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THE GRACE OF JEHOVAH

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THE GRACE OF JEHOVAH



DAWN BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

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FOREWORD

WHAT can a man believe? A historian observed concerning the days of the French Revolution that it was "the best of times and the worst of times." This expression quite aptly describes the religious situation in the world today. There has never been more religious freedom than there is currently in the non-totalitarian world. Devotees of all faiths are allowed to proclaim their understanding of the Bible far and wide—over television, over the radio, by means of the printed page, and through personal witness work among their friends and neighbors.

On the other hand, there has never been so much confusion pertaining to the Christian faith as at the present time. From this standpoint it is undoubtedly "the worst of times" the world has ever experienced. Certainly we have not yet reached that era when the "path of righteousness" is made so plain that "wayfaring men, though fools," need not err therein. (Isa. 35:8) Is there any certain way that a sincere, humble Christian might know with reasonable certainty that what he believes and serves is the truth?

The Apostle Paul gave good advice to the brethren at Thessalonica when he wrote, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," or as the New World Translation states, "Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is right." (1 Thess. 5:21) This was wise counsel in Paul's day, and it is equally appropriate and important in these "last days," when our "adversary the Devil" is still going about as a "roaring lion" seeking whom he may devour by false doctrines and otherwise.

There is only one way to "make sure of all things," we believe, and that is to prove, or test, them by the infallible Word of God, the Holy Bible. Sincere Christians have been saying this for centuries. Teachers of the Bible in all denominations insist that this should be done, but it is seldom fully practiced. Each group has its textbooks, its "quarterlies," and in these, only those portions of the Holy Bible are cited which it is thought are in agreement with the views of the group in question. Quite generally, however, the students using these helps conclude that they are becoming acquainted with the entire testimony of the Holy Bible with respect to the topics studied.

So if we are to "make sure of all things" a most important consideration is to "make sure" that we are using the entire Bible, not just those portions which have been interpreted for us. Recently we came across an example of what we mean in this respect. In a publication designed to be a help to Bible study we noticed that a number of texts from the Holy Bible were quoted in an effort to disprove the restoration of natural Israel to the Promised Land and to favor with God. One of the texts quoted was Romans 11:7,8, which reads, "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day."

From reading this passage the student was expected to get the impression that the unbelieving Israelites of Jesus' day were irrevocably and forever cast off from divine favor. But what a different impression is left in the mind when Paul's full lesson on the topic is considered! Beginning with verse 25 of the same chapter, we read:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it

is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant with them when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all."—Rom. 11:25-32

It is equally important to make sure that the translation of the Scriptures we are asked to use is true to the Hebrew or Greek text. We know how many have been held in fear of eternal torment through mistranslations of the Hebrew word **sheol**, and the Greek words **hades** and **Gehenna**. The King James translation of the Holy Bible is not the only faulty one.

We recently saw a translation of Romans 5:18 and of I Timothy 2:4 which uses the expression "all kinds of men" in these texts, which, as written by the Apostle Paul, so unequivocally state that Jesus died to ransom all mankind from death. There are no words at all in these Greek texts to warrant the use of the expression "all kinds of men." A glance at the word-for-word translation in the Emphatic Diaglott will prove this to every earnest seeker after truth.

Yes, it is important that we prove all things by the pure Word of God, regardless of the source of our information. That is true of the thoughts set forth in the following pages of this booklet under the heading "The Grace of Jehovah." Almost without exception the contradictory beliefs now being proclaimed to a confused world have one thing in common, which is the use of fear as a method of making converts. It may be fear of eternal torture, fear of death in Armageddon, or fear of something else. "The Grace of Jehovah" endeavors to exalt the love of God. We trust you will find it helpful in your further study of his precious Word.

THE GRACE OF JEHOVAH

JEHOVAH, the name given in the Old Testament Scriptures to the Supreme Being, the great Creator of the universe, is described by the Apostle Peter as the "God of all grace." (I Pet. 5:10) The grace of God is the favor of God, the favor which he so lovingly manifests toward all his human creatures, favor which is unmerited by them because of their sin. In order that we may be assured of his abundant favor, Jehovah has revealed by the almost innumerable promises of his Word his intention, in his own due time and way, to bestow his blessings upon "all the families of the earth."

This loving purpose is first clearly stated in a promise God made to father Abraham, when he said to him, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:3) This promise was repeated several times to Abraham and was confirmed by God's oath. (Gen. 22:16-18) Later, it was renewed to Abraham's son Isaac, when God said to him that "all the nations" were to be "blessed." (Gen. 26:4) To Isaac's son Jacob it was again renewed.—Gen. 28:14, 15

Certainly Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were justified in believing that this promise applied to all the "families," or "nations," of the earth who lived in their day. However, the inhabitants of the earth who were contemporary with these patriarchs did not receive the promised blessings, nor were they offered to them. With few exceptions, all the families of the earth who have lived both before and since the days of the patriarchs have fallen asleep in death without having had an opportunity to participate in them.

Two thousand years after Abraham died, the Apostle Paul wrote about the promise God had made to Abraham and showed that it was to be fulfilled through Christ and those of

this age who are "baptized into Christ"—the church. (Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) This means that two thousand years elapsed after the promise was made before God's chosen channel of blessing began to be developed. Jesus, primarily, is that channel; but as Paul shows, his church will be associated with him as "heirs according to the promise"; and nearly two thousand years more have elapsed in the calling and selection of the church. Meanwhile other millions continue to die without having an opportunity to receive the blessings which Jehovah promised.

However, we are assured in the Scriptures that all the millions who have died are looked upon by God as merely being "asleep" and that in his own "due time" they will be awakened from the sleep of death and be given an opportunity to receive the promised blessings. The stated purpose of God to restore the dead to life is one of the fundamental teachings of the Word of God. It is described in the Old Testament in various ways. Isaiah spoke of the "ransomed of the Lord" and said that they would "return." Ezekiel mentions it as returning to a "former estate," that is, the state of life as in contrast with the state of death. Jeremiah describes the resurrection as a returning from "the land of the enemy," that is, the great enemy, Death.—Isa. 35:10; Ezek. 16:55; Jer. 31:16

In the New Testament the Apostle Paul wrote, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (I Cor. 15:22) In Romans 8:19-23 Paul assures us that all creation, as well as the church of this Gospel Age, will be delivered from the corruption of death. He shows that all mankind is now "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God"—waiting, that is, for the "seed" of Abraham to be completed and for the promised blessings of life to begin flowing out to the people.

In John 1:9 we read concerning Jesus that he is "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The Sodomites and other wicked people of Abraham's day

certainly were not enlightened by Christ; so this means that they too, being among "all the families of the earth," are to be awakened from the sleep of death in order to receive that enlightenment.

Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32) Until the present time, comparatively few of earth's millions have been drawn to Christ. The vast majority have died without even having heard of him or understanding the great purpose of Jehovah which Christ came to earth to accomplish. This promise by Jesus would, therefore, go unfulfilled unless the wicked dead are restored to life.

In Isaiah 25:6-9 we are promised that a time is coming when Jehovah will make unto "all people" a "feast of fat things." What a beautiful symbol this is to emphasize the abundance of God's grace toward all mankind! This promise also states that God, Jehovah, will remove the "veil that is spread over all nations." Certainly this applies to the nations of the past as well as the present, yet the "veil" of misunderstanding concerning Jehovah was not removed from their "faces" while they lived and will never be removed unless they are awakened from the sleep of death and enlightened by the glory of God, which will then fill the earth. It will be then that Jehovah will "swallow up death in victory."

This will be accomplished during the messianic kingdom reign. It will be then that "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the Governor among the nations."—Ps. 22:27, 28

Specific Nations Mentioned

The people of Egypt and Assyria were, for the most part, enemies of God; yet he has promised to bless them. Concerning the time when they are awakened from death we read: "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and

with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord [Jehovah] of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of mine hands, and Israel mine inheritance."—Isa. 19:24, 25

The words "captive," "captivity," and "prisoners" are often used in the prophecies to refer to the death condition and to those held "captive" in death. Job refers to those in death as "prisoners" who "rest together." (Job 3:11-19) Referring to those who die in the great Armageddon struggle, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "They shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited."—Isa. 24:22

In a definite statement that the people of Sodom and Samaria and the nation of Israel shall be restored to their "former estate"—that is, the estate of life—their awakening from death is described as a bringing again of their "captivity." The text reads, "When I shall 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 thy captives in the midst of them."—Ezek. 16:53

The 48th chapter of Jeremiah describes the complete destruction of ancient Moab; yet in the last verse of the chapter we are given the promise, "Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord." This means that the Moabites are to be awakened from death and given an opportunity to enjoy God's promised blessings.

The Ammonites were also a wicked people, yet the Lord has promised to "bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon."—Jer. 49:6

Jeremiah 49:34-39 describes God's wrath against the Elamites, resulting in their destruction as sinners; but in verse 39 he says, "It shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam"—bring them forth, that is, from their captivity in death.

God destroyed Egypt's firstborn, as well as Pharaoh and his army. He also destroyed certain wicked kings because of their opposition to his people. Concerning these the Prophet David explained that God destroyed them because "his mercy endureth forever." (Ps. 136:10, 15, 18, 19, 20) How different is this explanation from that which, with a restricted viewpoint, some might offer as to why God destroyed those wicked people. Some would probably be inclined to say that God destroyed them because he had no more mercy for them forever. But this would not be true. From God's standpoint it was a merciful act to destroy them, for he was merely causing them to sleep until his due time came to further extend his mercy by enlightening them and giving them an opportunity to receive his promised blessings of everlasting life.

That the wicked are to be resurrected in order to come into harmony with God, if they will, is shown in the promise that the Sodomites and Samaritans are to return to their "former estate." (Ezek. 16:53-56) Verses 60 to 63 reveal that the purpose of their awakening, as well as the awakening of the Israelites, is that they might be brought into covenant relationship with God.

Ezekiel explains that in the resurrection the "shame" of the Israelites, because of their more favorable opportunity, will be greater than that of the Gentile nations then resurrected. Evidently Jesus had this prophecy in mind when he said it would be more tolerable, or "endurable," for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment than for the Jews who rejected him. (Matt. 10:15) But even these are to be raised from the dead and given an opportunity for salvation. Paul emphasizes this. Speaking of those who stumbled and fell in their rejection of Jesus and including them in God's grace, he said: "All Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer [Christ and his church] and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins."
—Rom. 11:26, 27

The "covenant" here referred to by Paul is the New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34, a covenant which is to be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. For the Israelites who rejected Jesus to be saved under the terms of this covenant means that they must be raised from the dead. And this, indeed, is just what the apostle declares, "What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"—Rom. 11:15

Paul had good authority for this statement. Near the close of Jesus' ministry he addressed the Jews who rejected him, and particularly his persecutors, saying: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. 23:37-39) Here in one grand sweep Jesus speaks of the wicked Jews throughout the entire Jewish Age, including those who rejected him, and said that in the future they would see him and accept him and would say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." There is no possible way this statement could be fulfilled apart from the resurrection of these wicked Israelites whom the Master addressed.

True, Jesus did say to the Israelites of his day, "Your house is left unto you desolate." But this had reference to the loss of their opportunity of continuing to be God's royal, or kingdom, nation. It did not mean that as individuals they would not have the opportunity of receiving the blessings of Christ's kingdom. The "kingdom" was taken away from them and given to a "nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," but their opportunity to receive life through Christ was not taken away.

The scribes and Pharisees were the religious leaders of Israel and, as such, "sat in Moses' seat." They were about to lose that honored position, and concerning this Jesus

pronounced "woe" upon them. He called them a "generation of vipers" and asked, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell [Gehenna]?" (Matt. 23:33) Obviously their willful opposition to Jesus and his message resulted in a considerable hardening of their hearts, which will make it much less tolerable for them in the future judgment day than for those less favored in this life. But Jesus did not say there was no hope for them to escape the condemnation of Gehenna. His question merely suggests the difficulties they would encounter, difficulties which they could overcome only by humbling themselves and, together with the remainder of mankind, joyfully and wholeheartedly acclaiming, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

In Romans 11:26 we read, "All Israel shall be saved." And, as Paul further explains, this will be in keeping with God's promise to take away their sins and to make a New Covenant with them. (Rom. 11:26,27; Jer. 31:31-34) The "Deliverer" who will "take away their sins" and save Israel will "come out of Sion"—Christ and his church in heavenly glory. It will be then that the Israelites will be restored to divine favor—those who have died, as well as the living generation, including the scribes and Pharisees who were instrumental in crucifying Jesus.

The majority of the Jews in Jesus' day refused to believe on him. A few did believe partially, but Paul explains that "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." (Rom. 11:32) How vast, indeed, is the mercy and grace of Jehovah! "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33) The reason God will be able to extend his mercy to the unbelieving Israelites is that receiving them back into his favor will, as Paul explains, mean "life from the dead."—Rom. 11:15

In setting forth this great fact of Israel's restoration, Paul was merely emphasizing the verity of God's promises which

are recorded in the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 37:1-14 is presented a remarkable prophecy of the restoration of Israel, a prophecy in which the "whole house of Israel" is symbolized by a valley of dry bones. "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts," they are represented as saying. This has been very true of the Israelites throughout the centuries.

But the prophecies show that this scene would change, that they would be restored eventually to their own land. (See Jer. 31:8-12; Amos 9:14, 15; Jer. 30:3-7; 16:14-16; Ezek. 20:33-37) The last prophecy cited indicates that the regathering would take place in times of great stress. The Lord declares, "I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye were scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. . . . And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant."

This indicates that the Israelites are to be regathered to Palestine prior to their acceptance into the New Covenant. In another prophecy the Lord says, "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." (Ezek. 36:24, 25) This also shows that they are regathered in unbelief.

The prophecy of Joel 3:1, 2 reveals that the regathering of Israel would take place during the "last days" assembling of the nations for the great Armageddon struggle. We have been witnessing the fulfillment of this prophecy. The fact that the Jewish people themselves do not yet recognize the significance of what is occurring does not mean that the Lord's hand is not overruling in their restoration to the land. This, however, is but the first phase of their restoration. Their "dry bones" are coming together, but not until they are clothed with flesh and the Lord puts his Spirit in them, will the Israelites turn to the Lord. The prophecy reads, "When I

have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, . . . then shall ye know that I the Lord hath spoken it, saith the Lord.”—Ezek. 37:13, 14

This prophecy refers to the national resurrection of Israel as well as to their individual restoration to the Promised Land, and it includes those who are in their graves. How right, therefore, was Paul, when he wrote that the receiving again of Israel would be “life from the dead”! How true also is his statement that “all Israel shall be saved” and that God had counted them all in “unbelief that he might have mercy upon all.”

And this is also in full harmony with Jesus’ assertion to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees that while the “house” of Israel was left desolate, they would later see him, and would say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” But only after the Lord has awakened them from the sleep of death will they thus discern that Jesus is the Messiah and, recognizing his blessedness, acclaim and serve him, and serve Jehovah who sent him.

All Classes Blessed

The restless, discontented masses of mankind are represented in the Scriptures as the “sea.” (Luke 21:25; Isa. 57:20) In Isaiah 60:5 we read concerning these: “Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear [reverence], and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.”

Certainly the “abundance of the sea” has not yet been “converted” to the Lord, nor have the “forces of the Gentiles” come unto him. “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name,” but nothing more than this has yet been accomplished by the Lord. (Acts 15:14) However, as James explains, after the people for the Lord’s name have been

taken out from the Gentiles, an opportunity will be given for the "residue of men," i.e., the remainder of the world of mankind, to "seek after the Lord."

Christ Died for All

Jehovah's love for the sin-cursed and dying race has been made operative through the gift of his Son to be man's Redeemer. In John 3:16 we read, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This text limits the receiving of everlasting life to those who "believe." But, as Paul asks, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. 10:14) And the same apostle also explains that the "god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (II Cor. 4:4) This indicates that as long as Satan continues to rule this "present evil world," even those who do hear the Gospel imperfectly presented do not have a fair opportunity to believe.

One of the biblical words used to describe the redemptive work of Christ is "ransom," and Paul explains that a knowledge of the ransom will be testified to all in due time. To Timothy he wrote: "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. 2:3-6

The sequence stated in this text is most revealing. Paul says that it is God's will that all shall first be "saved" and then come to a "knowledge of the truth." So far as eternal salvation is concerned, it must be based upon a knowledge of the "ransom for all" and a belief and obedience in harmony therewith. What, then, does Paul mean by being "saved" before coming to a knowledge of the truth? Obviously this is a

reference to the fact that in order to have a genuine opportunity to know about the "ransom for all," the entire unbelieving world will need to be "saved," or awakened from the sleep of death.

It will be after the people are awakened from death, as Paul indicates, that the glorious truth of the ransom and the manner in which it gives evidence of God's love will be "testified" to them. That will be the "due time" when the "sea" will be converted unto the Lord. Satan, the great deceiver, will then be bound, and the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth. Then the way will be made plain, so plain that "wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."—Isa. 35:8

The word "ransom" means a price to correspond, or a price to offset. When Adam sinned he was a perfect man, the "son of God." (Luke 3:38) God's just law, demanding an "eye for an eye," a "tooth for a tooth," a "life for a life," meant that if Adam was to be redeemed another perfect man would have to take his place in death. (Exod. 21:23,24; Deut. 19:21) It was for this purpose that Jesus was made flesh—a perfect human being, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."—Gal. 4:4; Heb. 7:26

The claim has been made that Adam was not redeemed by the blood of Christ because he was a willful sinner. The fact is that if Adam had not sinned willfully God could have forgiven him without a ransom. It was because God loved him despite his willful sin that, in order to give him another opportunity for life, he sent Jesus to be a ransom for him. Addressing those who have believed on Jesus and have already accepted the provisions of the ransom, Paul wrote, "If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." (Heb. 10:26) From this it is clear that if another sacrifice for sin were to be made, the willful sin of those who now have a knowledge of the truth would be atoned for, and they could return to harmony with God if they wished. It is only because there will be "no more"

sacrifice for sin that the reconciliation of present willful sinners will never be possible. Jesus atoned for the willful sin of Adam, so Adam will be awakened from the sleep of death and given another opportunity to live forever.

Adam's children inherited his sin and the sentence of death which came upon him because of his disobedience. (Rom. 5:12) Thus, when Jesus redeemed Adam, it meant that he also redeemed his offspring, who lost life through him. Paul explains the philosophy of this, saying: "If by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men [including Adam] unto justification of life."—Rom. 5:17-19

Christ stated that he came to give his life a "ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28) The Greek text reads, "the many." The word "many" as used in this text means an indefinite large number. In the Greek it is **polus**, and it was this word which Jesus used when he said to his disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous [**polus**], but the laborers are few." (Matt. 9:37) This contrasting use of the word **polus** strongly indicates that it denotes a great number, and what better word could Jesus have used to describe the countless millions whom he came to ransom by his precious blood?

The Apostle Paul emphasizes the largeness of this number when he says that Jesus gave himself a ransom for "all"—that is, for the entire human race. This does not mean, of course, that the entire human race will be eternally saved as a result of the ransom, for it is mandatory that there be an individual acceptance of this provision of Jehovah's grace in order to receive everlasting benefit from it. But the provision has been made for all; and because of this no one will remain in death because of Adam's sin, for all have been ransomed therefrom.

Opportunity After Death

As we have seen, it is God's will that all be saved from adamic death and given a knowledge of the truth concerning his loving provision of the ransom—all, that is, who do not receive that knowledge in this age. Jesus gives us further information concerning this, saying, "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 shall judge him in the last day."—John 12:46-48

It is clear from this that Jesus did not limit the opportunity of accepting the truth to the present short span of life. If they do not believe me, he said, I do not pass judgment. Jesus is our Exemplar, and since he did not judge those who failed to believe his testimony, surely we should not do so. Let us, instead, maintain his attitude toward those who do not accept our message, leaving their judgment with the Lord.

Jesus said that the truth of his teachings, his "word," would judge unbelievers in "the last day." When Jesus said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again," she replied, "I know he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." The "last day," then, is the resurrection day in the great plan of God, and we have Jesus' own words that unbelievers will then be judged, a judgment made possible by virtue of the fact that they will be raised from the dead.—John 11:23,24

This is confirmed by Jesus in his revealing message recorded in John 5:24 which we quote from the New World Translation: "Most truly I say to you, he that hears my word and believes him that sent me has everlasting life, and he does not come into judgment, but has passed over from death to life." "Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life,

and those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment.”—vss. 28, 29

Those who believe, Jesus said, pass from death to life and do not come into judgment. It will be conceded, we think, that this passing from death to life is now upon the basis of faith and that the life now received by faith becomes a reality only in the resurrection. Thus, those who now believe come forth to a resurrection of life. These are the ones who do “good things,” that is, the good works of God. “The work of God,” Jesus said, is “that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” (John 6:29) Those who do not believe could not perform works which would be good in God’s sight, but only vile works.

Jesus said that those who believe do not come into judgment, meaning that those who fail to believe do come into judgment, and in this 29th verse he explains that this will be after they come forth from the tomb; for, as he states, they come forth to “a resurrection of judgment.” Thus we see that while believers, when awakened from death, pass immediately into everlasting life without the necessity of further trial, or judgment, the awakening from death is not limited to these; for the unbelievers also are to “come forth,” that they may have their judgment, or trial period.

Since according to the New World Translation only those in the “memorial tombs” will “come out” of death, would we be warranted in concluding that this limits the resurrection to God’s friends, to those held in his memory? The Greek word translated “memorial tombs” is **mnemeion**, which simply means remembrance. It was used by the ancients to describe their burial places, or tombs. People were buried in these because their relatives and friends wanted to remember them. We erect tombstones today for the same reason. Tombs and tombstones are not designed to help God remember the dead.

This same Greek word is used in Matthew 27:52, 53, and in Luke 11:44, and translated “graves.” Certainly in these texts the word does not apply to the memory of God. **Mnemeion** is

translated "grave" in John 11:17, 31, 38, and in John 12:17. In none of these instances could it possibly mean the memory of God. It is translated "sepulchre" and "tomb" in referring to Jesus' burial place. It would hardly seem reasonable that in one instance alone this Greek word should be used to denote the memory of God.

However, even if this were true, we would not need to conclude that it limits God's grace as it will be manifested toward the wicked dead in awakening them from death that they might have a fair opportunity to accept his provision of life through Christ. We noted earlier in this discussion that Jehovah does remember the wicked dead and that he will awaken them from death in his own due time. The proof that God remembers them is the fact that he has promised to restore them to life. He would not make promises concerning those whom he had blotted from his memory; and, as we have seen, he has made such promises on behalf of the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Elamites, the Sodomites, the Samaritans, the Israelites who crucified Jesus, and the scribes and Pharisees who persecuted him.

Jehovah's promises and prophecies assure us that as prisoners of death all these, as well as the masses of mankind symbolized by the "sea," are to be released from their captivity. God recognizes that throughout the ages Satan, the prince of darkness, has blinded the minds of those who have not believed, and he proposes to give them an opportunity to believe when Satan is bound and when a knowledge of his own love and glory fills the earth. That will be the "due time" and the first time when a true knowledge of the "ransom for all" will be testified to the teeming millions of the human race.

Judgment

These millions, awakened from death and enlightened concerning the will of God, will then have an individual trial for life. It will be their **krisis**, or judgment time, as shown in John 5:29. In Isaiah 26:9 we are told that when the Lord's

“judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” However, Isaiah indicates the possibility that even in that “land of uprightness” there will be willfully “wicked” who will not, even under those favorable conditions, “learn righteousness.”—vs. 10

Nevertheless, even they will be awakened to have their opportunity to learn righteousness. Verse 11 shows this. It reads, “Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.” God’s “hand” has not yet been “lifted up.” It will be during the Millennium that he will make “bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations,” and when “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” (Isa. 52:10) And the wicked will be there to “see.” They will be awakened from death and given an opportunity to “see,” but those who are willful at heart will continue to resist the Lord and will be destroyed. But the decision as to whether or not they are incorrigible will not be made until the Lord’s “hand is lifted up.”

During that future judgment period in the “land of uprightness” all adverse influences will be removed. Isaiah indicates this, saying, “O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us. . . . They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.” (Isa. 26:13, 14) Isaiah is here speaking as an Israelite, and that nation time and time again was given over to the worship of false gods and goddesses, such as Baal, Moloch, and Astoreth. The prince of all these is Satan. He will be bound during the judgment day, and the false gods of the heathen will have forever perished. Even the memory of them will be forgotten.

Truly, it will be a “land of uprightness”; and while Isaiah notes the possibility that even under such favorable circumstances some may refuse to “see” and, as willful

enemies of God and of righteousness, be destroyed, we need not suppose that there will be a great number who will take such a course. This we can well leave to the judgment of a merciful God, knowing that when the dead are awakened and "stand" before him and the "books" are opened, revealing his holy will to those who in this life "sat in darkness," every loving consideration will be given each individual. And we may assume that the names of the vast majority will be enrolled in the "book of life," which will then be opened for them.

They will be judged by the truths written in the books which then will be opened, not by what is imperfectly witnessed to them at the present time. It will be then that they will have an opportunity of conforming their "works" to the will of God as it will be revealed to them by the opening of the "books." (Rev. 20:12-14) Only those who do not then conform and whose names will not therefore be written in the "book of life" then "opened" will go into the "second death."— vs. 15

Regeneration

In Matthew 19:28 Jesus associates the future work of judgment with "the regeneration." Adam generated the human race. Jesus will regenerate those to whom Adam bequeathed a heritage of death. This is brought beautifully to our attention in Isaiah 53:10, where we are informed that Jesus "shall see his seed," and that the "pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." From the natural standpoint, Jesus did not have a "seed," a "generation"; but, as verse 11 states, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." His travail in death as man's Redeemer will indeed result in a "seed," and that seed will be the regenerated race of mankind.

Isaiah declares concerning Jesus that the "pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." This "pleasure" of Jehovah must be that loving purpose of which he makes mention over and over again throughout his Word, that gracious design

which he has spoken by the "mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." It is his plan to bless "all the families of the earth" by giving them an opportunity to accept the provision of God's grace through Christ and live forever.

The Apostle Paul further emphasizes the fact that the human race will be regenerated through Jesus when he refers to him as the "last Adam." He explains that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The "first Adam" generated the race in a dying condition, but the "last Adam" will "regenerate" the race to life.—I Cor. 15:22, 45

Confirming this aspect of Jehovah's provision for regenerating humanity are the many references in his Word in which the church of Christ, when associated with him in glory, is spoken of as his "bride." Revelation 19:7 reads, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." It is this glorified bride, the "last Eve" as it were, who will with Christ initiate the call to life: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. . . . And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Rev. 22:17

This symbolic reference to the church of Christ and her work in the resurrection is in full harmony with Paul's explanation that this same class constitutes a part of the promised seed of Abraham through which "all the families of the earth" are to be blessed. (Gal. 3:8, 16, 27-29) It is also in agreement with Jesus' promise in his statement to Peter that the "gates of hell" would not prevail against the church. (Matt. 16:18) These "gates of hell" are to be opened that the "pleasure of the Lord," his promised blessing of all the families of the earth, might "prosper" through Christ and his glorified "bride."

In Isaiah 49:8, 9 we have another reference to the release of the prisoners of death through the instrumentality of Jesus and his church. In II Corinthians 6:1,2 this prophecy is quoted, in part, by the Apostle Paul and applied to the church. The promise reads: "I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to

cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." God covenanted with Abraham and confirmed it by his oath, that he would bless all the families of the earth, and in this prophecy he assures us that his "pleasure" will be accomplished through Christ and his church, that all the prisoners of death will be called forth in fulfillment of his promises.

In Isaiah 65:17-25 we have another wonderful promise of the kingdom of Christ and the blessings it will shower upon the people. In this promise Christ and his "bride" are referred to as the "blessed of the Lord," whose "seed"—regenerated mankind—will then build houses and inhabit them, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. The marginal translation states that "mine elect shall make them," the "seed of the blessed of the Lord," "long enjoy the work of their hands."

The earth is not to be filled with the offspring of a group miraculously kept alive through Armageddon for the purpose. Instead, and as Isaiah assures us, Christ shall "see his seed," and shall "see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied," for the "pleasure" of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. Surely he who wept over the suffering of the sin-cursed and dying world and said to Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," could never be "satisfied" to see more than four billions of the present population of earth for whom he died go down into everlasting death! Nor could he be "satisfied" to see the countless millions who have died through the ages suffer a similar fate. If this were so, how untrue would be the promise that the "pleasure of the Lord" would prosper in his hand!

"Restoration of All Things"

Another word used in the Bible to convey the thought of an awakening of the dead to life is "restoration." In the King

James translation it is "restitution." The New World Translation speaks of it as the "restoration of all things which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time." (Acts 3:21) How comprehensive this is—the prophets foretold the restoration of all things, including, as we have seen, the Edomites, the Elamites, the Israelites, and many others—"all." One of the proof texts quoted by Peter as an example of what the prophets had written on the subject of "restoration" is the promise made to Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

As another proof text, Peter cites the prophecy of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 18:18,19, concerning a "Prophet" whom the Lord would raise up to the people of his day, from among their brethren of a later generation, saying that they would have the opportunity of hearing that Prophet. In order for this to be fulfilled the Israelites of Moses' day, to whom the promise was first made, must be raised from the dead. It was for this reason that Peter quoted it. He was showing that it would be fulfilled through Christ during the time of his second presence, hence that it demanded the resurrection of the dead.

And the people who heard Peter deliver this sermon understood it just as he wished them to do. Verses 1 and 2 of the next chapter reveal this, stating that the "priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees" were "grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead." The New World Translation limits the meaning of this text, indicating that the apostles were teaching the resurrection of the dead merely "in the case of Jesus." But this is not what Peter said.

The Emphatic Diaglott reads, "Being grieved because they taught the people, and announced that resurrection from the dead in Jesus." All of the prophets had foretold the resurrection of the dead, "both of the just and unjust." What grieved the priests was Peter's explanation that "that resurrection," which the prophets had foretold, was to come

through Jesus. They did not like Peter's claim that Jesus himself had been raised from the dead, and they liked still less his teaching that the resurrected Jesus would return and fulfill the promises of God to raise all the dead during the "times of restitution of all things."

The priests and the ruler of the temple knew that all God's holy prophets had foretold such a time of "restitution," or restoration. We know this from Paul's words to Felix, when he said: "This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."—Acts 24:14, 15

Peter's reference to the prophecy of Moses concerning "that Prophet" and the fact that "every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" is very enlightening. It shows that the "times of restitution" will see conditions vastly different from what they are now. During the present age, the righteous as well as the wicked are dying. This is illustrated by Jeremiah's parable concerning the "fathers" having eaten the "sour grape," and the "children's teeth" being "set on edge."—Jer. 31:29

Jeremiah explains that in "those days," that is, in the "times of restitution," this will no longer be true. He asserts that then "every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." (vs. 30) How well Peter explained this when he said, "It shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."—Acts 3:23

Yes, it "shall come to pass." It was not so in Peter's day, and it has not yet "come to pass." Today the people are still dying because of Adam's sin. As Peter explained, the time when restitution blessings will flow out to the world and when

only willful sinners will die is during Christ's second presence.

While we believe that our Lord has returned and is now serving "meat in due season" to the household of faith, the "times of restitution" have not yet begun. Evil still goes unchecked, and those who serve the Lord still have the opportunity of suffering and dying with him. They are not protected and kept alive as the righteous will be when kingdom blessings are actually made available to the people.

Then, everyone who dies will die for his own iniquity. Then children will not be condemned to the "second death" because their parents may be unfaithful. Only in the sense that all die in Adam is this true even now, and when the kingdom authority of Christ is actually functioning in the earth, no one will die at all unless individually guilty of willful sin.

Surely "there is a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea"! How abundant and soul-satisfying is the testimony of his Word, which reveals the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of his love and grace. How wonderful that he has made a provision of life for others than ourselves! May the example of his love broaden our own outlook and make us more like him.

Yes, a knowledge of the grace and love of Jehovah inspires us to reverence and love him. The Lord said, "Their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." (Isa. 29:13) We should delight to proclaim the love of God, and fear should never be used to induce people to believe in him and in his beloved Son. The Lord's people today, as in the past, are called to show forth his praises, and how better can we do this than by proclaiming the glorious kingdom Gospel of love and grace!

Justice in the Kingdom

While God is love, he is also just, and his justice demands the punishment of all willful sinners with death. We have

already noted the clear testimony of the Scriptures on this point; but it is important to realize that this testimony of the Word, insofar as mankind in general is concerned, applies to the age of "restitution," not to the present time. Many of the Lord's people down through the age failed to realize this and so made the mistake of supposing that all were lost who did not accept their message.

This mistaken viewpoint did not come about suddenly but was the result of a gradual falling away from the true faith. The apostles foretold that this would happen. The apostasy continued to develop until the church illicitly joined hands with the state and claimed that thereby the kingdom of Christ had been established. This formed the basis of many serious errors, including the unscriptural teaching that the opportunity to gain salvation is limited to this present short span of life.

If the kingdom was then established, every text of Scripture applying to the work of the kingdom would of necessity be in process of fulfillment, including those which indicate that those who disobey the laws of the kingdom would be everlastingly destroyed. By that time, of course, "destruction" had come to mean "torment."

The reasoning seemed sound; but it was based on a false premise, for the kingdom of Christ was not then established. Kingdom authority was not then, and never has been, entrusted to fallen and imperfect men. However, while today nearly all recognize the evils of the church-state counterfeit of Christ's kingdom, most of the errors which grew out of the great apostasy still becloud the thinking of millions, not the least of which is the false view that there can be no opportunity beyond death to accept Christ and obtain salvation.

At this end of the age, however, the glorious Gospel of the kingdom was, in the Lord's providence, restored to humble followers of the Master. It again became clearly understood, as it was by the Early Church, that the work of God in the

present age is merely the selection of that "little flock" who will live and reign with Christ during the kingdom age. Again it was seen that the glorious promises of God concerning kingdom blessings to all the families of the earth would be fulfilled only after all who were to reign with Christ in his kingdom were glorified together with him.

This restored understanding of the loving plan of God revealed not only that the promised blessings of "restitution" must wait for fulfillment until the kingdom was established but also that not until then would the world be on trial for life. This meant that all the various texts of Scripture describing the righteous judgments of God against willful sinners do not apply now but in the kingdom age, that "judgment day" of the future.

But not all who once rejoiced in this clear light of truth continued in it. With some, the viewpoint again developed that the kingdom is already established, not through a church state system, but through them. The claim is that they are now the Lord's kingdom class and that the authority of the kingdom is now being exercised through them. If this were true, it would follow that any and all who might fail to heed their message and join them in their work would thereby become subject to the "second death." The reasoning is correct, but again the premise is wrong. Kingdom authority is not yet being exercised in the earth, except over the nations for their destruction.

No Private Interpretation

Once a false premise is established as a foundation upon which to build, error's building blocks fall neatly into place upon that foundation. If kingdom authority is vested in a certain group, obviously the leaders of that group must be God's sole channel of truth. Since one of the kingdom promises is that a "pure language" would be turned to the people, then they must be the channel through which it is fulfilled.

A text of scripture which is used to support this "channel" doctrine is II Peter 1:20,21 which reads in part, "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." This is construed to mean that not all have the privilege of interpreting the Scriptures, but only those specially authorized by God, that he speaks through his "channel" and not by blessing individual Bible study.

The Greek word in this text which is translated "interpretation" is **epilusis**, which Prof. Strong defines as "explanation." This may not seem like an important difference until we read Peter's entire statement, which is: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation [explanation]. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."—II Pet. 1:19-21

The word "for" in these verses is very important—no prophecy of the scripture is of private explanation "FOR . . . holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." The apostle is emphasizing that the prophecies of the Old Testament to which he urges Christians to take heed are not men's explanations of things which were to come. If they expressed merely human viewpoints, or examinations, it would not be especially important to give heed to them. But, since these prophecies were given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, they are important to everyone who wishes to be taught by God.

And since they were given by the Holy Spirit, it is only by the help of the Holy Spirit that they can be understood. Paul reminds us of this with respect to all the thoughts of God pertaining to his loving purposes when, to the Corinthian brethren he wrote: "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the

world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.”—I Cor. 2:11-13

Thus the apostle makes it clear that all who have received the Holy Spirit are able to understand the precious thoughts of God, which by his Spirit he has caused to be written in his Word. All the Lord's people have the privilege of assisting one another in the study of the Bible, and each one has an individual responsibility to “search the Scriptures” and to hold fast only to that which is found to be in full harmony with the Holy Word. “Study to show thyself approved unto God,” Paul wrote to Timothy, “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (II Tim. 2:15) The responsibility set forth in this injunction cannot be delegated to or left in the hands of others.

Paul speaks of “rightly dividing the word of truth.” In the context he mentions some who were then teaching that the resurrection of the dead had already taken place. The Bible surely teaches that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, but the erroneous position of those mentioned by Paul was their claim that it was in the past. They had failed to “rightly divide the word of truth” so did not clearly comprehend the plans and purposes of God.

The Bible also clearly teaches that the time will come when God will turn to the people a “pure language.” (Zeph. 3:9) But this is one of the precious kingdom promises of the Bible and is not now being fulfilled. The verse preceding this promise reads: “Wait ye upon me, saith 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 upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.” It is immediately after this that the Lord says, “For 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.”

It is clear that the "pure language" is not turned to the people until "all the earth" is devoured by the fire of God's jealousy. It is true that the gathering of the nations of earth in preparation for the overthrow of this present evil world is in progress, but the symbolic earth has not yet been destroyed. Satan is still the "god of this world." (II Cor. 4:4) His blinding influences are still causing the proclamation of all sorts of confusing and God-dishonoring teachings, with the result that the people are not yet calling upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent.

When the Bride Says, "Come"

John Wesley, in the largeness of his heart and through failure to see that the Millennium is the age in God's plan when the full and free grace of God will be extended to the people, taught that "the Spirit and the bride" are now saying, "Come, . . . take the water of life freely." It is understandable that he should have made such a mistake, but examination of the text with its context shows that it is another one of those kingdom texts which cannot and will not be fulfilled until the full end of the present age and until the church of Christ is complete and united with her Lord as his "bride."

The river of water of life proceeds "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." "On either side of the river, was there the tree of life, . . . and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Rev. 22:1,2) Are the nations now being healed? Surely not! This is a promise which could not possibly apply until after the Armageddon struggle is fully over, after the nations and peoples of the earth have been left prostrate and bleeding. It will be then that they will need and receive healing.

The next verse says, "And there shall be no more curse." (Rev. 22:3) Is it true that the curse of sin and death has been lifted from the earth? Surely not! Humanity continues to suffer and die, while darkness still covers the earth and gross

darkness the people, although the Revelator says of the time when the water of life is available that there "shall be no night there."—vs. 5

Here, then, are three outstanding developments in the plan of God for which the world must wait before the invitation can properly be extended to all, "Come, . . . take the water of life freely." (1) The nations must begin to be healed by the "leaves" of the life-giving trees, (2) there must be evidence of the lifting of the curse of death, and (3) the "pure language" which God has promised to turn to the people must have effectively scattered all the mists of superstition and darkness which are still blinding their minds and preventing them from knowing and understanding the great and loving Jehovah of the Bible.

And in the larger context of this wonderful promise, it is even more apparent that it could not possibly be in process of fulfillment now. No bride or "wife" appears in the Book of Revelation until chapter 19, verse 7, where we read that "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." This means the full end of the church's career in the flesh. The next time we find mention of the "bride" is in chapter 21, where, in verse 2, we are told of the "holy city, new Jerusalem," which comes "down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." In verses 9 and 10 we read: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." The "bride," then, is the "holy city." Its coming down from God out of heaven is associated with the creation of the "new heavens" and the "new earth" when the present symbolic earth is "passed away" and there is "no more sea." Can we say today that there is "no more sea"—no more restless, discontented, and suffering mass of mankind?

Combined with this general picture is the assertion that "the tabernacle of God is with men" and the explanation that

then "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (vss. 3-5) Is it now true that there is "no more death," no more "pain," and that all things have been made new?

These are the conditions which will be brought to pass on earth when the time comes for the "bride" of Christ to say, "Come. . . . take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17) John Wesley preached his conception of God's free grace, inviting all to partake of the water of life freely. He did not realize that the "throne of God and of the Lamb" from which the river of life will flow was not established in his day. So, actually, the water of life was not then available. Nor is that "river" now flowing. Nor will it be flowing until after the Armageddon struggle is fully over. No one can partake of this "river" now and thereby be assured of not dying in Armageddon.

The Sheep and the Goats

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats also applies to the kingdom period. Its introduction shows this—"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." (Matt. 25:31) The Greek word here translated "angels" means "messengers." It is variously used in the Bible, referring at times to human beings as servants, and at other times to spirit beings, and at times, even to inanimate things. Paul referred to his partial blindness as "a messenger of Satan."—II Cor. 12:7

The "angels" of this parable, who sit with Jesus in the throne of his glory, are the members of his glorified church. Paul wrote, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (I Cor. 6:2) In Matthew 19:28 Jesus promised his disciples that they would sit on thrones judging the "twelve tribes of Israel." But Israel will be only one of the nations to be judged thus by Jesus and his church, when together they

sit upon the throne of his glory. (Rev. 3:21) As the parable shows, "all nations" will then be judged by them.

In his sermon on Mars' Hill, Paul stated that God had appointed a day when he would judge the world in righteousness and had given assurance of this unto "all men" by raising Jesus from the dead to be the righteous judge. (Acts 17:31) This appointed "day" was not in Paul's time. The people were not then on trial before Christ and will not be until the kingdom is established.

The work of judgment is also referred to in a prophecy recorded by Micah, chapter 4, verses 1 to 4. Micah shows that it will take place after the "mountain of the house of the Lord" is established in the "top of the mountains." Has this yet occurred? Is the Lord's kingdom today dominating all the nations of the earth? Surely not! The kingdom class is not controlling world affairs but instead is suffering persecution and must be subservient to worldly governments and depend upon their courts for the administration of justice.

When the kingdom of the Lord is established, the law will not go forth from human governments or from man-made institutions but from "Zion." And the word of the Lord will go forth from "Jerusalem." Not until then will the Lord "judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off." Not until then will the nations "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks." Not until then will they cease to "lift up sword against nation," and learn war no more. Not until then will it be true that "none shall make them afraid."

What wonderful changes there will be in human experience when the Lord judges among the nations! Who could possibly presume to say that this work of judgment is now going on? Are the nations now beating their swords into plowshares? Have they ceased to lift up swords against one another? Is the world enjoying the full economic security represented in this prophecy by the symbol of "every man" sitting under vine and fig tree?

And above all, is it true today, as this prophecy declares it will be when the Lord is judging among the nations, that there are none to "make afraid"? Never before has the world been so filled with fear. It is the time foretold by Jesus when men's hearts would be "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth." (Luke 21:26) No, this is not the world's judgment day! The "sheep" are not now being separated from the "goats."

It is true that this parable was given by Jesus as one of the signs of his second presence. But we should remember that his presence lasts for more than a thousand years, and that the ultimate purpose of his return is the restoration of those for whom he died at his first advent. So the judgment-day work, while one of the signs of his presence, is a sign which has not yet appeared. We are witnessing the "distress of nations with perplexity," but not their enlightenment and blessing. But when that judgment work does begin, it will continue until all who prove worthy during that thousand-year age will hear the Master say to them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"—the kingdom, or dominion, given to our first parents.—Matt. 25:34; Gen. 1:28

The use of the word "blessed" in the Master's statement, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," is most significant. Beginning with Abraham, God continued to promise the future blessing of all the "families," or "nations," of the earth. And now, at the close of the final judgment or trial day, the thousand-year kingdom day, we find Jesus saying to those who pass successfully through that trial, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." These are the ones, in other words, whom the Father promised to bless and who will then be blessed.

Jehovah promised to "bless" these families, or nations, through the "Seed" of Abraham. Jesus, the Head of that "seed" class, first died to redeem them. Then he comes in the throne of his glory, his church with him, to administer the

blessings he provided through his death, the blessings of "restitution," of "regeneration," of "resurrection." God commanded our first parents to multiply and fill the earth and to have dominion over it. He knew that this would be done, and to emphasize the triumph of Jehovah's loving purpose toward man, the invitation will be extended, "Come, inherit the dominion prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The ones for whom it was originally prepared are the ones who will finally receive it—the "blessed" of the Father.

God's Organization

The organization of the church is clearly set forth in the Bible. Jesus is its Head, and it is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the "chief cornerstone." (Eph. 2:20) In Ephesians 4:11 Paul informs us that the Lord has also supplied evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These have been valuable helpers, but none of them has been inspired in the sense of never making a mistake in expounding the Word of God.

These lesser servants in the church, given the general title of "elders," are appointed by the local congregations of the Lord's people. According to the Bible, these appointments are made by a vote of the congregation and not by a centralized authority, as in Papacy. In Acts 14:23, the word "ordained" is used in this connection, and it is translated from a Greek word which, according to Professor Young, means "to appoint by vote." In this end of the age, as in times past, a departure from this method of appointing local servants has led to unscriptural dictatorship among the people of God.

In the messages to the "seven churches," recorded in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation, an "angel," or special messenger, is mentioned in connection with each of the congregations named. In Luke 12:42-44 a special servant is mentioned by Jesus, one whom the Lord would raise up when he returned for the purpose of dispensing "meat in due season" to the "household" of faith.—Matt. 24:45-47

These various servants of the church have, in the Lord's providence, been a rich blessing to the household of faith, and the proof that they have been the Lord's choice has been the joy which the truths they taught have brought into the hearts and lives of the Lord's people. None of them has in any sense been the successor of another like servant, but each has been raised up at the proper time to serve the church according to its needs at the time.

The special servant mentioned by Jesus who would be raised up to serve the household of faith at the end of the age is obviously one individual who would be used by the Lord to serve the entire "household." This servant is not a class, or group, neither a society, or organization, for the very simple reason that he is mentioned in conjunction with fellow servants. If "that servant" is an organization, then it would be serving other organizations. If it were a class, then the other servants would also be classes, or groups.

The Greek word translated "ruler" in Jesus' promise that a faithful steward would be made ruler to serve the "household" with "meat in due season" means to "set down" or to place. It does not imply that the faithful steward would rule his fellow servants or exercise lordship over them in any way. His only assignment was to serve his brethren with the "meat in due season," which the Lord himself would provide through the written Word at the time of his return.

And what is this spiritual food which was served in "due season"? Throughout the Gospel Age the Lord's people maintained their hopes of a heavenly reward. Truths pertaining to Christ's return, the "harvest" which is the "end of the age," the establishment and work of the kingdom were not vital to their needs. But when our Lord did return, these dispensational truths became essential "meat in due season." During the age it was not the "due time" to proclaim the glorious kingdom hope of "restitution." But when Christ returned, it was; and in order that this might be included in the witness work of the household of faith, this

fundamental truth was restored, and the Lord's faithful servants have been proclaiming it for almost a hundred years.

The determining of just whom the Lord has used as one or another of his special servants has not been a matter of interpretation or of saying arbitrarily that this or that one has been the Lord's choice. Rather, it is a matter of discovering from the Bible the nature of the message that was due at any given time, and then noting whom the Lord used to deliver that message. Thus it is in connection with "that servant." Pastor Russell was the one used to announce the presence of Christ, the work of harvest, the imminence of the kingdom, and the glorious hope of restitution for the world. For this he was hated by nominal churchianity. He was persecuted because he taught that the love and grace of Jehovah extended to the unrighteous dead and that they would be given an opportunity to obtain life when awakened from the sleep of death during the Millennium.

It was this loving message of the grace of Jehovah, this voice of God spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began, that helped to identify Pastor Russell as the one specially used at this end of the age as "that servant." Obviously his fellow servants delight to proclaim the same glorious Gospel of love. To the extent that they have cooperated in the work of proclaiming this same message the Lord has blessed them—not by large numbers of followers, nor by establishing an imposing institution—but by giving them rejoicing hearts as they sacrifice their all in proclaiming the good news of the "restitution of all things."

In view of the fact that Pastor Russell died so many years ago, some might ask if we should not now look for another special servant, either an individual or a society. No, this is not necessary, nor is it indicated in the Word of God. Jesus, the Head of the church, is its chief instructor, and we still depend upon the record of what he said more than nineteen centuries ago. New apostles were not needed for the church when the original twelve died. The writings of Paul and Peter

and the others are just as vital to us today as they were to the Early Church.

And we still have the glorious message of present truth which that "faithful and wise servant" had found in the Word of God. This message, which continues to live in the hearts of God's people, is the important consideration; and Brother Russell is still "that servant" to those who continue to rejoice in the doctrines which he had found in his study of the Bible.

A Theocratic Government

A theocracy is a government under God. The ancient kingdom of Israel was a theocracy, for the various kings who ruled the nation were said to "sit on the throne of the Lord." When David relinquished his rulership to Solomon, he prayed to God, saying, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all."—1 Chron. 29:11

Israel's government under God was typical of the kingdom of Christ, which also will be a theocracy. But that theocracy is not yet functioning. When the attempt was made back in the Middle Ages to establish Christ's kingdom, someone added the words of David's prayer to our Lord's prayer, "Thine is the kingdom." But it was not true then, and it is not true today. When Israel's typical theocracy was overthrown in 606 B. C., the Lord said, "It shall be no more until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it him."—Ezek. 21:27

We believe that the rightful King has come and that he has taken unto himself his great power to reign but that his power is not being exercised through human representatives. The work of the King now is merely the dashing of the nations to pieces like a potter's vessel. We can see evidences of this on every hand, and from this standpoint we can truly say that "our King is marching on." But the earthly phase of his kingdom has not yet been established, and no one is authorized to exercise kingdom authority in his name.

The work of God in the earth throughout the ages has been to select and train, in advance, those who will serve as the personnel of the kingdom of Christ when it actually begins to function for the blessing of all the families of the earth. These will have been tried and tested under the most crucial circumstances, and their loyalty to Jehovah and to the principles of righteousness which are the foundations of his throne will have been fully demonstrated.

Their training complete, these fall asleep in death to await the glorious inauguration of the kingdom in which they will, by means of the resurrection of the dead, have a part. "Be thou faithful unto death," said Jesus to his faithful followers of the Gospel Age, "and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10) No one can possibly have a "crown" in that glorious kingdom with Christ until he has been proved worthy by suffering and dying with him. Those who thus qualify are exalted to the divine nature with Christ. They will have proved their loyalty and, in their new, divine bodies, will be able to govern perfectly, in harmony with Jehovah's will.

Those who will be the human representatives of that future theocratic government were also pretrained. These are the ancient worthies, the faithful servants of God from righteous Abel to John the Baptist. Jesus told the religious rulers of his day that these would be seen and recognized in the kingdom, while they themselves would be cast out. (Luke 13:28) He said that the people would "sit down" with these. (vs. 29) This expression is a translation of a Greek term which describes the attitude of a pupil before its master, or teacher. In other words, these ancient worthies are to be the recognized teachers of the people in the real theocratic government now near.

A careful and prayerful reading of the 11th chapter of Hebrews shows clearly that the ancient worthies also proved their fidelity to God and righteousness. And Paul explains that they hoped for a "better resurrection." (Heb. 11:35) Yes, when these are raised from the dead, they will no longer

have the former handicaps of imperfect human bodies through which to express their devotion to God. And what marvelous representatives these will be of the spiritual rulers of that kingdom, the divine Christ!

The Scriptures also tell us of another class who will "serve God in his temple." It is the "great multitude" of Revelation 7:9, 13-17. These are shown to have come up through "great tribulation" and to have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are not in the throne but stand before the throne. They will not be rulers but servants of the rulers. The Scriptures do not furnish the details of their service, but evidently it will, in some manner, correspond to the service now being rendered to the "heirs of salvation" by the angels, the "ministering spirits" who "always behold the face" of our "Father which is in heaven." (Heb. 1:14; Matt. 18:10) The "great multitude" then, will be the liaison servants in the kingdom, maintaining communications between the spiritual and human phases of that theocratic government.

What a wonderful government that will be, with all who serve in it under Christ thoroughly tested and trained in advance. To these the authority of the kingdom can be safely entrusted, for they will delight to use it to the glory of God and to shower his promised blessings upon all the families of the earth.

The Gospel Age Call

We have spoken of the work of God throughout the ages. Let us think of this work for a moment from the standpoint of his calling or invitation to those whom he has been selecting and preparing during the present age to be the rulers and servants in the messianic kingdom. Christ began the calling of those who are to live and reign with him. The first of these were the remnant of Israel who responded to his message and accepted him as the promised Messiah. These were called to be sons of God, members of his divine and future ruling family.—John 1:11, 12

Later this same call was extended to the Gentiles, those responding being a "people for his name." (Acts 15:14-17) James explains that after this people for his name is called out from the Gentiles, the Lord returns to "built again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down," that the "residue of men," the rest of the world of mankind, might seek after the Lord. He makes no mention of the calling of another class at the end of the age. If millions were to be called and brought under a theocratic government at the end of the age and thus saved from death in Armageddon, this would have been a most logical place for the Lord, through the apostle, to so state. James concludes his summary of the divine plan by saying that "known unto God are all his works from the foundation of the world." This implies that he had mentioned all the main features of God's plan for the salvation of the world, yet he said nothing about a special class being called at this end of the age.

Those reached by the truth during this age are said to be called in "one hope" of their calling. (Eph. 4:4) They are called according to God's purpose. They are called of God to be "priests," as typed by Aaron. (Heb. 3:1, 6; 5:4) The whole world is not called—only "as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39) There has been no other call during the present Gospel Age, nor is there any other call now. The "great multitude" does not come into existence under a special call.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3) All of Jesus' disciples from then until now, obeying his word, and trusting in the merit of his shed blood, are thus made clean, being represented as wearing robes of righteousness. (Isa. 61:10) They are urged to keep themselves "unspotted from the world." (James 1:27) When the number of the elect "little flock" is complete, they will be presented to the Lord without "spot, or wrinkle." (Eph. 5:27) But the Bible indicates that there are many who do not keep themselves

unspotted, and through lack of zeal their robes become soiled and in need of cleansing.

These love the Lord, and in a final test do not deny him. They are represented as a class that comes through "great tribulation," washing their spotted robes. There are no direct promises made to these. Such promises would tend to encourage laxity; but the God of all mercy and grace, who is longsuffering and "not willing that any should perish," in his wise economy will give them a place as servants in his kingdom arrangements. Having been given spiritual hopes, they will become spirit beings. They will not be a part of the temple class, but will serve God in his temple. In Psalm 45:14,15 they are represented as being virgins and companions of the "bride," and will enter into the "King's palace."

That these are a called out, spiritual class, as is the bride, the "little flock," is indicated in Revelation 7:9 by the fact that the Greek word, *ek* meaning "out of" is used in connection with their having been called "out of" all nations, not "of" all nations as given in the King James version. It is the same Greek word used in the 14th verse, where it is correctly translated, "out of." The text reads, "These are they which came **out of** great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Cleansing the Temple

The "temple" of the Lord has been in process of preparation throughout the entire Gospel Age. When complete, it will be composed of Jesus and his faithful followers, the "little flock." It is to this temple class in the flesh that the prophecy of Malachi 3:1 applies. This text states that the Lord would suddenly come to his temple. In Matthew 11:10 Jesus applies the beginning of this verse; that is, the reference to the "messenger" who would "prepare the way before me," to John the Baptist. Obviously, then, the remainder of the prophecy began to have its fulfillment at Jesus' first advent.

Judgment began with the house of God at that time and has continued throughout the age. (I Pet. 4:17) To speak of Jesus "coming to his temple for judgment" in 1918 is expressing merely a supposition, having no scriptural meaning, while disregarding the facts concerning the time and methods of God's dealings with those whom he has been calling and preparing to live and reign with Christ.

Outlining further details of the age-long judgment work of the church, the prophet continues, "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Mal. 3:2) The Apostle Peter speaks of the "fiery trial" by which all the temple class are tested; and Paul wrote, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (I Pet. 4:12; I Cor. 10:12) Malachi adds that the Lord "shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."—Mal. 3:3

The "silver" and "gold" mentioned here may be symbolic of the two spirit-begotten classes which have developed together throughout the age—the "little flock" and the "great multitude." They have all been invited to present their bodies "a living sacrifice," to "offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." (Rom. 12:1) All of them covenanted to do this. The "gold" class faithfully carry out their covenant, while the "great multitude," represented by the silver, do not have the same loving "zeal of the Lord's house" which consumes the "little flock." To these, the destruction of their flesh is "tribulation." Yet they are purified and in the end are granted a place as servants in the glorified temple.

Passing Through Armageddon

With two global wars in the past and another threatening, with atom and nuclear bombs in the hands of the earth's largest nations and these nations ready and willing to use

them when occasion may seem to demand, there is little doubt to truth-enlightened students of prophecy that the terrible climax of the final Armageddon struggle of the world is near. What will be the position of the Lord's people in the final phase of this "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation"? Will all the unrighteous be destroyed in Armageddon?

Referring to the signs of his presence, Jesus said, "When ye see these things, . . . then look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption [deliverance] draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28) This seems clearly to refer to the deliverance of the last members of the "little flock," the church, in the first resurrection, that they might live and reign with Christ in his kingdom, which, after Armageddon, will begin to bless "all the families of the earth." This deliverance is referred to in Psalm 46:5, where the promise is that the Lord will "help" his people, "and that right early." The marginal translation reads, "when the morning appeareth."

But what about the remainder of mankind, the unbelievers, the unrighteous, those whose eyes of understanding are blinded by the "god of this world"? (II Cor. 4:4) When Jesus prophetically described the final phases of Armageddon, the great "time of trouble," he said that unless those days be shortened "no flesh would be saved." But he gave assurance that those days would be shortened, indicating clearly that some flesh would be saved, that all would not perish in Armageddon.—Matt. 24:22

In the 46th Psalm we have one of the Bible's most graphic descriptions of Armageddon, revealing the Lord's hand in the struggle through to the end, and to the full exercise and manifestation of divine authority throughout the earth. Verse 6 declares, "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted." Then follow words of assurance to those of the Lord's people who would see the beginning of this trouble, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." We have the refuge of the truth

and the glorious promises that, if faithful unto death, we will live and reign in the Lord's kingdom.

Verse 8 gives a further description of the "time of trouble" of Armageddon. It reads, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth." It is after this Armageddon destruction, after this "desolation" which the Lord makes in the earth, that he speaks to the people, saying, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."—vs. 10

The Hebrew word here translated "heathen" literally means "foreign nations." In the Scriptures it is used generally to describe all non-Israelites. The Israelites were the Lord's chosen people, and all others were "foreign" to him. It is these nations and peoples of the earth who are "foreign" to the Lord because alienated from him through wicked works—the "raging" heathen of verse 6—who are shown to be living on earth after Armageddon and to whom he speaks, saying, "Be still and know that I am God."

If these were a righteous people, the Lord would have no need to speak to them in this way. The fact is that the vast majority who pass through Armageddon, the "millions now living who will never die," will not be righteous. That is why, after the symbolic "earth" is devoured with the fire of God's "jealousy," it will become necessary to turn to them a "pure language," that thereby they may be drawn to the Lord and be given the desire to "serve him with one consent."—Zeph. 3:9

However, the fact that millions of the unrighteous will pass through Armageddon does not mean that there is any guarantee that certain individuals will be thus favored above others. One scripture says, "Seek righteousness, seek meekness, it may be that ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." (Zeph. 2:3) This says, "may" be. It is no guarantee against death. Indeed, for millions it will be a blessing to fall asleep in death, to be awakened after the

Armageddon struggle is over. This would be a wonderful way to be "hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

But will this mean that the wicked who may die will remain dead forever, that they will "sleep a perpetual sleep"? This expression is used in Jeremiah 51:57, where it is applied to the "princes" and other mighty ones in "Babylon." The Lord asserts that he would make them "drunk," so that they would sleep with a "perpetual sleep." The thought is clear. They are rendered helpless and inactive, as in a drunken sleep. Death seems not to be referred to here at all. And even if it were, the word "perpetual" is translated from the Hebrew word **olam** which signifies merely for an age, or to a completion. It does not mean eternity. The lords of symbolic Babylon are rendered helpless to perpetuate this unholy system, and it is destroyed in Armageddon, together with all other unrighteous institutions; but the individuals associated with it will be among those to whom the Lord will later turn a "pure language," that they too may call upon the name of the Lord to serve him in the right way, if they will.—Zeph. 3:8,9

The Love of God

The grace and love of Jehovah toward his people, and toward all mankind, should inspire his people to render full obedience to him. Obedience based upon fear of punishment is not pleasing to him. If we catch the inspiration of his love, we will rejoice that he has blessings for others besides ourselves, and we will want to proclaim this heart-warming message to all mankind. We will want to tell the whole world about these "good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people."—Luke 2:10

How much do we love this message? Is the theme song of God's love still ringing in our hearts? Attempts to make progress in the truth have caused the glorious theme song of God's love to die out in the hearts and lives of some, but it cannot be removed from the Word of God. How thankful we should be that the many attempts throughout the centuries to limit Jehovah's grace by misguided human philosophy have

made not the slightest change in his loving design to bless all the families of the earth. As the Lord's witnesses in the earth, let us resolve to proclaim this glorious plan of Jehovah, the plan which provides for the enlightenment of Adam and all his progeny in order that each and every one of them might have a full and fair opportunity to know him, whom to know aright is life eternal.

We are living in the most momentous period of the world's history. It is the "day of the Lord," the time when his vengeance is upon the nations. It is the "last days," when, due to the increasing horrors of the "time of trouble," the nations will soon realize the hopelessness of the plight and will say, "Let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways." (Mic. 4:1-4) We are approaching the morning of a new age. For the world it is still "dark," and we can see the rising of the "Day Star" only by the light of prophecy, that "sure word of prophecy which shineth in a dark place until the day dawn."—II Pet. 1:19

Yes, the millennial morning is about to break, preceded by dark clouds of trouble by which the selfish institutions of earth are being destroyed to make way for the glorious kingdom of the Messiah, that genuine theocracy which will be represented among the nations by the resurrected "princes in all the earth"—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets. For nearly a century the approach of the Millennium has been proclaimed, and now there is more evidence than ever that the healing wings of the "Sun of righteousness" will soon begin to enlighten, warm, and bless all the families of the earth.

Today there is a faithful little company of people throughout the country and the world who unitedly are proclaiming this Gospel of the kingdom, the Gospel of Jehovah's love. They are doing it by radio and television in practically all parts of the world, by millions of copies of free literature, by public and home meetings, by tape recordings,

and by their personal testimonies. They are not doing it to save their hearers from "second death" in Armageddon but to bear witness to the love and glory of God and thereby to demonstrate that their own hearts have been warmed and enlarged by Jehovah's grace.

These are making genuine progress in the truth. To them the "path of the just" is indeed "shining more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. 4:18) This does not mean that the basic doctrines of the truth must constantly be changing. It does not mean that one "light" must be extinguished that another might shine. It means, rather, that day by day every consecrated servant of the Lord sees more clearly the wonderful manner in which the glorious promises and prophecies of the Bible illuminate the various doctrines of the truth which he has learned, enabling him to rejoice more and more in the firm foundation for faith which Jehovah has provided for him in his blessed Word.

The apostles taught that after their death there would be a great falling away from the faith. Undoubtedly those who retrograded into darkness thought they were making progress in the light. That "progress," however, was but a yielding to the desire to set up Christ's kingdom ahead of time, and by the arm of flesh. We have already noted the evils to which this led and the manner in which it restricted people's conception of the grace and love of God. It is along this line that we are furnished with an infallible guide as to whether or not we are making real progress in the light or whether the eyes of our understanding are being blinded by the "god of this world."—II Cor. 4:4

Has the new light which we have received increased our appreciation of the love of God? Has it helped us to realize more fully than before the glorious fact that the God whom we worship is indeed a loving God—the "God of all grace"—a God who has planned for the blessing of all the families of the earth? If so, then we have made real progress in the truth and will be more zealous than ever to tell the whole world these good tidings of great joy.

On the other hand, if our "progress" has led to a restricted view of the grace and love of Jehovah, if in our new understanding we have reached the conclusion that only those will be blessed who agree with us and accept the message which, at the best, we are able to present imperfectly, then we have retrogressed, and the glorious light of the true knowledge of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ is far out in front, while we have been left behind in the darkness. The truth of Jehovah's grace is still being witnessed to the world by those who love and treasure it because it is true and because it satisfies their longings as nothing else can do. Practically the entire professed Christian world continues to tell the people that death ends all opportunity to accept Christ and obtain salvation. The Bible stands out against this restricted viewpoint of Jehovah's grace. The human philosophy that "while there is life there is hope" cannot be applied to God's dealings with his human creatures. Bible students know this, and they rejoice in the future opportunity for salvation which will be offered to the people in the approaching "times of restitution of all things."

It is this glorious message which they love to tell out to the nations. They know that only such a message is adequate to comfort those who mourn as a result of the distressing conditions of this "day of vengeance." They are happy to "declare the day of vengeance," in that they explain the meaning of the world-shaking events now upon the nations. But they find no authority in the Word of God for pronouncing vengeance. This belongs to the Lord, and he alone can read the hearts of the people and know the extent to which each individual is responsible for his wrongdoing.

So while we leave the work of judgment with the Lord, let us lift up the banner of truth, the truth of Jehovah's love, and proclaim it far and wide! Certainly there is opportunity for all who wish to join in this proclamation of divine love and "make the voice of his praise to be heard."—Ps. 66:8; Isa. 52:8

ARE BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS FORBIDDEN BY GOD?

“But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.”—Genesis 9:4

THIS and other similar texts of Scripture are being used by some in an effort to prove that donating blood to save another's life, or receiving a transfusion of blood, is forbidden by God and a sin so gross as to result in eternal death. Are we justified in placing such an interpretation upon the divine injunction against eating or drinking the blood of lower animals?

The science of transferring blood from one human being to another in order to save life was not known in ancient times. Obviously, then, there is no direct reference to it in the Word of God; so our conclusions as to whether or not it can properly be placed in the same category, from God's standpoint, as the assimilation of the blood of beasts through the digestive organs must be based wholly upon the principles involved rather than direct statements of the Bible.

What common factors are involved in drinking the blood of lower animals and the medical science of blood transfusion? So far as we are able to see, there is only one, which is the word blood. Apart from this, the two practices have nothing whatsoever in common.

God forbade his ancient people to drink the blood of lower animals. It is human blood that is used in the science of blood transfusion.

Drinking the blood of lower animals necessitates their death. Blood transfusions do not require the death of those who donate their blood.

The life-sustaining vitamins derived from drinking blood reach the system through the digestive organs, the remaining

elements being eliminated from the body as waste; thus the blood, as such, is destroyed. In transfusions the blood of the donor is channeled directly into the bloodstream of the patient.

Thus we see that there is no similarity at all between the ancient custom of drinking blood, which was forbidden by the Lord, and the modern science of blood transfusion. Therefore, only by being definitely misapplied can the Scriptures be construed to forbid deriving benefit from this very humane application of medical science. No one should permit such a flagrant misapplication of God's commands to deter him from receiving the benefits of blood transfusion through fear of disobeying God and of being sentenced to the "second death."

The Blood of Atonement

In Leviticus 17:10, 11 we read: "And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." The expression, "any manner of blood," cannot be construed to include human blood, for human blood was not offered on altars by Israel.

The "atonement" made by the blood of animals was of a typical nature only and pointed forward to the atonement which would be made for Adam and his race by Jesus' blood. "Almost all things are by the Law purged by blood," we read, "and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."—Heb. 9:22, 23

The "blood of bulls and goats" did not actually take away the sins of the Israelites, but God used those sacrifices to

point forward to the shedding of Jesus' blood; so he attached a great sacredness to animal blood, and for this reason did not want the Israelites to consider it common, or as ordinary food. This viewpoint of the typical blood is used by Paul to teach a lesson. Speaking of those who, having come to a knowledge of the truth and accepted the provisions of God's grace through Christ, and willfully turn against the Lord, the apostle said, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing?"—Heb. 10:29

Since Jehovah wants his people to consider the blood of Jesus as sacred and holy, it is understandable why he limited the use of animal blood to picture the real blood of atonement. With the Israelites it was part of a school of experience designed to lead them to Christ. But this could not be construed in the remotest sense to be related to the modern medical science of blood transfusion.

Symbolically speaking, it is essential to "drink" the blood which was prefigured by those typical sacrifices, the blood, that is, of Jesus. Jesus said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:53) In nonsymbolic language this simply means that in order to have everlasting life, either by faith now, or actually in the age to come, it is essential to accept Christ and his sacrificial work on our behalf—to recognize that he died for our sins and for all mankind, including Adam. But this acceptance of Christ is wholly unrelated to blood transfusion as now practiced in the medical world.

Heathen Customs Banned

A problem was presented to Jewish Christians in the Early Church when Gentile converts began to associate with them. These Gentiles were sincere in their acceptance of Christ, but seemingly in many cases their Christian faith was merely superimposed upon their forms of heathen worship, many of which were repugnant to Jewish believers, and some even

licentious. Certain Jewish teachers in the church thought to discipline their Gentile brethren by insisting that they obey the ordinances of the Law, such as circumcision.

The apostles, and others more mature in the faith, met in conference at Jerusalem to decide what should be done about this problem. In view of the circumstances, they agreed on a minimum requirement of Gentile converts—they were to “abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication.” (Acts 15:29) Fornication is unequivocally condemned in the Scriptures.

The idolatrous worship of the heathen of that day included feasting on the meats which had been offered to idols, and fornication. Partaking of blood could easily have been associated with these revelries. The immature Gentile Christian would see no wrong in these things, but to bring them into the church would have been disastrous; so the apostles wisely insisted that they abstain from them. However, these instructions to Gentile believers in the Early Church have no bearing whatever on the present-day medical science of blood transfusion.

The Watchtower of July 1, 1951, endeavors to prove that the divine injunction against drinking blood includes human blood. They cite the case of David, who refused to drink the water secured for him by three men at the risk of their lives. David said, “My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it.”—I Chron. 11:17-19

Here David is speaking symbolically. Instead of drinking the water secured at the risk of life, he poured it “out to the Lord.” As David reasoned it, the water represented the blood of his benefactors, and this, he thought, should be offered to the Lord rather than to accept the sacrifice on his own behalf. There is no relationship here whatever to God’s command not to drink the blood of lower animals, and certainly it is wholly unrelated to blood transfusion.

○ If you have an opportunity to donate your blood to save the life of a relative or friend, or a brother in Christ, do not hesitate thus to serve. Or if your doctor says that a blood transfusion will save your life, or the life of your child, by all means take advantage of this modern blessing.



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