to mean eternal torture, but this is not the correct thought. The punishment, or wages of sin, is death. If the death is eternal, which it will be in the case of willful sinners, then it will be everlasting punishment or, as the Greek text puts it, an everlasting cutting off.

In this parable Jesus says to the sheep class, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (vs. 34) This is the kingdom, or dominion, that was given to our first parents when they were created. It was the dominion over the earth and over the lower forms of creation on the earth. The Genesis record reads: God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (Gen. :26) This is the kingdom that was given to mankind in the beginning, and this is the kingdom that will be restored to the willing and obedient at the close of the world s thousand-year judgment day.

### **“Not Yet”**

David wrote concerning man, Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands. Paul quotes this, and adds: We see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (Ps. 8:6; Heb. 2:8, 9) Thus Paul explains that the death of Jesus provided for the restoration of man s life and dominion.

And it is Jesus who, in his Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, explains when man s lost dominion will be restored; that it will be at the close of the world s judgment day, when he will say to those proven righteous at that time, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. When this great event in the plan of God is accomplished, none will need to say, as Paul did, that we see not yet all things put under man, for all will then know that the grand design of the Creator through Christ has been fulfilled and that all things have been put under man, for his lost dominion will have been restored.

### **Good and Evil**

The sin of our first parents consisted in their eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 2:9) The fact that God planted this tree together with the others in the Garden of Eden suggests that he desired his perfect human creatures to have an understanding of both good and evil. That he made eating of the fruit of this tree a test of obedience indicates his foreknowledge of the fact that this knowledge could be acquired only by experience.

God informed Adam that disobedience would lead to death. (Gen. 2:17) He knew that his human creation would experience much evil as a result of disobedience. For more than six thousand years the world has been filled with sickness, sorrow, and death. Truly all have received an experimental knowledge of evil and its terrible consequences, and this has come about as a result of that original act of disobedience in Eden the partaking-of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

-But during all this time mankind has had little opportunity to learn about good and its results. True, probably most people in every generation have experienced moments, perhaps days, or even a few years, of relative happiness, but for the most part the dying human race has continued to groan under the weight of sin and death. Man has increased this suffering by his inhumanity to man, for selfishness in all its ugly forms has continued to plague the human race from Eden until now.

But this situation will change with the establishment of Christ s kingdom. Under the laws of that kingdom evil will be restrained, death will be destroyed, and the dead will be restored to life. Then, for the first time in a universal way, the human race will experience good. And then they will be in a position to judge upon the basis of actual experience whether to choose evil and die, or to choose good and live.

This is the divine purpose in the permission of evil. God did not wish his human creatures to be like robots, obeying him because they had no choice to do otherwise. He wanted them to obey and serve him

because they delighted to and because they realized upon the basis of a full knowledge of the issues involved that this was the only right thing to do.

And it is this willing desire to serve the Creator that will be manifested by the restored human race at the close of the thousand-year day of judgment. The people will then know the Lord and appreciate the advantages of being in harmony with him. They will have learned fully of his love in providing redemption and salvation through Christ. As those ransomed by the gift of God's dear Son and his sacrificial death will have returned from death with songs of everlasting joy upon their heads, they will obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isa. 35:10

Chapter 15

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD**

WE HAVE noted the mighty works of God as revealed in creation and have examined the scriptural testimony concerning his purpose in the creation of man. We have found that while man transgressed divine law and was sentenced to death, it is the Creator's design to restore him to life as a human, on the earth, where, if he is then obedient, he may live in perfection forever. We have found that in the outworking of the Creator's grand design Jesus was raised from the dead and exalted to immortality on the divine plane of life and that his faithful followers are promised this same exaltation, to be with Jesus and reign with him for the restoration of mankind to perfect human life.

It is recognized that the outworking of such a grand design calls for the exercise of mighty power—power beyond the ability of the human mind to conceive—and it is this almighty power that is referred to in the Bible as the Spirit, or Holy Spirit, of God. The Spirit of God is referred to hundreds of times in the Bible. In the New Testament it is usually designated the Holy Spirit, often mistranslated Holy Ghost in an attempt to convey the traditional misconception of the Dark Ages that the Holy Spirit is a person.

In the Old Testament, Spirit is translated from the Hebrew word *ruach*, which Professor Strong defines as wind. The same word is many times translated breath. In the New Testament the word Spirit is translated from the Greek word *pneuma*, meaning, according to Professor Strong, breath, or current of air. Let us not conclude, however, that the Holy Spirit of God is merely wind, or a blast of air. The ancient Hebrew and Greek languages did not contain specific words for everything, and this was particularly true in expressing thoughts pertaining to God and to his mighty works. However, through use, many words containing specific meanings took on accommodated or additional meanings. Thus *ruach* in the Hebrew language and *pneuma* in the Greek language, because of their original application to the invisible power of the wind, came to mean any invisible force or power and were used to describe the invisible power of God.

Broadly speaking, then, the Spirit of God is the invisible power of God by which he accomplishes all his good purposes. It is that almighty power which cannot be thwarted and which enables the Creator to accomplish all the good pleasure of his will. Jehovah declares: I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. (Isa. 46:11) The Creator also asserts, My word ...that goeth forth out of my mouth ...will not return unto me void, but it will accomplish that which I please, and it will prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Isa. 55:11

The Spirit or power of God is manifest throughout all creation. It was the Spirit of God that transformed this planet from an empty, shapeless mass into the beautiful earth that it now is, making it capable of sustaining countless varieties of things, animate and inanimate. In this work of transformation, it was God's Spirit that set the bounds of the mighty oceans, so that the Creator could say, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here will thy proud waves be stayed. Job 38:11

It was God's power that brought forth the grass and herbs in the earth. It was his Spirit that implemented his decree, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life. (Gen. 1:2, 20) It was God's Spirit that fulfilled his Word, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind. (Gen. 1:24) It was God's power that operated in the creation of man. Gen. 1:27

It is the Spirit of God, directed in secret processes known only to him, that enables all life on earth to reproduce its kind. Solomon wrote: Thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. (Eccles. 11:5) Solomon was the wisest of all men in his day, but he acknowledged his lack of understanding the manner in which the Spirit of God operates; and our scientists today are as limited in their knowledge of the operation of God's Spirit as Solomon was.

We cannot understand the workings of divine power. We can only marvel at what it accomplishes. Like the wind, it is truly an invisible power. Gravitation is one of its manifestations: He hangeth the earth upon nothing. (Job 26:7) But the earth is only an infinitesimal speck in God's great universe. Think of the countless heavenly bodies, all of which are likewise hung upon nothing, yet they spin around in the orbits designed for them, kept in place by what we call the law of gravitation.

Think of the power of God that is contained in our sun and is given off under a controlled process which furnishes our earth with light and heat! We are told that the sun gives off as much energy in one second as man has used with all his implements ever since he has been on the earth. And even the power or energy utilized by man has its origin with God. Man cannot produce power except by utilizing the created things of God.

Man has now discovered the tremendous energy that is locked up in a single atom. Try to figure out the number of atoms contained in all of God's vast creation. It is impossible for the human mind to fathom, but the mere thought of it may help us to grasp a little more realistically the almighty power of God. It was a simple matter for a Creator possessing such unlimited power to prepare the earth for human habitation.

### **The Power of Life**

The Spirit of God is a life-giving power. In Genesis 6:17 row-ch is translated breath in the expression breath of life. We could say, then, that the Spirit of God which moved upon the face of the waters was the Spirit of life. Confirming this, Job 12:10 reads, concerning the Creator, In whose hand is the soul [margin, life] of every living thing, and the breath [margin] of all mankind. It is this thought that Paul expressed in his sermon on Mars Hill when he said concerning God, In him we live, and move, and have our being. Acts 17:28

God's Spirit is the power of inanimate as well as animate life. Only God can make a tree, the poet wrote, and this highlights the fact that but for the Spirit of God there would be no trees, no flowers, no grass, no fruit, no vegetables. Scientists can put together all the elements found in a blade of grass, but they cannot make their blade live. In his sermon to the Athenians Paul said that God is not far from every one of us. (Acts 17:27) Certainly the Spirit of God is manifest all around us in the beauty and fragrance of the flowers, in his loving provisions of food, and in the gorgeous landscapes which enrapture us with their beauty, formed by the blending of myriad varieties of inanimate life.

When Paul sought an illustration of Christian activity in proclaiming the Gospel, he likened it to sowing and watering; but he explained that it is God who gives the increase. (I Cor. 3: 7) How futile would be the work of a farmer in sowing seed in the springtime if God did not give the increase! Some farmers realize, when they see the tiny plants push up the earth and spread forth their leaves, that the power of God is working to give the increase; but others do not realize this. How much more every manifestation

of life with which we are surrounded would mean if we could just keep in mind that what we see is not a mere chemical process, not a fortuity of blind nature, but the working of the Spirit of God!

### **God's Spirit Everywhere**

Some mistakenly speak of the omnipresence of God, meaning that he is present everywhere at the same time. This tends to deny the personality of the Creator. However, God's Spirit, his power, is indeed present everywhere and all the time. There is no situation in the whole universe over which he does not have full control, or of which he could not instantly take control. David wrote: Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither will I go from thy Spirit? or whither will I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [ehool, the death condition], behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there will thy hand lead me, and thy right hand will hold me. Ps. 139:6-10

Here David is expressing his confidence that even in death, that is, in hell, he would not be beyond the reach of divine power. How strange the psalmist's statement would be if hell were a place of fire and torment! But when we accept the scriptural fact that hell is the state or condition of death, this expression becomes rich with meaning. It is simply David's poetic way of affirming his belief in the promises of God to restore the dead to life. It means that God's Spirit will reach down into the death state and awaken the dead. This was confirmed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead by the almighty power of the Father. God did not leave Jesus' soul, his being, in hell, the state of death. Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27, 28, 32; Eph. 1:19,20

### **God's Thoughts**

Another manner in which God has been using his power to accomplish his purposes is through the influence of his thoughts over and in the lives of those whom he calls into his service in the outworking of his plan, particularly during this present era. We all recognize the power of thought. The life of each one of us is controlled by thoughts—either our own thoughts, or those of others which we allow to influence us.

But how does God bring his thoughts, his mind, to bear upon the lives of those in this age who have dedicated themselves to serve him? It is through his written Word. God began the preparation of his written Word through the ancient prophets who wrote and spoke—as they were moved by the Holy Spirit—or power of God (II Pet. 1:21) The operation of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of the prophets who wrote the Old Testament was miraculous, the writers themselves only dimly understanding the meaning of what they wrote. Peter explains that it was revealed to them—that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. I Pet. 1:12

We cannot understand how the prophets were caused to record God's thoughts. The Bible simply explains that it was by the Holy Spirit. With this knowledge we can say that the Old Testament Scriptures are a product, or work, of the Holy Spirit. The thoughts of God recorded in the Old Testament are to be read and pondered at will by his people. But no one can understand the real import of these recorded thoughts of God until the due time arrives, and then the full meaning has to be miraculously revealed, which brings to our attention another accomplishment of the Holy Spirit.

The miraculous revealing of the meaning of the Old Testament messages began with Jesus. Doubtless through Jesus' childhood his mother Mary had many times told him the circumstances in connection with his birth—that Joseph was not his father, that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit. This would impress upon Jesus the fact that he was on earth for a special mission, and therefore he would be anxious to learn what that mission was. So we find him in the temple at the early age of twelve, discussing matters with the doctors of the Law and asking them questions. He probably learned from them that under the Law it

would not be proper for him to enter upon any priestly service for God until he was thirty years old. (Luke 2:42-49; Num.4:2, 3 So he returned to Nazareth and was subject to his mother and foster father until that time came.

When Jesus was thirty years of age he went promptly to John the Baptist, at Jordan, and offered himself for baptism. Then a wonderful miracle occurred. The Holy Spirit came upon him. The record states: The Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou are my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. (Luke 3:22) Actually, of course, the Holy Spirit is not in the shape of a dove. The Holy Spirit, as we have seen, is the holy power of God, and here the presence of that power was manifested to John in the likeness of a dove descending upon the Master. The bodily form of a dove was merely an outward demonstration, principally for the benefit of John the Baptist, and to enable him to bear testimony as to what had taken place.

### **Heavens Opened**

In Matthew 3 :16 we are informed that when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus the heavens were opened unto him. Here was a functioning of the Holy Spirit different from any that had ever before occurred. The Holy Spirit had been operative in the creation of the universe and had given life to all living things. The Holy Spirit had enabled the prophets to record their messages from God for the benefit of his people in a later age. Now the same Spirit had miraculously revealed to Jesus the meaning of those things which previously even the angels could not understand. Now Jesus could understand them.

In this we see the further working of God s power in communicating his thoughts to the finite minds of those who he desired should come under their influence in his due time. However, God does not impose his thoughts upon anyone. He did not do this with Jesus. Jesus desired to know his Heavenly Father s thoughts toward him. He wanted to know his Father s will in order that he might do it. Jesus attitude in this is described in a prophecy concerning him. In this prophecy Jesus is represented as saying, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. Ps. 40:7, 8

The volume of the book here referred to is the Old Testament, which contained a full expression of God s will for his beloved Son, who delighted to do his Father s will. He wanted his Father to reveal his will to him, and the heavens were opened ; that is, the Holy Spirit revealed to him the meaning of what had previously been written. Even before this the perfect mind of Jesus had probably become well acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures. Perhaps he had even memorized much of what had been written.

Now the Holy Spirit was revealing to him its true meaning concerning his own mission on earth, and also the plan of God as a whole. The record states that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he remained for forty days. The miraculous revelation of truth which the Holy Spirit had unfolded to him was seemingly so overwhelming and important that he felt the necessity of isolating himself from others for a time that he might have an undisturbed opportunity to adjust himself to the flood of light, of truth, on the Old Testament which had entered his mind, and thus be prepared to fulfill his agreement to do his Father s will.

### **Jesus' Ministry**

Throughout the entire course of Jesus ministry he was unfolding the various aspects of truth which had been revealed to him. While he did not himself write his teachings yet, under the later direction of the Holy Spirit, his wonderful words of life were recorded by others and were thus made available for the instruction of all the Lord s people throughout the entire age. It was by Jesus conformity to the thoughts of God, as revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that he was prepared to be the great future King of earth; and it is through obedience to those same thoughts of God that Jesus followers are prepared to be

associated with him in the future work of the kingdom that glorious work of blessing all the families of the earth.

In the words and works of Jesus we have revealed the meaning of the Spirit-inspired writings of the Old Testament, a bringing closer to us of the holy thoughts of God, that they might exert their intended influence in our lives. When we read the teachings of Jesus we may know that they reveal to us the will of God. When Jesus says that we should love our enemies, it means that his Heavenly Father wants us to love our enemies. After all, we are being prepared to be Jesus' associates in the future blessing of all mankind, and many of the human race today are enemies of God and of his people. We must learn to love these enemies in order to be properly prepared to deal with them and bless them.

### **Truth Held Back**

But we do not have the full will of God revealed through the personal teachings and example of Jesus. He did not give expression to all the wonderful truths revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. He said to his disciples: I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he [it] the Spirit of truth is come, he [it] will guide you into all truth. (John 16:12, 13) The minds of the disciples were not then prepared to grasp all the marvelous truths which had been revealed to Jesus. Much of what he did tell them was only vaguely understood by them, and many of the lessons they failed to remember.

In John 14:26 we have a promise by Jesus to his disciples that in his name the Father would send the Holy Spirit and that it would be to them a wonderful Comforter. The Spirit, he said, will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. What a wonderful promise! It means that, while there were many truths which Jesus had not revealed to his disciples, later, through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, these would be made known to them. Nothing that they needed to know in order to complete the divine revelation through their oral and written ministry would be omitted when the promise to send the Holy Spirit was fulfilled.

At Pentecost this promise was fulfilled. On that memorable day there was a mighty demonstration of power. Explaining it, Peter said that Jesus, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, ...hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. (Acts 2:33) The Holy Spirit was shed forth. There was no way the translators could distort this statement to make it seem as though the Holy Spirit was a third person in a trinity of gods. A person cannot be shed forth, but a power can be; and it was this power, the Holy Spirit of truth, that came upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost.

While all the disciples who waited at Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit were richly blessed when it was shed forth, only the apostles received from it a miraculous illumination of their minds. They were specially designated by the fact that a visible manifestation of the Spirit in the form of cloven tongues rested upon them. These, in turn, through their oral teachings and their epistles, have made the vision plain for the remainder of God's people throughout the age. God does not miraculously and directly reveal his truth to his people as a whole, although he helps them to understand truth which has already been miraculously revealed. With the ministry of the apostles, the Spirit-inspired teachings of the Bible were completed.

### **A Comforter**

In promising to shed forth the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, Jesus said that it would be a Comforter to them. And how true this proved to be! When Jesus was taken from them and crucified, the disciples were made sad of heart. It was much more than the loss in death of a beloved friend. They had accepted Jesus as the foretold Messiah. The disciples knew that the God of Israel had promised to send a Messiah through the line of David and that this great King was to establish a kingdom, a government, which eventually would exert worldwide influence and control. They believed that Jesus was this great King, and they believed that in associating themselves with him they would have a share in his kingdom.



With Jesus' death this hope was shattered, but only until the Holy Spirit was shed forth, for then they realized that the messianic kingdom was to be more effective and more glorious than they had ever dreamed it could be. They also realized that it had been necessary for Jesus to die in order to redeem the world from death. They now knew that when the Heavenly Father raised Jesus from death he had highly exalted him beyond the comprehension of their finite minds. They now knew that if they became conformed to Jesus' character-likeness and faithfully laid down their lives as his witnesses, they would, in God's due time, share the glory of his kingdom and the glory of his exalted position on the throne of God. How wonderfully they were comforted by the Holy Spirit!

### **Things to Come**

Jesus had said that when the Holy Spirit of truth came upon the disciples it would show them things to come, and it did. (John 16:13) An example of this is found in a sermon preached by Peter shortly after Pentecost. This sermon was prompted by a miracle which he had performed through power of the resurrected Jesus. It was the healing of a man who had been lame from the time of his birth. Peter explained that Jesus was to come again and that when he did return there would be times of restitution of all things, which, he added, God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21) However, not until the Holy Spirit of truth was shed forth at Pentecost did Peter understand this great truth of restitution for a lost world.

The pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit completed the miraculous revelation of divine truth that was given to Jesus at Jordan. Thus, through his teachings and those of the apostles including Paul, who also later became one of the inspired apostles the revelation of the divine will for the followers of the Master was completed and is now contained in the inspired Word. No further miraculous revelation is needed. Paul emphasized this when he wrote to Timothy, saying, All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. II Tim. 3:16, 17

The all Scripture given by inspiration of God is what we speak of as the Old and New Testament. In these two parts of the Bible, therefore, God has recorded and revealed his thoughts those thoughts which he has designed will exert power over and in the lives of those who, during the present age in the divine plan, are fully dedicated to him. In this wonderful arrangement, miraculously provided, is manifested the manner in which the power of God, the Holy Spirit of truth, operates in the minds and hearts of those who surrender to its influence, thus accomplishing the Creator's design in the lives of those who have been called to joint-heirship with Jesus in his kingdom.

In conjunction with the written Word, the power of God also operates on behalf of his children of the present age through his providential care over them. These providences, properly interpreted, are always in keeping with the Lord's written words, and every follower of the Master rejoices in them as he can see the marvelous manner in which the promises of God are fulfilled in the everyday experiences of his life. How grateful every follower of the Master should be to realize that the same power of God that brought forth all the works of creation is working in him, preparing him to live and reign with Christ a thousand years for the restoration of the human race from sin and death to righteousness and everlasting life!

Chapter 16

## **GOD'S NEW CREATION**

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

THE animate and inanimate creations of God exist in almost endless variety. On this small planet Earth there are the many sorts of inanimate life in the vegetable kingdom; and in the animal kingdom there are many thousands of species, beginning with the lowest forms of organisms and continuing to the highest form of earthly life, which is the human. David wrote that man was made a little lower than the angels, which means that above the human plane of existence, and invisible to our eyes, there are further varieties of created life. Ps. 8:4-8

The Scriptures reveal that, beginning with the first advent of Jesus, the Creator has been developing another creation a creation on a higher plane of life than any previously brought forth. This new creation is to be divine and in God's design will share his highest of all planes of life. The Creator's design calls for a limited number to be on this high plane of life, and it reveals that these will be indestructible. They will enjoy glory and honor and immortality. Rom. 2:7

It was God's arrangement, in connection with all his other intelligent creatures, to create them and then test their loyalty to him. It was thus with the angels. Some of these maintained their fidelity; others failed under test and became what are sometimes referred to as fallen angels. The same procedure was followed with respect to man. Adam was created a perfect human and then tested. He failed under test and came under condemnation of death, with his progeny dying with him.

### **Pre-tested**

But this procedure was not possible when it came to God's new creation of the present age, for in his design those who would be members of this highly honored class were ultimately to be exalted to the divine plane of life, which, as we have noted, is indestructible. Obviously it was necessary that those striving for this high position should be tested before they were granted immortality, else there would be the possibility of having sinners in the universe who could not be destroyed. Thus, so far as these would be concerned, the divine mandate that the wages of sin is death would be made void. Rom. 6:23

The only way this testing prior to full maturity as new creatures could be accomplished would be to invite a limited number who already existed on a lower plane of life to participate in the program on the basis that if they proved loyal under the severest of tests they would be exalted to the divine plane. The first of these was Jesus, and during this Gospel Age others have been invited to partake of this heavenly calling. (Heb. 3:1) The creative work in these has been and continues to be accomplished by God's Holy Spirit.

At the time of his baptism, and through the holy power of the Creator, Jesus became a new creature. His mind was filled with the precious promises of God, and these set before him the hope of a future joy of exaltation to the right hand of his Father. The joy enabled Jesus to endure the cross and to despise the shame involved in the testing of his fidelity to the Creator. (Ps. 16:10, 11; Heb. 12:2) When Jesus proved his faithfulness, even unto death, and was raised from the dead, he was highly exalted above every name that is named. He was, in fact, given the divine nature. Phil. 2:9,10

### **His Followers Also**

What was true with Jesus is also true with respect to all his faithful followers. The only difference is that Jesus was perfect from the beginning, so that his mind and body could and did react perfectly to the impulses of the Holy Spirit as they reached him through the Word of truth, whereas his followers are imperfect, members of the fallen and sinful race of Adam. These could not be acceptable at all for the purpose for which they are called except as they are looked upon by the Creator as being covered by the righteousness of Christ.

In the selection of these to be part of his new creation, the Creator, through his providences, prepares them to be receptive to his Word of truth, and then arranges for them to be brought into contact with that

Word. Through God's Word these begin to appreciate his love as expressed through Christ Jesus, and they are influenced by the drawing power of his love to dedicate themselves to him and to Christ, whose righteousness they believe will be imputed to them.

Paul explains this viewpoint very beautifully. He writes: "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. (II Cor. 5:14, 15) Then in the 17th verse Paul adds: "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. It is concerning these that, in our text, Paul writes, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Eph. 2:10

As Paul explains, this new creation is God's workmanship. God's creative work in developing this group of his faithful people in preparation for exaltation to the divine nature is accomplished by his Holy Spirit, or power. It involves much more than conversion from sin to righteousness. The total creative process involves the development of a new mind—a spiritual mind with heavenly aspirations—and finally, in the resurrection, the exaltation of that mind in a glorious divine body.

### **Born Again**

To help our finite minds comprehend in some measure the bringing forth of this new creation, the Bible uses various illustrations. One of these is the begetting and birth of a child. We recall Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, a ruler in Israel. To him Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3) The kingdom of God here referred to is the rulership aspect of that kingdom. There will be many millions in the kingdom of God as subjects, but these will not be born again.

Nicodemus did not understand this, and he asked if it would be necessary to enter again into his mother's womb and literally be born again. Jesus replied: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. John 3:4-8

Jesus' illustration of the characteristics of one who is born of the Spirit is revealing—he uses the invisible power of the wind. Obviously our finite minds cannot grasp too much concerning the characteristics of spirit beings, but we do know that they are invisible to human eyes, and powerful. This is true of the exalted Jesus and of the Heavenly Father; and those who are exalted to the divine nature to be rulers in the kingdom of God will be like these. They will be God's new creation. I John 3:2

### **Begotten First**

Many students of the Bible think that in his discussion with Nicodemus Jesus was referring only to conversion from sin to righteousness and a filling with the Holy Spirit. But this is not all that Jesus was speaking of, as is apparent from the Master's statement that those born of the Spirit can come and go as the wind. However, before there can be a birth of the Spirit there must first be a begetting of the Spirit, and it is this begetting that occurs when one enters the narrow way and begins to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

This point is somewhat obscured in our English Bibles, due to the fact that there is but one Greek word for both begetting and birth. The student must determine from the context which meaning is intended. For example, when Jesus said that those born of the Spirit could come and go as the wind, we know he was referring to Spirit birth, and not Spirit begetting. Other texts use the word born when the context

indicates that the reference is to the Christian at the present time. In these instances the word *beget* or *begotten* would greatly clarify the meaning of the text.

There is a beautiful thought associated with the idea of *begettal*, followed in due time by birth. It is during this period that the embryonic new creature is nourished and matures in preparation for birth. This development takes place while the mind of the new creature is contained in an earthly body. Thus the creative process goes on, and in due time the new creature is ready for birth on the divine plane.

It is the Spirit of truth, reaching the new creature through the inspired Word of God, that does the nourishing and strengthening prior to the birth of the new creature. During this period God's providences also exercise an important role in the development of the new creature. But when the due time comes for spiritual birth in the resurrection, God's power is exercised in a more direct manner. Paul speaks of the exceeding greatness of his [God's power which raised Jesus from the dead at the time he was born of the Spirit.

Through God's overruling providences in our lives as new creatures, that same divine power is available for us while we are maturing in preparation for Spirit birth. And then that mighty power of God will be used to raise us from the dead and exalt us to the divine nature to live and reign with Christ in that glorious kingdom through which all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Paul was willing to give up all earthly advantages and glory in order to experience that power, during the present life and in the resurrection. Phil. 3:8-11; Eph. 1:18-23

## **Cooperation**

In all the other works of creation the things created did not have the opportunity of cooperating in their own creation. But with God's new creation it is different. Paul wrote: *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* (Phil. 2:12,13) Peter speaks of our being made partakers of the divine nature through the exceeding great and precious promises of God and then admonishes us to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, fortitude, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love. If we do this, Peter assures us, we will have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. II Pet. 1:4-11

Part of the work of God's grace in our lives is accomplished through the trials which he permits and helps us to endure. It is by these that our loyalty to the Creator is tested. Peter wrote, *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.* (I Pet. 4:19) Yes, our Creator is faithful. He was faithful in the creation of our first parents. When they transgressed his law he was faithful in sending his beloved Son to redeem them and their progeny from death. He is faithful now in bringing forth his new creation. He is loving and kind and just, and while he knows that we need to be tested, his strength is available to help us if we yield ourselves to the experiences which he sees best for us.

Peter also wrote, *Humble yourselves ...under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.* (I Pet. 5:6, 7) Nothing like this was ever said to any others of God's intelligent creatures while in the process of being created. They were not asked to cooperate. But we are. God's creative hand may at times weigh heavily upon us as new creatures. But this is in love and because he is a faithful Creator. Our part in it is to realize that he is caring for us and to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, knowing that if we do, through his faithfulness he will exalt us in due time to the glory, honor, and immortality which he has promised.

The mighty hand of God, as represented in his providences, will continue over us until we finish our course in death. Jesus said, *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* (Rev. 2:10) Here again our cooperation is invited, and what a blessed privilege it is to respond by faithful adherence to the whole will of God. Being faithful is possible only with the help of the God of all grace, who hath

called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus. It is the God of grace who is able, after we have suffered a while, to make us perfect and strong and settled. Truly he is a faithful Creator! I Pet. 5:10, 11

### **Minds Renewed**

Paul wrote: Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Rom. 12:2) The renewing of the mind here referred to by Paul is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. By nature we seek earthly things. Adam was created of the earth, earthy. The earth, by nature, is our home, and it is natural that man should love the things of the earth.

But for those whom God is developing as new creatures in Christ Jesus there is the need that their minds be transformed. There are many promises of the Word which help to accomplish this. Jesus said to his disciples that he was going away to prepare a place for them, and that he would come and receive them unto himself, that where he was, there they would be also. (John 14:2, 3) John wrote that it does not yet appear what we will be, but we know that we will be like him and see him as he is. I John 3 :1-3

The Apostle Peter wrote: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. I Pet. 1:3-5

These and other promises create an assurance that by faithfulness to the will of God we may attain spiritual life with Jesus in a heavenly home. Thus our minds are transformed from earthly to heavenly aspirations. We hear Paul's admonition to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and to set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth. (Col. 3: 1, 2) As we allow these new aspirations to captivate us, we are growing as new creatures, and if faithful to the end of our earthly course, we will attain the glory promised.

### **“Bare Grain”**

Paul uses bare grain to illustrate the new mind that is sown in death and made alive in the resurrection. He says that it is sown in corruption, and it is raised in incorruption. Continuing, he says: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. (I Cor. 15:37, 42-44) To this Paul adds, There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body in the resurrection, that is.

Paul explains that in the resurrection God will give to every seed its own body, that is, a body appropriate to the mind that was sown in death. For the mass of mankind this will be a human body, for they have not developed spiritual aspirations and hopes. They were created to live on the earth, and their hopes have all been earthly. But for new creatures who have set their affections on things above it will be different. The minds of these have been transformed, and their hopes have been transferred from the earth to heaven, for they have been made partakers of the heavenly calling. Heb. 3 :1

Concerning these in the resurrection, Paul states, As we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. (I Cor. 15:49) For he further explains, this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. I Cor. 15:53, 54

The statement, Death is swallowed up in victory, is quoted from Isaiah 25:8. The entire verse reads: He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the

rebuke of his people will he take away from off all the earth. This is one of God's promises to restore mankind in general to perfection of human life on the earth. This will be accomplished through the agencies of Christ's thousand-year kingdom. During that time Satan will be bound, and the Lord's people will not be persecuted, for then, as Isaiah assures us, the Lord will remove the rebuke of his people ...from off all the earth.

However, as Paul explains, this great boon to humanity, this great project of restitution, must await the completion of the new creation class of the present age. Only after all these, individually, have been exalted to immortality will God fulfill his promise to swallow up death in victory, and put an end to the reign of sin and death. This proper sequence in the outworking of the divine plan is shown by Paul's use of the words when and then in his explanation that when ...this mortal will have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

### **God's Inheritance**

In Ephesians 1:18 Paul speaks of the riches of the glory of his [God's] inheritance in the saints. There are many passages which refer directly or indirectly to the rich inheritance of the new creation class. They are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. But here Paul speaks of this class as being God's inheritance. This is a stupendous thought, yet one which can be understood when we take all the facts into consideration.

Among all the hosts of God's intelligent creatures there had been none on his own plane of existence. Even the holy angels were limited in the extent to which they could fellowship and cooperate with the divine Creator. But God's new creation, when completed, will be on the divine plane of life with him. He will have an immediate family of his own, which in this future sense was not true before. So, in the outworking of his grand design for the deliverance of mankind from sin and death, God himself will receive an inheritance which throughout the endless ages will continue to enhance his joy and glory.

How truly marvelous it is to realize that by his Holy Spirit, or power, the Creator could take some of his imperfect and dying creatures here on earth, recreate and exalt them to his own nature and high position in the universe! To do this, even for Jesus, who was perfect and separate from sinners, is beyond our comprehension. But what amazing grace is manifested through him in the calling, preparation, and exaltation of Jesus' followers to the same high position. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. Rom. 11:33

### Chapter 17

## **THE EVER-LIVING, LOVING GOD**

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater so will my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it will not return unto me void, but it will accomplish that which I please, and it will prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Isaiah 55:8-11

GOD is dead, many are saying today, and these claim that belief in God is ineffectual in helping men and women meet the problems of this chaotic world in which we live. However, those who say this have in mind the concepts of a god which have come down to us from the Dark Ages. This is a god who, according to the claims made for him, proposed to torment his enemies forever in a fiery hell. He was the god of war in those days when Europe was ruled by church-state systems of government. He was the god of the so-called Holy Inquisition and the blessing of those who tortured humans who did not subscribe to their theology.

We agree that this god is either dead or dying. Indeed, he never really lived except in the minds of his devotees and now these, by the million, are realizing that such a god can be no help to them in this nuclear age of learning and science, so they are willing that he should be dead. But the true God of the Bible is not dead! He is the everliving and loving God of all creation, a God of justice and of might, a God who is ever ready to help his people in their times of need.

Concerning the true God, the Prophet Isaiah wrote: Have you not known? have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increases strength. Even the youths will faint and be weary, and the young men will utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength; they will mount up with wings as eagles; they will run, and not be weary; and they will walk, and not faint. Isa. 40:28-31

### **Knowing God**

When we look about us in the world and note all the indications of human failure, we cannot see much evidence of the existence and work of an all-powerful and loving God. David wrote, The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork.

Here the reference is to the great works of creation. And how wonderfully the works of creation do reveal the glory of the Creator! This is true not only as we look into the heavens, but it is true with respect to all the created things with which we are surrounded: they all display the marvelous wisdom and power of the Creator. But the creative works of God do not explain why his human creatures have experienced thousands of years of pain and death, nor do they explain why mankind today is experiencing the greatest time of trouble that has ever been known on this earth.

Jeremiah 9:23, 24 reads: Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says the Lord. We can see God's glory in the heavens and in the flowers, in the mountains, rivers, and valleys, but these do not explain, why God is permitting chaos to prevail throughout the earth at the present time. They do not reveal God's loving-kindness.

We can see the glory of God in the birth and growth of a normal baby. But what about the malformed babies, those retarded in mind and body? And what about all the other distressing situations which are a blight on human happiness generally? The glory of the heavens and the delicate beauty of the flower do not answer these questions concerning an all-wise God who delights to exercise loving-kindness in the earth.

### **Only Through His Plan**

It is only as we become acquainted with God's grand design, or plan, as it is revealed to us in his inspired Word, the Bible, that we can see and know the great Creator as a just and loving God as well as a wise and powerful one. That Word not only reveals the successive creative steps of the Creator in preparing the earth for human habitation, but it also explains his purpose in the creation of man. Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish [fill] the earth, and subdue it, the Creator said to our first parents. (Gen. 1:27, 28) Thousands of years later God affirmed that he had not created the earth in vain, but had formed it to be inhabited. Isa. 45:18

God also designed that man should be king of earth having dominion over all his other earthly creatures. (Ps. 8:3-9) In the New Testament we find the Apostle Paul saying, We see not yet all things put under

him [man]. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. (Heb. 2:8, 9) Man disobeyed his Creator and lost his dominion. However, God, in his love, provided redemption for him, which means that God's original design for his human creatures is yet to be realized. Man is to be restored to life and to his dominion over the earth. It is through this great truth of the Bible that we are able to see and know God as One who delights to exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth.

## **Obedience Essential**

We can see the glory of God in the heavens because the heavenly bodies obey the law of God. Think of the chaos and destruction there would be among the planets and stars and suns if each one were permitted to go its own way, breaking loose from the gravitational laws which hold each in its own orbit! They cannot disobey. These inanimate creations are held in control by the unvarying laws of the Creator, from which they cannot deviate.

Obedience to divine law is equally important to God's intelligent creatures. It was so with our first parents, but they were free to disobey if they so desired. They were not robots, but intelligent creatures, made in the image of God. It was contrary to the design of the Creator to coerce his human creatures into obeying his law. He desired them to obey of their own choice. In exercising this God-given freedom, they chose to go contrary to their Creator's will. This brought the penalty of death, of which they had been forewarned.

You will surely die, God had said to Adam. (Gen. 2:17) The Apostle Paul wrote that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, and also that in Adam all die. (Rom. 5:19; I Cor. 15:22) Thus it was that death was introduced into human experience. By inheritance, death passed on from one generation to another, and with it, all the sickness and pain that ultimately leads to the grave. The wreck of the human race which resulted from disobedience to divine law is like the chaos and destruction that would have taken place among the stars had they not been held in course by the laws which still control them.

## **Why Permitted**

God permitted sin to enter into the world so that his human creatures might, by experience, learn the terrible results of disobedience to his law. In Genesis 3:22 we read, The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil. The us referred to in this statement is the same as in Genesis 1:26, where the Creator is quoted as saying, Let US make man in our image. The reference is to Jehovah and his beloved Son, the Logos, or Word, who cooperated with his Heavenly Father in all the creative work. John 1:3

The Heavenly Father and his beloved Son knew what the terrible results of disobedience to divine law would be; but Adam did not know, although he had been told that he would die as the result of sin. Jehovah and the Logos knew also that the human race could gain this information fully only by being permitted to experience it. So when Adam and Eve sinned, the Creator observed (Gen. 3:22) that they had become as one of us, to know good and evil; that is, they were destined to acquire this information because they had embarked upon a course whereby they would learn these lessons by experience.

Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, experienced good for a short time, although, having known nothing else, they perhaps did not fully appreciate the blessings which their Creator had provided for them. After they sinned they were driven out of that garden home, and it was then that they began to experience evil. Being perfect to begin with, they lived for hundreds of years; and probably much of the time during these years they were free from severe physical pain, although, figuratively, they did eat their bread by the sweat of their face.



But finally death took its toll, and our first parents returned to the earth from which they were taken. Since then, throughout the centuries, generation after generation has likewise suffered and died. Some good has been experienced by many, but for the most part it has been a long dark night of weeping during which evil has been experienced by all almost continuously. David wrote about this, saying, Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Ps. 30:5

### **The “Good” Time**

It will be during that future morning of joy, ushering in a new day of blessings for mankind, that the people will gain their real experience with good. It will be only then that the vast majority will fully learn why God has permitted evil. Then they will realize that the relatively short time of distress in this life will be as nothing compared with the eternity of joy that will stretch out before them as restored and perfect human sons of God.

This future time of blessing has been made possible in the plan of God through the Creator's loving gift of his Son to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world. (John 3:16) Jesus, in his love, laid down his life in sacrifice, taking the sinner's place in death. He did this in cooperation with his Heavenly Father to provide release for the human race from sin and death. Paul wrote that Jesus gave himself a ransom, or corresponding price, for all, and that this manifestation of divine love toward the human race is, in due time, to be testified, or made known, to all mankind. I Tim. 2:3-6

Christ's work of redemption through his death provides for a resurrection of the dead. Apart from the resurrection of the dead, there would be no answer to the question as to why God permits evil. If this life, entailing so much misery, is all there is to hope for, then our faith is vain. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then the sufferings of mankind during the present life are also in vain. It would indicate that there is no God of love who cares for his human creatures.

But there IS to be a resurrection of the dead. The Old Testament teaches it, and this hope-inspiring doctrine of the divine plan is abundantly confirmed in the New Testament. Paul wrote, Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. (I Cor. 15:20) The reference to Jesus as the firstfruits of the resurrection implies that there will be afterfruits, and, indeed, this is what the Bible teaches. I Cor. 15:23

Coming forth from death in what the Bible refers to as the first resurrection will be those who, during the present age, have suffered and died with Jesus. These are restored to life and exalted to heavenly glory to live and reign with Christ in that thousand-year kingdom which will be the medium of blessing for all mankind. (Rev. 20:4, 6) Those who participate in the later, general resurrection will be restored to life as humans here on the earth. As we have seen, this was God's design in the creation of man, and that design is to be carried out.

The hope of the resurrection has been confused in the minds of many by the false claim that there is no death. If no one really dies, how could there truly be a resurrection of the dead? This false teaching goes back to Satan's lie to mother Eve, You will not surely die. (Gen. 3:4) But when we accept death as the reality that it is, how heart-cheering is the hope of a resurrection of the dead! It means that all will be given the opportunity of picking up the broken thread of life and going on to benefit from the experiences of the present time.

Consider a retarded child. Suppose that within a few months or even years, medical science could find a way to restore that child to normal health of mind and body. How quickly the past would be forgotten, and how the child and its family would rejoice in the new-found buoyancy of health and life! Through divine power, this will be the experience of all who have suffered and died. After all, death is but an interlude of sleep between the weeping of the present dark night of trouble and the joys of earth's new day of rejoicing in health that will become perfect upon obedience, and a life which will be everlasting.

Then all will know that God permitted evil to give mankind an opportunity, based upon experience, to choose between disobedience and death, and obedience and all the radiant joys of a life that will be everlasting.

### **Through the Kingdom**

While humans have been unaware of it, ever since the fall into sin and death, God has been preparing for man's ultimate deliverance. He sent his Son to be the Redeemer from sin and death, and now for more than nineteen hundred years he has been selecting from the world those who will be associated with Jesus in the future work of blessing all mankind. That work of blessing will be accomplished through the invisible, spiritual rulership of the messianic kingdom, in which Jesus and his faithful followers of the present age will be the chief rulers.

Prior to the present age, God was selecting and preparing a group of humans who will be the visible representatives of Christ throughout the earth. These are the ancient faithful servants of God, beginning with righteous Abel. They are referred to in the Bible as those who will be made princes in all the earth. (Ps. 45:16) In the 11th chapter of Hebrews we read of some of the leading ones in this group, and we are told of their heroic deeds of faith. Actually, they died for their faith, and through all their experiences they had the assurance that they were pleasing to their God, Jehovah, the living and loving God of all creation.

The faithful followers of Jesus during the present age have also lived and died by faith. These, too, have had the assurance of God's favor and blessing in their lives. They have suffered, grown old, and died, just as all mankind; but they have known that God has a wonderful plan to restore them to life, and to exalt them to glory, honor, and immortality, to live and reign with Christ a thousand years for the blessing of the world of mankind. Because of this they have been convinced that the light afflictions of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the eternal weight of glory which awaits them in Christ's kingdom. II Cor. 4:17

### **Witnesses for Jesus**

The faithful followers of Jesus have rejoiced in their privilege of bearing witness to his name and of telling the whole world, as they have had opportunity, of the grand design of the Heavenly Father to shower blessings of joy and life upon all mankind. These have not been popular among those who worshipped the god of the Dark Ages. It has not always been easy to declare boldly that the wages of sin is death in the midst of those who have insisted that there is no death.

But the Lord has given strength to his people, and still does. We rejoice to know of his abounding love, and that from everlasting to everlasting he is the same true and ever-living God, not only of wisdom and justice, but also of love and power. How good, indeed, to realize that God's love provided a way of escape from death, and that his power will restore the dead to life!

In our testimony we can also affirm the workings of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We rejoice in the new hope of life which it has begotten in us, and we look forward to the birth of this new life in the resurrection. We are glad also that in the coming kingdom God's Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, and that it will be an important factor in enlightening the world concerning the true and living God. What a privilege it is to assure all that in God's due time the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Isa. 11:9

No, our God is not dead! He has been unknown to mankind in general, but he has nonetheless been preparing for their blessing. He has worked in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform, but his wonders have been performed, although unrecognized by the world. And still greater wonders are to come. Critics have tried to explain away the miracles of the Bible. They have cast doubt concerning Noah

and the Flood, about the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and of the River Jordan. They have scoffed at the story of Daniel in the lions' den and the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace.

Many today who have taken the name of Jesus deny his virgin birth, his miracles, and his resurrection from the dead. But how different it will be when the wonders of tomorrow begin to unfold! Noah will be awakened from the sleep of death and will be able to confirm the account of the Flood and of his own experience in connection with it. Moses, likewise, will be on hand to relate how the power of God enabled him to lead the Israelites through the Red Sea. Joshua, also, will then be there to tell about the crossing of Jordan. And who will doubt the story of Daniel in the lions' den and the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace when they hear these ancient servants of God confirm their truthfulness?

In addition to these wonders there will be the actual awakening of all the dead—not all at once, of course, but as they can be provided for throughout the period of the kingdom. The Prophet Isaiah describes the kingdom of Christ as a mountain and tells us that in this mountain death will be swallowed up and tears will be wiped away. He describes the response of the people to this miraculous dispensing of the blessings of health and life. They will say, Isaiah declares, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isa. 25:6-9

Yes, the people will then recognize and rejoice in the true and living God of the Bible. Recognizing that all their own plans have miserably failed, they will gladly follow the arrangements of Christ's kingdom and thus find peace, security, health, and life. There may be some individuals who, despite their experimental knowledge of both good and evil, will choose the evil course of disobedience. The Bible reveals that these will be destroyed, that they will not be permitted to corrupt the good ways of those who are rejoicing in the Lord and his blessings of health, life, and happiness. Acts 3:23

### **God Is Not Dead**

Yes, the God of all creation is very much alive, and his grand design for his human creatures is developing rapidly to its glorious consummation. As yet mankind in general is unaware of this, and the hearts of the people are filled with fear as they look ahead to the things coming upon the earth. For example, God said, "Multiply and fill the earth." (Gen. 1:27, 28) The carrying out of this divine commission is now causing much anxiety on the part of many. We are having a population explosion, they say, and something must be done about it, else the earth will, in a very short time, become overpopulated.

The world fails to understand that the One who gave the human race the commission to fill the earth is fully qualified to withdraw the commission by neutralizing the powers of procreation which make its accomplishment possible. However, the fact that we have reached the time in human experience when the earth would soon become overpopulated except for divine intervention in the affairs of men is one of the sure indications that such intervention is near.

Divine intervention in all human affairs will come through the agencies of Christ's kingdom, and it is good to realize that this control over the activities of men will soon be established; for it is this that will assure mankind of peace, of health, and of life everlasting. In a word, this means that all the glorious promises of God, including the awakening of the dead, will soon be fulfilled.

The blessings described in these promises are very near. They do not belong to the remote and distant future. While today the world is filled with darkness and chaos, through God's Word of prophecy the rays of the coming morn can already be seen, assuring us that the dawning of the grandest day the earth has ever known is just at hand!

That will also be the world's blessed thousand-year day of judgment. The psalmist wrote: Say among the [nations] that the Lord reigns: the world also will be established that it will not be moved; he will judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then will all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth: he will judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. Ps. 96:10-13

And think of the joy that will come to mankind through the awakening of those who have fallen asleep in death! This is described in the Bible as a returning from death. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, The ransomed of the Lord will return, ...with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they will obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. (Isa. 35:10) Truly, Great and marvelous are your deeds, O Lord God, Sovereign over all; just and true are your ways, you King of the ages. Who will not revere you, Lord, and do homage to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship in your presence, for your just dealings stand revealed. Rev. 15:3, 4, NEB

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