

God and Reason

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Chapter I

THE WAY OUT

IF EVER there was a time in the history of the world which called for calm and unbiased reasoning on the part of all, it is now. But mere reasoning, no matter how intelligent, can never bring hope to anyone unless there can be found some dependable foundation upon which reason may be based.

Today the world seems hopelessly adrift on the stormy seas of raging human passions. Jesus foretold the coming of just such a time as this in which there would be “distress of nations, with perplexity; men’s hearts failing them for fear” (Luke 21:25,26), as they see the things “coming on the earth.” Is there a way out?

This is a question that is now upon the lips and in the hearts of practically all thinking people the world over. Is there anything upon which we may build our hopes for better days ahead? In this hour of world distress many churchmen are recommending religion as a sure solace for the suffering people. But if religion can point the way out of the billowy seas of uncertainty to a haven of rest and security, for what particular kind of religion should we look?

We hold that through biblical truth alone will man find a true solution to the present worldwide conditions of perplexity and distress, and it is from this standpoint that we approach the subject in this discussion. Yet on this point we are faced with the necessity of distinguishing between the pure teachings of the Bible and the confusing theories of traditional theology, which too often masquerade in the name of Christianity.

We cannot expect to make progress in finding a reasonable basis for faith and hope except by identifying superstition as such, brushing it aside, and seeking to learn and apply the naked principles of undefiled biblical truth to present-day problems. If, as all Christians claim to believe, the Bible is the foundation of ultimate truth and reason, then by all means let us find out what the Bible really teaches!

If in this search for truth we may seem to trespass upon some of your accustomed beliefs, and seem cruelly to wrest them from you, think not that this will destroy your faith in the eternal verities that are actually taught in the Bible. It will not!

Truth and Reason

To whatever extent vain superstition is replaced with dependable truth and reason, one's faith becomes a far more comforting reality than mere credulity, and the Bible takes on a new and saner meaning. And how much need there is today that our faith be based upon a firm foundation of reason and truth, for we are surely confronted with many confusing paradoxes.

Evolutionists insist that we have made steadily progressive strides since the first crude beginning of civilization on this planet. Many today boastfully point to the marvelous achievements of this modern brain age, yet our highly civilized world is faced with the undeniable fact that its boasted civilization now stands at the very brink of destruction. With all our learning, we are not able to maintain the standards of supposed culture to which we pretend to have arrived.

No longer is it possible to prevent a knowledge of these startling facts from edging in upon the public mind. Serious statesmen are frankly painting out the necessity of something drastic being done if civilization is to be saved. Prominent religious leaders of all schools of ecclesiasticism are earnestly announcing that unless the people now quickly return to God, the whole world will be plunged into the greatest and most deadly cataclysm of all human history.

Finding the Real Solution

Agreeing that it does look doubtful if mere human diplomacy will be able to prevent the disaster which nearly everybody fears, the necessity of finding some other solution naturally becomes obvious and imperative if we are to have any hope for the immediate or distant future.

Do the religious differences that exist among the professed followers of Christ mean that we should give up our faith in the Bible itself as containing answers to the baffling questions with which the world is now confronted? We think not!

Should we conclude that the great Intelligence who brought into existence the countless billions of heavenly bodies, and who causes them to move about ceaselessly in their orbits with such absolute accuracy, has signally failed in his attempt to produce a race of sentient creatures here on this small planet that can continue to exist under conditions of uninterrupted peace and happiness? Reason answers, No!

When Jesus was on the earth he suggested to his disciples something very definite in the way of world betterment. He said, "Pray ye: Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:9,10) All down through the centuries, earnest Christians have been repeating that prayer, and patiently waiting for its answer. Is it ever to be answered?

What kind of laws will the world be required to obey it and when the prayer, Thy kingdom come, is answered? These are but a few of the many important questions which reason demands must be considered if we are to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion in the discussion of this subject which is so vital to all who are seeking a true solution of present world distress—the divine solution.

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Chapter II

THE CREATOR AND HIS HUMAN CREATION

IT IS assumed that a large majority of our readers already, or at least would like to exercise such a faith if it could be based upon reason. On this point it is interesting to note that eminent scientists of today are becoming more and more convinced of the existence of a Divine Intelligence, and some of them have gone on record before their colleagues to that effect. We recall, for example, the words of Dr. Michael I. Pupin, who at one time was president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Albert Wiggam, scientific writer, in an interview with Dr. Pupin, quotes him as saying:

“Wherever science has explored the universe it has found it to be a manifestation of a coordinating principle, and that coordinating, directing principle I call Divine Intelligence. It leaves us no escape from the conclusion that back of everything there is a definite guiding principle which leads from chaos to cosmos.

“We are faced with two alternatives. We can either believe that cosmos, beautiful law and order, is simply the result of haphazard happenings; or, that it is the result of definite intelligence. Personally, I choose to believe in the coordinating principle, the Divine Intelligence. Why? Because it is simpler. It is intelligent. It harmonizes with my whole experience.

“The theory that intelligent beings like ourselves or intelligent processes like the movement of the stars, are the outcome of unintelligent happenings, is beyond my understanding. And why should I accept such a theory, when I observe the evidence of a directing Intelligence every day? When you see the stars, each moving in its own pathway, or see a seed grow up after a definite plan into a tree, or see a baby develop into a full grown, self-directing human individuality, can you conceive of all that taking place as the result of haphazard happenings? Well, I cannot.

“Why should I deny a directing Intelligence of all cosmic phenomena? To me as a scientist it is obvious. It was obvious to the prophets over three thousand years ago. From the crudest savage to the highest prophet it has always seemed obvious that there is a definite Intelligence back of everything. There is nothing that science has ever found that contradicts this. ... Indeed, the more deeply science penetrates into the laws of the universe, the more it leads us to believe in an Intelligent Divinity.” Amen!

The main question, then, for us to examine is that of how and to what extent this Intelligent Creator has revealed his purposes to man—particularly his plans concerning man himself. The Bible purports to be such a revelation, and our theme will be developed upon this basis.

Today there is a growing tendency to doubt the inspiration of the Bible. But Christianity is so inseparably connected with the Bible—both the Old and New Testaments—that if we repudiate it, or take the position that it is not reliable, we may as well give up Christianity itself. We hold, however, that there is both internal and external evidence that the Bible is the Word of God.

It is admitted even by skeptics that wherever, and to whatever extent the influence of the Bible has been felt, its moralizing force has made the world better. For this reason it has been called the torch of civilization. There would be no world crisis today if the laws of the Bible had been faithfully followed by the ruling classes and the masses in the various nations.

A book, then, that has been such a power for good, and which has influenced the course of so large a part of the world for good during so many centuries, is surely worthy of being given more than a mere, casual reading before it is discarded. Besides, no other satisfactory explanation of the origin and destiny of man, apart from that suggested in the Bible, has ever been offered, evolutionists to the contrary notwithstanding.

The Genesis Account of Creation

The Bible account of creation and the Garden of Eden story of man's fall have come in for the greatest amount of criticism on the part of evolutionists. But in recent years many scientists show a tendency to reverse their position in regard to these points. Prof. Rene Thevenin, of France, in a series of syndicated articles published in America on the age of the human race, said: "Before science gets through poking in caves and sea bottoms it may prove that there is considerable truth hidden in that fall-of-man legend."

The fall-of-man teaching of the Bible is, we believe, more than a legend. It is based on the fact that man was originally created perfect and given a perfect home—"eastward in Eden." (Gen. 2:8) It is from this standpoint that our investigation will be conducted.

According to the Bible, the human race started with just two specially created persons—Adam and Eve. Is it reasonable to suppose that this is true? Yes, the present population of the earth suggests it. Everyone knows that the human race has been steadily increasing in numbers during the entire period of known history. Think of what the population of Europe would be today, had not America been discovered five centuries ago!

Now, it doesn't take any extraordinary intelligence, or faith, either, to determine that if we begin with the present ratio of increase in population, and inversely figure the constant decrease back through the centuries, we eventually shall reach the point where there will be found but a single pair—at just about the time when history dawns, and when man, according to the Bible, was created. This, together with the fact that recent archaeological discoveries are revealing that man, at the dawn of history, had a higher civilization than in later times, constitutes good circumstantial evidence in favor of the Garden of Eden story of Genesis.

Space will not here permit a detailed scientific analysis of the subject, but we trust that those interested, and especially those who may have doubts along this line, will take the trouble to search out the facts from the scientific standpoint, rather than endeavor to substantiate the unsupported guesses of evolutionists. *

* NOTE: As an aid to this study, we recommend the booklet "[Creation](#)"

Is it so very hard to believe that the same great Power and Intelligence that brought into being the mighty universe about which scientists tell us so much, could also have brought that first human pair into existence by a special act of creation? If man and all other forms of life are not the result of creative power exercised by a Supreme Intelligent Being, let the scientists explain the phenomenon of life in some other way! Reason suggests that it is far better to take the Bible account of creation, and from that basis endeavor to discover the Creator's design for the human race.

A Romantic Procedure

That simple Genesis story of creation tells us that man was first created; but no helpmate was found for him. Then Eve was brought forth. And is the method unthinkable? Has the most ingenious novelist in the world ever conceived of a more romantic way of finding a bride for his hero than that which is given in connection with the story of the creation of mother Eve? If God had the power to create Adam (and where did man come from, if God did not create him?), surely the details of removing one of his ribs, and from it producing a woman, would be an easy task for such a Creator if he chose to adopt such a procedure.

And then there was that wonderful garden home that God provided for his perfect human creation! Surely there is nothing unreasonable in supposing that God, after creating man, would provide a suitable home for him. Why should anyone make light of such a story, which tells us

only that which anyone must admit would have been the logical thing to do under the circumstances? The Book of Genesis reveals that God created human beings to live right here on the earth—not in heaven, hell, or purgatory. Their commission was to obey the Creator’s law, and to multiply and fill the earth. Nothing was said to Adam and Eve about preparing for heaven.

In an endeavor to get back to foundation facts, let us suppose, for the time being, that the divine purpose to have the earth filled and subdued by man had been accomplished just as God commanded. To what would this have led? It would simply mean that the human family, gradually increasing in number in harmony with the divine command, would soon find that the originally provided garden home was too small, and that it would become necessary to begin the work of extending its borders.

The divine command was to fill the earth, not to overfill it. Surely divine wisdom and power will be able, when sufficient numbers have been born to adequately populate the earth, to cause the further propagation of the race to cease. Would there have been anything illogical or wrong with a program of this kind? Isn’t it reasonable, and exactly what we would expect of a wise and loving Creator? But to visualize the grandeur of it all, it is necessary to rid our minds of all the terrible pictures of suffering and want that now loom up before us. Selfishness of fallen man has produced all the suffering that is in the world today. Such suffering would have been unknown had man remained in harmony with his Creator.

And death! That, too, would have been an experience unknown to the human race. Modern science admits that living cells might be able to reproduce themselves indefinitely if given a perfect environment. Death came as a result of sin; and with death came suffering, sickness, and sorrow. Try to visualize a perfect human race, free from all selfishness, sickness, and death! Wouldn’t that just about suit everybody, everywhere? But, you say, why waste time thinking about something which, if it ever were a possibility, is now gone forever? But is such a possibility forever gone? The Scriptures answer, No! The divine program of redemption and restoration through Christ guarantees that, that which might have been, is yet to be.

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Chapter III

THE BOW OF PROMISE

“And In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice.” —Genesis 22:18

OBVIOUSLY, if we are to reason correctly concerning God, it is primarily necessary to clear away the accumulated mists of superstition that have caused so many to lose faith in him and in the Book that is reputed to be his Word of truth. This is not an easy thing to do, but it is hoped that this discussion will materially aid in that direction.

Not all, of course, are sure whether or not they should accept the Bible as an authentic record of the origin and destiny of man, but all should at least be interested in the reasonableness of its brief presentation on the subject when critically analyzed—especially after all the mists of tradition have been cleared away from its simple, straightforward story. What, then, is the Bible story of man, when stripped of superstition and mere human assumption?

It says that after man was created, God told our first parents that they would surely die if they disobeyed his law: “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen. 2:17) This seems simple and clear enough. But is it true? Yes, this statement, made long ago to the progenitors of the human race, is verified today by billions of tombs and a continually dying world, which testify to the grim truth of that clearly spoken law.

On this point, then, it is evident that the Book of Genesis is in harmony with uncontroverted reality. The fact that Adam did not actually go into the tomb on the same day in which he disobeyed the divine law is no proof that the death penalty was not a literal one. A critical translation of the Hebrew text concerning this penalty gives it as “dying thou shalt die.” (Gen. 2:17, margin) This gives the thought that the process of death would begin at once, and continue until life became wholly extinct. And that is exactly what occurred.

But something else also occurred back there in Eden. From a source other than the Creator came a seductive statement to mother Eve: “Ye shall not surely die!” (Gen. 3:1-4) This suggestion that God had lied to his creatures is said to have come from the serpent.

Four thousand years later, the Apostle John identified “that old serpent” as being “the Devil and Satan,” and indicated that he has been the great deceiver of all nations. (See Revelation 20:1-3.) We now have two contradictory statements; one accredited to the LORD, in which he states that man would surely die; the other coming from one whom the Scriptures designate as a deceiver, in which he insists that man would not surely die. The first of these we have found to be substantiated by facts. Death is indeed a reality, concerning which the Bible says, “The dead know not anything,” and again, “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”—Eccles. 9:5-10

The Great Deception

But what about the serpent’s statement, “Thou shalt not surely die”? Jesus declared concerning this serpent that he is the “father of lies.” (John 8:44) If, therefore, the record of Genesis is true, we should expect to find some evidence throughout the ages of Satan’s deceptive efforts in connection with the subject of death. And, as the Revelator indicated that this old serpent has deceived all nations, we should expect his deceptions to be universally manifested. Do we find such evidence? Yes!

While Satan had said definitely that death would not result from partaking of the forbidden fruit, yet actually Adam and Eve, as well as all their progeny, have died or are dying. Hence it became necessary for Satan to do something about it. Of course he was not willing to come forward and apologize for falsely accusing God of being a liar; hence, he took the further sinister step of inducing the people to believe that what appeared to be death was not death, but the gateway into some other—either higher or lower—form of life. And because of the innate fear of death that lurks in human hearts, nearly all mankind have preferred to believe the lie that there is no death. Through this great deception, then, most have been made to believe that death is really a friend rather than an enemy, as the Bible declares it to be. (I Cor. 15:26) There is a glorious hope of future life, however, not because man cannot die, but because he does die and is to be raised from the dead.

But how can we have any standing before our Creator whose laws have been broken? What is the basis for hope that anyone may have an opportunity to return to favor with God and again enjoy the privilege of living everlastingly under conditions of complete happiness? Will God

cancel his decree of condemnation against us merely upon our promise to do better from now on?

The Bible most assuredly points out the Creator's plan whereby the lost race is to have an opportunity to return to harmony with him, but if we are to learn the truth on this point it is necessary to proceed cautiously. It is evident that we will never have our questions satisfactorily answered by delving into traditional theology, hoping therein to find some reasonable basis for faith and comforting hope, so let us confine our search to the Bible itself. Thus far the Bible is found to be in harmony with well-known and well-established facts, and also with reason. This gives us confidence. Is it not then reasonable to expect that it must contain a satisfactory solution to this entire problem of human destiny?

We are given the suggestion in Genesis 3:15 that the Creator, even from the beginning, intended to do something more for the human race than merely condemn it to death. The promise there is to the effect that "the seed of the woman" would eventually bruise the serpent's head. Of course, this is a rather vague and indefinite statement; but in the light of subsequent divine revelations it is seen to be wonderfully full of meaning.

We turn, for example, to almost the last chapter in the Bible—Revelation 20:1-3—and there we find the Apostle John declaring that in vision he saw a mighty angel come down from heaven and lay hold upon "that old serpent" and bind him for a thousand years, "that he should deceive the nations no more." This is a prophetic picture portraying the fulfillment of that vague promise of Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. In other words, in this highly symbolic language, the Creator assures us through the Revelator that our first parents' sin is not to result in a lasting blight upon the human race; but that in his own time and way a sure cure will be effected, and the serpent himself will be destroyed.

Thus we have located the two extreme ends, so to speak, of this God-given bow of promise—the promise given in Genesis that the serpent's head would be bruised, and the vision given to the Revelator that this same serpent would be bound, and finally destroyed. However, let us not stop here, but rather continue our search through the sacred record, in the hope that we may find some of the details of how Satan's death-dealing work in Eden is to be destroyed, and the human race restored to the lost Paradise.

God's Promise to Abraham

Leaving the disappointing scenes of Eden, let us come down to the time of Abraham—over two thousand years later. From this period onward it is no longer necessary to accept so many things by faith. Archaeologists have recently excavated Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, also various ruins of ancient Canaan, which substantiate practically every detail of Bible history covering that whole period. In view of these discoveries it is now admitted even by skeptics that the Bible is by no means a collection of old wives' fables, such as a great many once were led to believe.

Now to Abraham, God made a very remarkable promise which has not yet been fulfilled. He said, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:1-3) Later on in life, when his son Isaac had grown to manhood, God reiterated this promise and also confirmed it by an oath. But Abraham died without seeing it fulfilled. The promise was passed on to Isaac, then to his son, Jacob. Esau, Jacob's older brother, bartered the right to inherit it for a mess of pottage.

Finally Jacob reached the end of his span of imperfect life, yet God's promises to bless all nations had not been fulfilled to him; so upon his deathbed he passed this scepter on to his son Judah. We cannot here examine all the many related promises in the Old Testament which enlarge upon this original covenant made with Abraham. Suffice it to say that in these promises the Jews saw a great personality pictured—the "Lion of the tribe of Judah"—whom they became accustomed to speak of as their coming Messiah. (Gen. 49:8-10; Rev. 5:5) The tremendous influence of these ancient promises has been one of the contributing factors that have kept the distressed and persecuted people of Israel separate from the rest of the world for more than four thousand years until now. The Jews stand out today as a living testimony of the reality of God's dealings with them in the past, and of the hope-inspiring promises to them as his chosen people. Many of these promises, however, still remain unfilled.

The Messiah Promised

At the time of Jesus' first advent many of the Jews were on the alert regarding the coming of the long-promised Messiah. We are told that one night, out upon the hills of Judea where shepherds were tending their flocks, suddenly there appeared a supernatural light, and the sound of unusual voices. Incredibly fantastic, do you say?

Let us remember that if the Bible is what it claims to be—a revelation of the Creator's purposes toward the children of men; the same Creator who brought into existence all the other mighty works of creation—then it is not hard to believe that such a Supreme Intelligent Being has also created various orders of spirit beings on higher planes of existence than man. And if he desired to have these higher angelic creatures communicate with man on such a momentous occasion as the Savior's birth, it would be very easy for him to have arranged it. This is just what he did! Through the medium of one of these mighty angels, God announced to the shepherds, "Fear not: for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."—Luke 2:10,11

The word Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah. Hence this angelic announcement simply signified that the world's Messiah, whom God for so long had promised to send, had now actually been born, and that he was indeed to be the Savior of the world. That is why it was good tidings unto all people—all the families of the earth were to be blessed as a result of his birth. But how is Jesus, the Messiah, to be the Savior of the world? What is to be the nature of the blessing that he will bestow upon all?

From what we have previously learned, the human race, through Adam's transgression, lost the privilege of living everlastingly on the earth. Now if death simply means death, as it manifestly does, then there would seem no way for any of us to be saved except by being liberated from the death penalty and then restored to life.

"Peace on Earth"—When?

But what about the fact that although this Savior, this Messiah, made his advent into the world nearly two thousand years ago, the world continues to die as before? In what sense is he its Savior? If there is no eternal torment from which the race is to be rescued, then from what does the Messiah save it, and how? And will it be different when it is saved?

All, of course, are mindful of the beautiful music and the inspirational sermons that are heralded forth each Christmas from every church in Christendom. The cry, peace on earth, goodwill toward men, is annually announced on every hand. But is it not true that thus far these

pronouncements have been largely empty words? Does the cry of peace on earth, as it sounds in the ears of a dying soldier, mean very much to him? In time of war, the professed followers of Jesus in one nation slay the professed followers of Jesus in another nation, and call this their Christian duty. If they are faithful in doing this, will they joyfully meet their slaughtered foreign brethren in heavenly bliss? Is this the manner in which the prophecy of peace on earth is to be fulfilled? Our study has not yet unfolded sufficiently to supply the answers to these puzzling questions, but let us go on, and see that the Bible does have something satisfactory to say about them.

We have now traced the messianic promises from the day of the Garden of Eden down to Jesus' time, and found that these promises are to find a fulfillment in the Master. Paul indicates this in Galatians 3:8,16, where he clearly identifies Jesus as the promised seed of Abraham. John the Baptist announced Jesus, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" At that time John clearly recognized Jesus to be the promised Messiah. (John 1:29) Later, however, John was thrown into prison, and while there he began to wonder whether or not he might have been mistaken. He then sent messengers to Jesus to inquire if he really were the Messiah, and Jesus sent back a very interesting reply. He directed the messengers to remind John that at his hands the sick were being healed; the lame were made to walk; the blind to see; the deaf to hear; and that, on certain occasions, even the dead were made to rise.

Jesus' Works Fulfill Prophecy

Why did Jesus answer John in this peculiar manner? It was because the prophets had foretold that the Messiah would do just such things as these! Thus was John reassured. And not only was John the Baptist impressed by the mighty works of Jesus, but it was quite natural that many in Jesus' day should also become convinced of the Master's messiahship, and that the long-promised messianic kingdom was about to be set up for the blessing of Israel and the whole world of mankind—all the families of the earth. Indeed, the common people finally became so enthusiastic that they attempted then to make Jesus a king; and did acclaim him as such as he rode into Jerusalem on an ass.

Just five days later than this, however, something happened which mystified the disciples and others who looked upon Jesus as the Messiah. The religious leaders of Jesus' day became jealous of his popularity, so they instituted a plot against him, seized him, conducted a mock trial, condemned him to death, and finally had him crucified as a malefactor. What did this mean? How could it be that he who had come to be the king of earth should thus be taken and crucified? Such a turn of events did not harmonize with the disciples' conception of what the Messiah should do and be—establish a kingdom and be the king over, and deliverer of, the people. How keen their disappointment must have been when their hopes and expectations were thus dashed to the ground!

Three days thereafter, two of the crestfallen disciples of the Master were walking on their way to Emmaus when suddenly a stranger joined them. Noting their sorrow, he inquired as to the cause. They then related to him the events of the past days and how bitterly they had been disappointed in their expectations relative to the miracle-worker of Nazareth.

Why Jesus Died

Then, this stranger, who in reality was the resurrected Christ, took occasion to explain to them why he had died; that his death had been foreknown and foretold by the Heavenly Father, and

was a necessary precursor to the promised blessings that were to come through the glory of the messianic kingdom.

Later, these two disciples were relating their experiences to others, and they said, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32) Certainly there was good reason for the disciples’ enthusiasm. Now they saw that the Master’s death was not a tragic mistake, as they had thought, nor was it an evidence that he was not the Messiah. Finally the disciples came to realize that Jesus’ death was an absolute necessity in order for the world of mankind to receive the blessings of life which had been divinely promised.

Later, one of the disciples explained that Jesus, in his pre-human state, had been known as the *Logos*, translated ‘Word’ in John 1:1. It was this *Logos*, or Word of God, that became flesh for the very purpose of dying as a corresponding price, or “ransom,” for Adam, and the condemned race in him. (I Tim. 2:3-6; Rom. 5:12) By ignoring, or purposely concealing the accurate meaning of the Greek text as it appears in John, chapter 1, the translators have made it appear that the *Logos*, or the Word, is the divine Creator himself. But an accurate translation of the passage reveals the fact that the *Logos* was merely a god, or mighty one, while the Creator is referred to as **the** God—the Supreme One, the Almighty One.

The apostle tells us that the *Logos* was the agent of Jehovah in all the creative work: “Without him was not anything made that was made.” Doubtless this is why the plural pronouns, us and our, are used in the Genesis account of creation: “Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness.”—Gen. 1:26

The Scriptures speak of the oneness of the Father and the Son, but it is clearly a oneness of purpose and will, rather than of being. Jesus prayed that this same oneness should exist between himself and his followers. (John 17:21-23) That Jesus did not consider himself as one in person, and equal to the Creator, or that he was his own Father, is clearly indicated by his words when he said, “My Father is greater than I.”—John 14:28

The disciples knew that the wages of sin is death, not life in torment, hence it was easy for them to understand how the death of Jesus, who had been made flesh for that very purpose, could pay that penalty, and open up a way whereby the world could eventually return to harmony with God—hence to life. But prior to Pentecost there was still something quite mysterious to them about the whole affair. While they now knew that Jesus, their Messiah, had been raised from the dead, they saw little of him; and finally he left them entirely. How strange! When last seen by them, he told them to tarry at Jerusalem until they should receive further instruction through the medium of the Holy Spirit. Surely these things must have seemed to the disciples like very strange proceedings on the part of him whom they still believed to be the promised Messiah.

Not only were those early disciples themselves puzzled for a time by this further unexpected turn of events, but many since have misunderstood its true significance, and as a result have developed erroneous theories. If Jesus did not come to establish a literal kingdom upon the earth, then another reason for his coming must be discovered; hence to many it seemed logical to conclude that his coming, death, and resurrection were in order that people might be saved from the tortures of hell and whisked off to heaven when they die. But the Messiah is to establish an earthly kingdom and bless all the families of the earth in God’s due time, as we shall see.

As reasoning minds turn away more and more from the torment god of the Dark Ages, they want to know why nearly two thousand years have passed since Jesus left his disciples, and yet

the world today is more under the control of selfishness, and has less faith in the Messiah than ever before. Thinking minds wonder why, if Jesus is to convert the world and save it from hell-fire, there seems to be so little progress along this line; and also, if it be the messianic purpose to establish an earthly kingdom, and thereby bless the people with life and happiness, why that has not yet been done.

If the Bible is the Word of God, which we claim it is, then we should expect to find these as well as our other reasonable questions fully answered therein. But we should remember, even as the Word declares, that God's ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts. (Isa. 55:8-11) This does not mean that we should not inquire for an understanding of God's thoughts, for he has asked us to reason together with him. (Isa. 1:18) When we accept this invitation to reason with the Creator, through his inspired Word, we find that which satisfies both our heads and our hearts.

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Chapter IV

HAS CHRISTIANITY FAILED?

A CORRECT answer to the question as to whether Christianity has been a success or a failure depends upon a proper understanding of what constitutes Christianity, and just what God intended it should accomplish in the earth. Christ is presented to us in the Bible as the Savior of the world; and the logical conclusion is that God had planned for the world to be converted to him, and thus to be saved from death. But nearly two thousand years have passed since Jesus came to the earth to die for mankind, and yet the world is still far from being converted. Even nominal Christianity is rapidly losing ground, and whole nations are officially setting themselves against religion of every kind. Are we to judge from this that God's plan has failed?

The disciples, in Jesus' day, based their hopes of the messianic kingdom upon the prophecies of the Old Testament, and their hopes were therefore, in the main, correct. What they failed to understand, to begin with, was that the time had not then come for the establishment of that kingdom. Just so with most professing Christians since then: their belief that God had planned the conversion of the world through Christ and the church is correct, but they have failed to see from the scriptures that this is not the age in which God purposed that this work should be accomplished.

Now, as the immediate disciples of Jesus failed to note from the prophecies that the Messiah must suffer and die as man's Redeemer before the promised kingdom blessings could come to the world, just so have professed Christians; failed to see from the Scriptures that the true church of Christ must suffer and die with him before she will have the privilege of sharing with him in the future kingdom work of converting and blessing the world of mankind. The Apostle Paul states this matter clearly, saying, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—Rom. 8:17,18

The glory referred to here is evidently the glory of joint-heirship with Christ in his messianic kingdom. If those who attain to this glory must first of all suffer with him, then it means that the

present mission of the church is not that of conquering the world for Jesus, but of following faithfully in his footsteps, even unto death.

Christians Follow Jesus

And this is in reality what Jesus himself taught his followers. For example, on more than one occasion he said, “If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” That these were to follow him all the way into death is made positive by Jesus’ words in Revelation 2:10, which reads, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” That this faithfulness implies fortitude in the face of suffering persecution is shown by his promise of Revelation 3:21, where he says, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

When the divine commission was given to the church to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, the purpose was distinctly stated to be that of making disciples, and giving a witness. But that this witness was not intended by God to conquer the world, but to result in the preparation of Christians themselves for the future work of reigning with Jesus, is made clear in Revelation 20:4. We quote: “I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God, ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

Now if the mission of the true Christians in the world has been merely that of bearing witness to the truth and, by means of the experiences thereby gained, to prepare themselves for the great future work of converting the world during the thousand-year kingdom period, then we can readily understand the apparent failure of Christianity. We see, indeed, that true Christianity has not failed; that it is merely the false hope of nominal believers that has not materialized. When we see that the present mission of the church is one of sacrifice and suffering rather than one of conquering the world, many puzzling questions are at once cleared up for us.

For example, have you not often wondered why it is that faithful Christians have usually suffered more than unbelievers? Have you ever wondered why, after Jesus came as the light of the world, mankind actually was plunged into a long period of darkness which we now speak of as the Dark Ages? Have you ever wondered why there are more than twice as many heathen in the world today as a century ago? Who has not wondered about questions of this nature? Many, as a result of their wondering, have concluded that Christianity is a gigantic farce, and that this supposed foundation and bulwark of civilization has signally failed to make good its claims.

What Is a Christian?

The popular idea of Christianity has been that one becomes a Christian in about the same manner that one joins a club, and that it constitutes a sort of safeguard against divine wrath that otherwise would send the individual to a terrible place of torment at death. Hence it has been supposed that God wants everyone to become Christians so they might escape this terrible fate. But now that it is being discovered, in the fuller light of a better day, that the nightmare of eternal torture is not taught in the Bible, the way is thus becoming clear for a better understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

The word Christ, being a Greek translation of the Hebrew word **Messiah**, is used in the New Testament to connect Jesus with that glorious array of messianic promises found throughout the Old Testament. As already noted, the first of these promises was given in the Garden of Eden when God said that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head. Another, and more

specific promise, was given to Abraham when he was told that through his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Jesus, the Christ, came into the world as the seed of promise to be the one who would bless all humanity, and the Scriptures show that those Who become true Christians by following faithfully in his steps of self-sacrifice, even unto death, are to be a part with him of the promised seed.

The Apostle Paul, writing to Christians of his day, said, “If ye be Christ’s [Christians], then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:29) In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul says that Christ “is not one member, but many.” A very important point for consideration is presented by the apostle in these two statements. They show that in the selection and development of Christians, God is merely carrying on a preparatory work in connection with the future messianic purpose to bless all nations. It means that God has not been trying to make Christians of all mankind, but merely selecting a few from among the nations to be associated with Jesus in his future work of blessing the entire world, both the living and the dead.

A Peculiar People

But who are these Christians today whom God is selecting to reign with the Messiah? In what church will we find them? Probably there are some in all the various denominations, but God is the Judge as to just who they are. Specifically, a Christian is one who, having recognized that he was a sinner, and alienated from God, has repented, and who, through faith in the shed blood of Christ, has made a full consecration of his time, talents—all that he has—to the LORD, and is faithfully endeavoring to carry out that consecration. Denominational church membership has nothing whatever to do with it. See Romans 5:1-3.

In the fifteenth chapter of Acts there is a revealing account concerning the divine purpose in the selection of the faithful Christians of this age. Here they are styled a people for his name. The apostle explains that “God at the first did visit the Gentiles,” not to make all of them Christians, but “to take out of them a people for his name”—the true Christians. After this, declares the apostle, divine favor will return to Israel, and the broken-down “tabernacle of David” will be restored: and then, he says, “the residue [remainder] of men,” and the Gentiles, will have an opportunity to “seek after the LORD.” But first must be completed the work of taking out a people for his name—the bride of Christ—to be made up of all fully consecrated Christians.—Acts 15:14-18

When we thus see that God does not intend that all the world, in this age, shall become Christians, it helps us to understand many passages of the Bible that heretofore have been very difficult to understand. For example, in Revelation 5:10 we are told that the future reign of Christ and the church is to be here on the earth. How could this be true if all except the church are to be taken away from the earth and tormented forever in a burning hell? Over whom, then, would the saints reign here on the earth? But this difficulty vanishes when we realize from the Scriptures that the world is to be blessed, not cursed, following the completion of the true church.

Viewing the matter thus, we can see that God’s plan of human salvation provides an opportunity for all, both the church and the world, not that all are to be saved irrespective of their own cooperation in the divine arrangements. No, the Scriptures distinctly point out that all who sin willfully after having come to a full knowledge of the truth are to be punished with

everlasting destruction—but not everlasting preservation in misery, as the Dark Age creeds present the matter.

The True Church's Reward

Another interesting point, in connection with God's selection of the Christian church to be associated with Christ in his messianic kingdom, is that such faithful Christians are to have a higher reward than the world in general. God's provision for the world is that they shall be restored to life upon the earth—a restoration of the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, which is a dominion over the lower creation here on the earth; but to the Christian the Master gave the promise, "I go to prepare a place for you, ... that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2,3) Yes, the church is to have a heavenly reward, but it is not God's purpose to take all mankind to heaven, as we shall see later on in this discussion.

The prospect of everlasting life through the shed blood of the Redeemer is the blessed hope set before both the church and the world in the Bible. The scriptural presentation is not that of heaven for the righteous and eternal torture for the wicked, but is rather that of life or death.

The first man, Adam, disobeyed and lost life; but eventually Jesus came as man's ransom, to meet the penalty of death by his own death on the cross. As a result of this, the world once more will be given the opportunity to live. This opportunity will in due time come to all; but during this Gospel Age, fully consecrated Christians are the only ones who actually have a full opportunity to benefit from the death of the Redeemer. These, because they follow Jesus in laying down their lives sacrificially, are rewarded, not only with life itself, but with immortal life. These are they who "seek for glory and honor and immortality." (Rom. 2:7) The obedient of the world of mankind, during the future kingdom period, will also be given an opportunity to live, but the life they receive will be merely the restored human life forfeited by Adam. The obedient will then live everlastingly, not because they will become immortal, but because God will continue to sustain their lives.

Why the World Is Not Converted

The work of true Christianity has thus far been only that of preparing the future joint-heirs with the Messiah for the great work of his long-promised kingdom. Little wonder, in view of this, that the attempted work of converting the world has made so little progress throughout the Christian era. The LORD knew that, from the human standpoint, Christianity would appear to be a failure. Jesus himself, in referring to the end of this age, said, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) Thus the fact that very few in the world today really believe in the Bible is no surprise to God. His beloved Son, the Redeemer of the world, foresaw this very condition, and foretold it. This is another good reason why we should have faith in what the Bible says.

The hundreds of divisions among the so-called Christian churches likewise were foretold in the prophetic Word. Paul said that there would come a great falling away from the true faith, and this most certainly occurred.

Now if Jesus and his apostles were a group of deceiving men, bent on putting over some selfish scheme for the purpose of favorably influencing the whole world of mankind, would they deliberately predict that it would not be long before their entire scheme would fail and they themselves become laughingstocks in the minds of millions of people? Such pessimistic predictions would not be very encouraging to the early believers, nor induce very many to join

the movement. Worldly wisdom would say, Paint the future as bright as you can, or else you will never make many converts.

But Jesus and the apostles were not guided by worldly wisdom. They fully understood that the purpose of preaching the Gospel in this age was not to build up large and imposing church organizations. They knew that God did not intend that the mere preaching of the Gospel now would lead the world to the feet of Jesus. They foresaw that while a little flock of true Christians would be gathered and prepared for the future work of blessing, misguided men and women as a whole would distort the glorious truths the Master taught, and that, as a result of this, Christianity would appear to go down in defeat.

How glad we are, however, that real Christianity has not failed; that the divine plan for this age is being successfully accomplished, and that now this preparatory work for the new kingdom is about completed. Indeed, there is much scriptural evidence to show that the period set aside in the divine purpose for the call and preparation of true Christians to reign with Jesus in his messianic kingdom is about ended. It should rejoice our hearts then, to consider some of the evidences which indicate that we have almost reached the end of this age and the beginning of a new one, one in which the foretold blessings of peace and life will be dispensed to a dying world.

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Chapter V

THE END OF THE WORLD

BIBLICAL truths pertaining to the end of the world have been so distorted by superstition and satanic deception that in the minds of many serious people they have become almost repugnant. How many thousands of sincere people have been horrified when they thought of this traditionally-terrible calamity that had been imaginatively pictured to them by overenthusiastic evangelists! Not many years ago a noted clergyman sought to encourage humanity by announcing that the end of the world would not come for fifty million years. Doubtless many noble religionists felt greatly relieved by this statement, and rejoiced that such a calamitous event would not befall the earth in their day.

But what a different viewpoint of this subject we obtain when we examine the biblical record apart from the influence of Dark Age creeds. In the sacred Word we find that the end of the world is held out as something to which all should joyfully look forward. Indeed, when all the Bible prophecies relating to the subject are fully understood, it will be found that when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," he really was instructing them to pray for the end of this present evil world, and for a better one to take its place.

The Earth Abideth Forever

The many hallucinations in the minds of the people concerning the end of the world are not taught in the Bible at all. What the Scriptures say on this subject has nothing whatever to do with the burning up or destruction of the literal earth.

Concerning this physical planet on which we live, the Prophet Isaiah says, "Thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath

established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited.” (Isa. 45:18) Another of the Bible prophets tells us that “the earth abideth forever.” (Eccles. 1:4) Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, said, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” These passages all indicate that it is not God’s purpose ever to destroy the earth itself, but that it is to be used as a home for man.

The word world is used in the Bible very similarly to the way we often use it today, meaning not the earth, but the associations of people upon the earth—society in general. If, for example, we should read that the world was greatly shaken by a global war, we would not understand it to mean that literal mountains are being toppled over, or that the crust of the earth is in any way affected. The Bible uses language in this same manner when foretelling the distressing events to take place at the end of the present age; events by which the existing social order is to be destroyed to make way for the kingdom of the Messiah.

The term world is also used in the Bible to denote an age. Several worlds, or ages, are mentioned in the Bible. We are told, for example, of a world that ended at the time of the Flood—yet the earth itself was not then destroyed. The Bible also speaks of another world that began after the Flood, and which is to be destroyed during the second presence of Christ. And there is still another world which will begin with the end of the present one. This latter world will continue on indefinitely into the future. It is this third world that is to be established through the operation of the messianic kingdom.

These worlds, all of which are thus seen to function on the literal planet, Earth, are subdivided by the Apostle Peter into their spiritual and material aspects, under the symbols of “heaven” and “earth.” See II Peter 3. It is plainly evident that the apostle’s language as used in this chapter is pictorial rather than literal; for we would be forced to the absurd conclusion that the Creator intends to destroy his entire universe if we insisted upon a literal meaning, because the Apostle Peter makes it plain that the heavens as well as the earth will pass away with a great noise.

In this same prophecy, the apostle uses the symbol of fire to describe the destructive influences which will bring to an end the present evil order of things and purge and prepare the way for the establishment of God’s kingdom—the “new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Peter also tells us that the elements will melt with fervent heat. That this does not have reference to the elements of the literal earth is evident from the fact that Paul uses this same word when he admonishes the Christian not to be entangled again with the “weak and beggarly elements” of this world.—Gal. 4:9

National Symbolisms

An interesting example of the fact that the word earth, when used in the Bible, does not always mean the literal planet upon which we live, is found in Daniel 7:23. Here the prophet tells about a great and terrible beast that devours the whole earth. This would be a tall story indeed, if it were intended to be understood literally; for where would this gigantic beast stand while devouring this planetary morsel? As a symbol, however, it conveys a very meaningful lesson—the beast, as well as the earth, is symbolic.

All are familiar with the fact that many nations of the past and present are symbolized on their coat of arms by beasts of various kinds. The reigning pharaohs of Old Egypt used a lion to indicate their authority of rulership, and England today uses the lion on her standard for the same

purpose. Then there are the Chinese dragon, the Russian bear, and the American eagle. These are illustrations to show the figurative application of the characteristics of living creatures to nations.

The Bible employs a similar symbolic method to designate various great world powers of history. Hence, in the passage cited above, the symbolic earth—organized society—is pictured as being devoured by a beast. It is an apt portrayal of a selfish ruling-class organization appropriating the resources of society for its own selfish use. Many people of the world recognize these conditions, and see that the illustrations aptly fit the nations represented. Why, then, should we experience any special difficulty when we find similar symbolisms in the Bible? It is the way God teaches us.

The term mountain also is often used in a symbolic sense in the Bible, and when so used it denotes a kingdom—either one or more of the kingdoms of this world, or else the messianic kingdom of the next age.

The sea, when used pictorially in the Scriptures, represents the masses; and the roaring of the sea, the restless, discontented condition of these masses. See Isaiah 17:12,13. One of the Bible prophecies relative to the progress of events now taking place on the earth tells of the mountains being carried into the midst of the sea. This, indeed, is a fitting illustration of the fact that many of the strongest kingdoms of the earth already have fallen into the hands of the clamoring masses, and that other mighty mountains of civilization will likewise be engulfed as the rising tide of discontent surges more and more persistently against their bulwarks.

An example of the scriptural use of these striking symbolisms, portraying the disintegrating processes by which the present world is being destroyed, is that of Psalm 46:2-6. Here the LORD'S prophet says, "We will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Manifestly, this could not be understood literally, because if the literal earth were actually removed or destroyed there would be no mountains left to be carried into the sea, and no sea into which the mountains could be carried. Later in the chapter, the prophet interprets in part his own symbolic statements when he says, "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved." And then, reverting to symbolic phraseology again, he continues, "He [the LORD] uttered his voice, the earth melted."

That this melting of the earth does not mean the destruction of this literal planet on which we live is further evidenced in the closing verses of the chapter, where the prophet shows that the moving and melting have reference to the destruction of the war-thirsty governments prior to the establishment of God's kingdom. That the literal earth is not destroyed is shown in verse ten of the psalm, where we read, "Be still, and know that I am God: ... I will be exalted in the earth."

In this prophecy of the forty-sixth psalm, there is a most unusual example of the varied way in which the term earth is employed in the Scriptures. In verse two, the earth is said to be removed; in the sixth verse, it is described as being melted; yet in the tenth verse, as we have seen, it still exists, and God's name is exalted in it. In this new order, God's name will be exalted throughout the whole earth. Surely, then, we should rejoice in the many evidences around us today which denote the near approach of the time when Christ shall be King, and the reign of sin and death shall end! Many of these signs will be examined in the next chapter.

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Chapter VI

SIGNS OF THE APPROACHING END

SINCE the Scriptures so clearly show that the end of the world does not mean the destruction of the literal earth, but merely the end of the present era of sin, selfishness, and death, any evidences, prophetic or otherwise, which indicate the imminence of the new order of things should be hailed as good news.

The fact that, in the past, earnest but ill-advised religionists have prematurely announced the coming of the Lord, and have grossly misunderstood both the manner and the purpose of his coming, should not deter us now from examining the prophecies which have a bearing on this important subject. Indeed, we should be close students of biblical prophecies, that we might, if possible, ascertain just where we are on the stream of time; and especially what the prophets have predicted for our day. If we find that the Bible accurately describes both past and present world events, it will be another good reason why we should have confidence in its message concerning the future.

While Jesus was still on the earth, his disciples asked him what would be the sign of his second coming, and of the end of the world, or age. In reply, he gave a number of very definite signs by which his followers would be able to identify the closing days of this present evil world. One of these signs pertained to the natural seed of Abraham—the Jewish nation. The Master said, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” He evidently used the capital city of Israel—Jerusalem—as representing the entire nation, and meant that Gentile governments of the earth would continue to hold subjective control over the people as well as over the land of Palestine itself for a definite period of time, which he here refers to as the times of the Gentiles.—Luke 21:24

The subjection of the Jews to Gentile rule began more than six centuries before Jesus’ first advent, at the time when Nebuchadnezzar took the nation captive to Babylon—606 B.C., to be exact. In the second chapter of Daniel’s prophecy there is an account of some of the circumstances surrounding the beginning of this period of Gentile supremacy. Nebuchadnezzar was on the throne of Babylon at the time, and the LORD used a very dramatic way to indicate that with him began the period referred to by Jesus as the times of the Gentiles.

Four Gentile World Powers Foretold

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which, upon awakening, he could not remember. He was induced to send for Daniel, a Jewish captive, who was able not only to remind the king of his dream, but also to give him its interpretation. Daniel explained that in the dream the king had seen an image like unto a man. This image had a head of gold, breast of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet and toes of iron mingled with clay.

As the dream progressed, the king saw a stone cut out of the mountain without hands; and this stone smote the image on its feet, causing it to fall. After the image fell it was ground to powder, and the wind blew it away as the chaff from a summer threshing-floor. Then the stone that smote the image began to grow, and it continued growing until it became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.—Dan. 2:36-45

Daniel’s interpretation of this curious dream is one of the most remarkable in the entire Bible, in that it gives an accurate preview of Gentile history, beginning with Babylonian supremacy down through the centuries, even to the present day. In this divine interpretation, the prophet identifies the Babylonian Empire as being pictured by the head of gold. To the king of Babylon,

Daniel said, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.”—Dan. 2:37,38

Prior to this, God had favored and recognized none but the Jewish nation. But now the Jews had been made subjects of Babylon, and the king of Babylon was recognized by God as the first of that long line of Gentile rulers who, with divine sanction, were to hold the Jews under their control as a subject people for a long period of time. This, then was the beginning of the times of the Gentiles.

But Daniel did not close his prophecy with his identification of Babylon as the head of gold. He continued, telling Nebuchadnezzar that with the downfall of his kingdom there would arise another, a twofold empire, represented by the two arms of silver. This proved to be the Medo-Persian Empire, which conquered Babylon a few years later. Daniel also told of a third empire, represented by the belly and thighs of brass. This kingdom, as history shows, was Greece, which succeeded Medo-Persia as a world power of outstanding recognition.

And Daniel did not stop there. He went on, and foretold the rise of the great military (iron) power of Rome—even calling attention to its two parts, Eastern and Western, with capitals at Rome and Constantinople, as represented in the two legs of iron. Truly Rome was an iron kingdom!

And in his foretelling of the successive world powers that would come and go before the old world ends, Daniel stopped at just the right place—he mentions only four. He did not go on to describe a fifth universal Gentile world power. Daniel here accurately portrayed history for more than two thousand years in advance!

The reliability of any historian depends on his accuracy; and Daniel was accurate, even though recording history in advance. Hence we can have confidence in him, even as did Jesus, who quoted him in Matthew 24. It is this same dependable Prophet Daniel who describes events of our day, of which we shall note more as we proceed. If by divine providence Daniel was able to foresee and predict accurately more than two thousand years of the world’s most important events, it would seem that we should trust him in respect to the few things which he says are still future.

But, to return to the interpretation of the image, when the Roman Empire began to wane, there was no other power capable of stepping in and taking its place as dictator of the world. Rome began, rather, to split up into smaller states or kingdoms. Thus, the feet and the toes of the image, with the disintegrating influence of clay mixed with iron, aptly represent what actually happened following the heyday of Rome’s military supremacy.

Then the prophet continues, telling us that the stone cut out of the mountain without hands which smote the image upon its feet and then grew until it became a great mountain that filled the whole earth, represents the power and authority of God, which: one, brings to an end the lease of power given to those Gentile nations who ruled over Israel; and secondly, represents the near-establishment of a new kingdom “in the days of these kings”—the feet and toe kingdoms of the image. He also assures us that this new kingdom which is to be set up by the God of heaven shall “break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”—Dan. 2:44

Now we have the whole prophetic vision before us, showing the successive empires of Gentile supremacy over Israel, beginning with Babylon and continuing down through the centuries to the

collapse of Rome as a universal empire, and finally to the breaking up of every vestige of Gentile rule by setting up the kingdom of God on the earth.

In the LORD'S warning to Israel of a "seven times" period of punishment, we have a clue as to how long the Gentile times were to be. (Lev. 26:18,21,24,28) Most students of biblical time prophecies agree that a time, or year, in symbolic language means 360 literal years, and that the seven times of the Gentile supremacy over Israel represented 2,520 years. Beginning in 606 B.C., this period would end in A.D. 1914.

We should remember, however, that biblical time prophecies merely point out important landmarks or turning points in the affairs of nations, and then only in so far as those affairs relate to the plan of God. The end of the times of the Gentiles, in A.D. 1914, was the turning point between the old and the new world—when the old world would begin to die, clearing the way for the new. But we should not expect too much to happen all at once, although tremendous changes already are apparent in the world's national and political setup.

World Changes in Progress

Jesus said, as already noted, that "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:24) Thus we should expect that when the end of this period was reached there would be something to indicate a change in Israel's status among the Gentile powers. And there was. As a direct result of the First World War which began in 1914, the Jews of the world were no longer officially without recognition, and were permitted to return to Palestine to rebuild their national homeland. And now the new State of Israel is officially recognized as a nation among nations.

True, in recent years the Jews experienced an increased measure of persecution, and had their privileges in Palestine somewhat curtailed; but these experiences were also in harmony with the prophecies concerning the period in which divine favor was to be manifested toward them. God's prophet foretold that hunters would be sent to drive the Jew back to his own land. (Jer. 16:16) Also, that finally God would need to intervene on their behalf in order to protect them from their enemies even after they had been established in the Holy Land.—Jer. 30:3,5,11

So outstanding have been the many changes that have occurred the world over since the end of the Gentile times in 1914 that it is not uncommon even for noted statesmen and writers to refer to the prewar days as the old order, and to speak of the present era as a transitional period leading into new order. Inasmuch as the end of the age does not mean the burning up of the literal earth, we are able to see that the signs pertaining thereto do not need to be interpreted in such a way as to make them all terminate in a single day. We can see, then, that the old world is already ending, and that already there are evidences that the new age is near.

This incoming new order is what the Bible describes as the kingdom of Christ, or the kingdom of God—the divine rulership that is to supplant the present imperfect governments of earth. The Bible gives many titles to the new King of earth, and one of them is Michael—meaning 'who as God'. This title indicates that the new king will represent God, the Creator. Indeed, the prophet declares that "the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom." (Dan. 2:44) True, this new kingdom will be for the people, but it will represent God, the Creator, and will function by divine authority and power, enforcing his laws. The people will not be asked to vote for it, nor will its establishment and success depend upon human wisdom and ability.

It is this Michael, the Messiah and representative of Jehovah, who is referred to in that wonderfully accurate prophecy of Daniel, chapter twelve. There we are informed of a time when

Michael shall stand up to assume control of earth's affairs, and the prophet indicates that the first results of this will be "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." And who will say that we are not even now going through at least a part of this trouble? Jesus, in Luke 21:26, cited this prophecy of Daniel twelve, and explained that because of this foretold time of trouble, men's hearts will fail them for fear, as they look forward to coming events.

The Apostle Paul gives us further valuable information concerning the present development of world events, particularly in respect to this destructive trouble which is already afflicting the world. First he mentions the times and seasons, and the fact that while the world would not be aware of the true significance of the times in which they were living, yet the brethren of Christ would know perfectly. He points out that when the wise men of the world would be saying, "Peace and safety; then sudden destruction" would come upon them, "as travail upon a woman with child."—I Thess. 5:1-4

Everyone knows that the general agitation for peace among the nations and people of the earth, looking toward the outlawing of war, began in a marked way in the early twentieth century. Yes, peace societies and peace conferences are strictly modern movements. Such efforts were almost unknown to prior generations. Was it just a chance happening that, coincident with all these great efforts toward peace, the most devastating war of all history should suddenly be precipitated? Is not this in marked fulfillment of Paul's prediction of sudden destruction that was to come as the nations began to agitate for peace?

Spasms of Trouble Fulfill Prophecy

But notice the manner in which this destructive trouble was to come upon the old order of things: it was to be like travail upon a woman with child. Every mother knows what that means. Travail comes in spasms, with periods of easement in between. The successive periods of easement usually grow shorter, and the spasms of pain more severe, until the birth of the child takes place. And thus far this great time of trouble, which is to terminate in the birth of the new order, is developing exactly according to this biblical picture of travail.

The First World War

First, and exactly at the end of the times of the Gentiles, came the First World War, with all its horrible suffering and weakening effect upon civilization. The war ended, but the effects remained. It was supposed to be a war to end wars, but from the time the armistice was signed the nations began to prepare for another war, and finally in 1939 it broke out.

The war of 1914 was to make the world safe for democracy, but as an aftermath of the war dictatorships were set up which bankrupted the nations, but at the same time made thousands of millionaires, who, in fulfillment of another prophecy, have heaped together treasures for the last days. Indeed, it was a real spasm, beginning suddenly and ending suddenly—and it was worldwide. When it ended, the world was happy, insanely happy, for at least a day, not realizing that war was but the first of a series of spasms that were destined to come for the purpose of bringing to birth an entirely new social order.

Easement, and Further Spasms

Then began the easement. Prosperity loomed, and everyone began talking about getting back to normalcy. Yes, the period of easement was on; the poor world's pulse seemed normal, at least the prosperous political physicians claimed that it was, and they boastfully announced that the patient had fully recovered under their skillful treatment. Alas, how shortsighted is human

wisdom! These physicians did not understand that this is a case of travail preceding a new birth. They did not know that the Gentile times had ended, and that all the kings of earth have had their day—so they looked forward with hope to a perpetuation of the old order.

Then suddenly and without warning, in the fall of 1929, came the beginning of the second major spasm—and like the first one it, too, was worldwide. Stocks everywhere tumbled in a day, and kept on failing. Banks failed, and businesses went bankrupt. Turning from the hazardous stock market, many entrusted their money to the banks for safekeeping, only to find that the banks were eventually forced to close their doors. Some who did not trust the banks bought gold and stored it away in vaults, or elsewhere, only to have it finally taken away from them as an emergency measure. Thousands of factories closed; millions of men and women lost their jobs; long breadlines formed in nearly every city. Thus the poor world began to realize that it was in the throes of a depression that meant even more suffering than the first spasm had entailed, severe though it was.

Other Spasms

The depression spasm affected the entire world, and society's physicians went to work on the patient again. Many remedies were tried, and in nearly every instance improvement was reported. Indeed, in America it was claimed that the depression was ended, yet the tragic fact remained that there were still ten millions or more men and women out of work just prior to the time when the all-out defense program was inaugurated.

But true to the illustration of travail, the periods of easement seemed to grow shorter and shorter, so that before we were scarcely out of the depression, another and even more ghastly war came upon the nations—a revolutionary war—a struggle between dictatorship and democracy, with both sides pressing the bloody struggle through to the bitter end. Fascist and Nazi dictatorships were destroyed; but now the human race was threatened with nuclear bombs.

The argument is frequently advanced by those who have little or no faith in the prophecies of the Bible, that these events which students of the Bible refer to as signs of the approaching end, are merely a matter of history repeating itself. But let the reader take note that nearly all the points thus far considered involve unusual happenings in world affairs such as heretofore have been unknown in all the annals of human history. This is especially true of the next prophetic evidence to be considered.

Increase of Knowledge

In the same twelfth chapter of the prophecy of Daniel wherein the prophet tells of the present time of trouble that is daily becoming more severe, he gives us some further valuable and striking information concerning these last days in which we are living. Daniel designates this same period as the time of the end.

It is clear now that when Daniel here speaks of the time of the end he has reference, not to the approaching destruction of the earth, but to the end of Gentile supremacy over Israel. Concerning this period the prophet says, "in the time of the end many shall run to and fro [on the earth], and knowledge shall be increased." Simple words, these, but deep in meaning! It has been only within the lifetime of this present generation that people have really started running to and fro. We are now a world of travelers! And why? Because suddenly there has come an unprecedented increase of knowledge, which has made possible the inventions of new modes of travel, just as the prophet predicted.

Sir Isaac Newton, noted philosopher of the eighteenth century, who was also a believer in the Bible, studied this prophecy of Daniel, and upon the basis of it he concluded that the time would come when people would travel as fast as fifty miles an hour. Voltaire, the noted French infidel, made a great deal of sport of the mighty Newton for being so foolish as to make a rash prediction of this kind, and especially for using the Bible to prove it. It would be interesting to know what Voltaire would say were he to be awakened from the sleep of death now!

Today, those who travel on the highways no faster than fifty miles an hour are usually in the way of ordinary traffic, while six hundred miles an hour is a modest speed for an airplane. Those who now hold views similar to Voltaire's as to the absurdity of Bible prophecies, and who are alive today to see their fulfillment, might find it profitable to stop and calmly think the matter over. The younger members of the present generation are inclined to forget that all our wonderful blessings of invention and travel are peculiar to this generation. Our grandparents knew little or nothing about them. In the early days of railroading many otherwise intelligent persons claimed that the railroads were inventions of the devil, to carry immortal souls to hell.

If even a college professor of one hundred years ago had said that the time would come when we could sit in our homes and converse with people across the seas, or around the world, without as much as a wire or other visible connections, his friends would have said, "Poor man, it's too bad that he studied so hard." But here we are today, accepting these miracles as commonplace, not realizing that they have come in fulfillment of divine prophecy.

A hundred and fifty years ago, or thereabouts, it was not unusual for members of Parliament in Great Britain to be unable to sign their own names to important documents. What would we think of a ten-year-old child today who could not read or write? And, remember, all this increase of knowledge was prophesied to come in the time of the end.—Dan. 12:4

The Gathering of the Nations

Let us consider still another prophecy that has had a very close bearing on the times in which we are living, indicating that we are indeed witnessing the closing scenes of the world's nighttime of sorrow and death. The prophecy reads: "Therefore 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."—Zeph. 3:8,9

The point in this prophecy which reveals the time of its fulfillment is its reference to the gathering of the nations. Everyone knows that it has been only the last few decades that invention and progress have brought all the nations of the earth together in such a way that now none of them can exist in entire isolation from the others. First came the League of Nations. Then there was that conference of sixty-six nations, held in England in 1933. Though abortive in its objective, it nevertheless served as a good illustration of how the present family of nations actually has been gathered into a compact interdependent group during the time of the end.

That London Conference was arranged in acknowledgment of the fact that unless the nations could agree on some unified economic and monetary policy, the whole structure of civilization was likely to crumble. But alas, no real agreement was reached at the conference; with the result that after that there was the mad rearmament race among the nations, which led in 1939 to another global war. Then came the most impressive gathering of the nations in all history, when they assembled in San Francisco to frame a new order of peace—The United Nations.

Yes, Zephaniah predicted the utter failure of all these get-together efforts of the nations in these last days; and the reason he assigns for such failure is that the time has not come for God to express his righteous indignation against a selfish and corrupted society, a world that has perfunctorily professed his name, but has deliberately disobeyed his laws.

The prophet declares that God's vengeance will be expressed in such a manner that the whole earth will be devoured by the fire of his jealousy. If the earth could be devoured by a wild beast, as previously noted, it also could be devoured by the fire of God's jealousy, the language being symbolic in each case, with no reference to a literal earth, a literal beast, or a literal fire.

The symbolism of fire is very enlightening. Here it indicates the utter destruction of the present order of selfishness, following which will come the administration of the kingdom of Christ, that through it the people may have an opportunity to return to the worship and service of the true God.

That Zephaniah's prophecy has no reference to the destruction of the literal earth, nor of all the people upon the earth, is clearly shown, "For then [after the fire] will I turn to the people a pure language [truth], that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. 3:9) From this it is evident that the people will not be burned up, but will have an opportunity to return to God to serve him after the symbolic earth is devoured by the fire of God's jealous indignation—the great time of trouble.

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Chapter VII

THE WORLD'S ONLY HOPE—RESTITUTION

THE full restoration of the human race to a state of perfect health, happiness, and everlasting life, in a worldwide edenic home, is the expressed purpose of the Creator as recorded in his Word, the Bible. Reason tells us that this is as it should be. If God created the earth for man, and man for the earth, it would be illogical to suppose that he would permit opposing forces of deception and rebellion forever to thwart his loving designs; or that he would be forced to adopt some alternative arrangement in order to salvage a few of his human subjects by transferring them to another state of life.

When God created man and provided him with that wonderful Eden home, the commission was given to multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it. Nothing was said to Adam and Eve about going to heaven when they died; indeed, death was not in the offing for them as long as they remained obedient to the Creator's laws.

They were to live—on the earth—and not die. They were to fill the earth—not heaven—with their progeny. Try, then, to imagine the glorious, ideal conditions that would have obtained on this planet Earth if sin and death had not come upon the scene and the original edenic paradise had been enlarged to embrace the whole earth, as God had commanded. Picture that worldwide paradise filled with a perfect and happy human family, all enjoying eternal life and the eternal favor of their Creator. It is this practical, blessed boon that is yet to come to the human race, such restitution having been provided through the death of Jesus.

Promises of Restitution

When, in the very beginning, God said that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, he actually meant that the results of the serpent's work of death would be destroyed, and man would be restored to that which he was then forfeiting by disobeying his Creator. When God told Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed, it was in reality a promise of restoration to all of Adam's posterity.

When the angel announced the birth of Jesus, saying, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord," it meant that the whole world was to have an opportunity of being saved from death, and restored to life upon the earth. (Luke 2:11) When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," he simply was reminding them of the real and ultimate purpose of the kingdom of God—the restoration of man's lost estate. Every Christian who has uttered this prayer—whether he realized it or not—has prayed for the restoration of paradise conditions on the earth.

When our Lord and his apostles promised all faithful Christians that they would become joint-heirs with Jesus and would reign with him, it meant that ultimately they would share with him as the spiritual seed of Abraham, in the glorious work of dispensing the promised blessings of restored life. (Rev. 5:10) When the Scriptures tell us that Jesus "by the grace of God tasted death for every man," it means that the penalty of death, which rests upon every man because of original sin, will in due time be set aside, thus opening the way for every man to live again upon an earth made perfect.—Rom. 6:23; Heb. 2:9

It is in order to accomplish this work of restoration that the church, as well as Jesus, is exalted to such a high position, both of nature and of glory. And what a better hope of glory this is for the church of Christ than the Dark Age theory that God has been trying to get the whole world to join the church in order that they might be saved from hell-fire!

It is this glorious work of restoration, or restitution, that follows the second coming of Christ. The Apostle Peter indicates this in Acts 3:19-23. Just before making the statement here recorded, Peter had healed a man who had been lame from his youth. Using this incident as an illustration and as a basis for the important lesson he was about to impart to his hearers, he said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the LORD; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." And what an all-comprehensive prophecy this is, restitution of all things! What a different sequel to the second coming of Christ is this from the traditional crack of doom that was supposed to follow his return to the earth.

Yes, times of refreshing—not of gloom and torture—shall come from the presence of the LORD. The expression, 'from the presence of', in the Greek, literally means 'out from the face of it'. It is based on the oriental idea that to turn one's back upon another is an evidence of disfavor, but to look upon another indicates that he is considered a friend. How full of meaning then is this expression, as the apostle uses it in this prophecy! In the Garden of Eden, God turned his back upon his human creation because his law had been disobeyed. "In his favor is life," says the prophet; but the world lost God's favor because of sin, and, like the flower deprived of the sunlight and rain, the people have withered and died.—Ps. 30:5

The Promises Will Be Fulfilled

But while God's back, figuratively speaking, has been turned against the human race for more than six thousand years, nevertheless he has been making promises concerning the future time of blessing, and also making preparation for the things which he has been promising. The second coming of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom mark the time when these promises begin to be fulfilled. Because of this Peter tells us that then God will turn his face toward the human family, and that as a result, times of refreshing shall come.

The apostle also says that there shall come times of restitution of all things, spoken by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began. It was perfect life on earth that man lost, and it is perfect life on earth that is to be restored. How could the world be restored to heaven, when it has never been there? And think of it, all of God's holy prophets have foretold these coming days of blessing for the distressed and dying world of mankind! Did you ever wonder about deserts blossoming and fig trees growing in heaven? It is earthly things of this nature that the Old Testament prophets wrote about, and now we see that their messages pertained indeed to earthly blessings of life and happiness in the restored paradise.

Peter's restoration to health of the one man who had been lame was used merely as an illustration of the fact that when the messianic kingdom is established there will be similar restitution for all. Isaiah, for example, said that when the kingdom time comes, "the lame man shall leap as an hart," that the "tongue of the dumb shall sing," that the "ears of the deaf shall be unstopped," and the "eyes of the blind" opened. (Isaiah, chapter 35) Not only will these restitution blessings affect those unfortunate ones who are maimed and crippled, but all others who desire it shall be benefited thereby. And then, too, there is a spiritual blindness that will be removed when the "knowledge of God's glory" fills the earth "as the waters cover the sea."—Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:34

The messianic kingdom is symbolized in prophecy as a mountain. It is this mountain-kingdom that Daniel foretold would grow until it fills the whole earth. (Dan. 2:34,35,44) This same mountain is mentioned by the Prophet Micah where we read, "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it."—Mic. 4:1-4

The Last Days

The expression, last days, as used in the foregoing passage, is descriptive of the closing days of the reign of sin and death upon the earth, and the period in which a new and better order will be established, under the direct administration of the Messiah. The Dark Age hallucinations concerning the last days are found to be entirely erroneous when compared with this and other hope-inspiring scriptures. For example, instead of the last days signaling the end of all hope as well as all opportunity for repentance, the prophet presents an entirely opposite picture. He says that then God will teach the people his ways and that they will walk in his paths; that they will

cease their selfish, warlike tendencies, and will devote their time to the promotion of peace and goodwill: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Not all the details of the messianic kingdom arrangements are revealed in the Bible, but we are assured that the same divine power and unerring wisdom that brought into being and now controls the orderly movements of all the millions of heavenly bodies, vouchsafes the kingdom methods by which the knowledge of God's law of love will be enforced throughout the lengths and breadths of the earth immediately following the present debacle of human sin and selfishness.

The symbolism of Micah's prophecy, of course, are based on things with which the Prophet himself was familiar. Spears and swords are not much in vogue as effective implements of warfare today. If this prophecy had been written in more modern times it doubtless would have mentioned submarines, airplanes, poison gas, and nuclear warfare.

Likewise, the vine and fig tree picture is that of peace and contentment, based on an adequate assurance that the necessities and comforts of life will continue to be available for all when Christ's kingdom is in full operation. A comfortable cottage, free from mortgage, and a two-car garage, would be the modern conception of the same glorious condition.

We quote another interesting prophecy of the times of restitution: "In this mountain [kingdom] shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees ... well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the LORD God will wipe away all tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it."—Isa. 25:6-8

What more could be asked than that which is described in this heart-cheering prophecy of restitution blessings to come? A feast indeed it will be, when "the desire of all nations shall come." (Hag. 2:7) The feast symbolizes the life-restoring and life-sustaining provisions of the messianic kingdom.

The veil, symbolizing the blinding influences of that "old serpent," will then be removed. This will be made possible because, as the Revelator points out, Satan will then be bound that he should deceive the nations no more.—Rev. 20:1-3

And death is then to be swallowed up in victory! Ah, yes, it was death that entered the world and destroyed the happiness of all; but "that which was lost" is to be restored, hence death must be destroyed.

In Revelation 21:4 we are told that "there shall be no more death." The difficulty in the past has been that we tried to make all these glorious earthly promises apply to heaven, overlooking the fact that only a few—the genuine footstep followers of the Master during this age—are to have a heavenly reward. It is here on earth that death has reigned; and it is here, therefore, that there shall be no more death.

How happy the people will then be to accept the kingdom blessings of life and salvation! Note what the prophet says on this point: "it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

How many millions of people, indeed, have waited and longed for a better understanding of the true God! And how many, also, have hoped and prayed for the salvation that he alone can give! Yes, the world has been waiting for the sunrise of God's returning favor—ignorantly

waiting, perhaps, not having much idea of how or when it was to come about. But when the blinding influences of the archdeceiver have been removed and the knowledge of God's glory fills the earth, then the world will know its God, and actually and enthusiastically return to him with its whole heart.

God's Mighty Power

Let no one's faith be staggered by the immensity of the things which God has promised to do for mankind. Remember that we are now considering what the all-powerful eternal Creator of the universe has promised to do. The God who produced life in the first place is abundantly able to reproduce it in order to fulfill his promises.

And this restitution is to include the dead as well as the dying. It is this that is involved in the Bible teaching of the resurrection. This wonderful doctrine of the resurrection from the dead has been made void by the traditional theory that there is no death. How could one be raised from the dead unless he were dead? How utterly impossible it has been for a confused world to grasp the simple but soul-satisfying hope of restitution while their minds have been blinded by the immortal-soul tradition! But now, thank God, we can see what constitutes salvation; that it means an awakening from the dead and a restoration to life upon the earth. The Bible pictures death as being a sleep, from which all are to be awakened, refreshed, in the morning of the new day soon to dawn. The divine time clock of the ages already marks the early morning hour; and while the darkness is still dense, the day is rapidly approaching; yea, it is very near.

Yes, the most interesting part of it all is the fact that these life-giving blessings of restitution are indeed just around the corner. And it does not require a super abundance of faith to believe it, either. The prophets of the Bible have been so accurate in their foretelling of present world conditions—the conditions that were immediately to precede the establishment of God's kingdom—and of the many blessings which already have materialized, many of which would have been considered impossible up to a few years ago, that it is not hard to believe that the same divine power and wisdom that must have guided in giving prophetic utterance to the things which we now accept as realities must also have guided in foretelling the still more wonderful things which lie just ahead.

Let us then rejoice in the inspiring prospect that is before us; and may the vision of those joys to come enable us to bear patiently the trials of the present. The reign of sin and death has been a long and weary night for the world as a whole, yet for each individual the time goes quickly by, and with its passing, each one has laid the foundation of a very valuable lesson. If now we can realize that the wise and loving Creator has allowed the reign of evil for the very purpose of enhancing our appreciation of him and his laws, we can patiently wait for, and continue to pray for, the ushering in of the new day.

Let us remember, too, O blessed fact! that those who fall asleep in death while waiting for the divine kingdom to come, either ignorantly waiting or joyfully expecting and praying for it, will not miss the blessings of the new day any more than those who live all the way through the present transition, because all sleeping ones are to be awakened: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth."—John 5:28

But while all will, in the new day just at hand, have a full opportunity of returning to God and of receiving the blessings of everlasting life then available, this boon will not be forced upon anyone. Obedience to the laws of the messianic kingdom will be required; and those who will

not obey shall be destroyed in what the Scriptures term “the second death.” —Acts 3:23; Rev. 20:13-15

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Chapter VIII

GOD’S NEW ORDER

“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. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things now.” —Revelation 21:4,5

IF IT were possible to imagine our earth, or any of the other planets in the boundless expanse of the universe, disobeying the divine law that governs the heavenly bodies, we know that such anarchy would result in the utter destruction of that planet. The reason that scientists are able to foretell the exact second of a solar eclipse years in advance is because they know that the orbs of space are all subject to certain definite laws which can be depended upon to produce uniformly accurate results.

Is it not reasonable to suppose, then, that man, the highest of God’s earthly creatures, and the only one who has a conscience more or less attuned to the principles of right and wrong, is also subject to divine law? It is even so, and it was man’s disobedience to God’s law that plunged him into a quagmire of sorrow, suffering, and death. And it will be only through obedience to divine law that mankind will be able to return to God and to the blessings of life and happiness that were forfeited because of sin.

But let no one suppose that any present attempt to obey God’s law will result in the return of God’s favor. No, God’s law was violated by the perfect Adam—who had both the knowledge and ability to do better—which resulted in his being sentenced to death. Adam’s posterity, therefore, have been the children of a condemned and dying man; so all have been born imperfect and under condemnation of death. Thus man, in his enfeebled, dying state, is unable to keep God’s law inviolate, hence is hopelessly lost so far as providing salvation for himself is concerned.

The Scriptures say that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) From this it is seen that in Jesus alone is centered all hope of salvation. He paid the penalty of death by his own death on Calvary’s cross. It was for this very purpose that Jesus was made flesh. It was a man (Adam) who had sinned, and it therefore was necessary that another man—a perfect and uncondemned man—become the Redeemer. This Jesus did. But while God, in his love, sent Jesus to die for the race, thus providing a way of escape from death, a mere mental assent to this vital truth will not bring salvation, either now or later when the kingdom is established. What does God require?

God expressed his law to Israel in what is known as the Ten Commandments. These constitute the basis of most civilized laws today. Jesus summed up these commandments in two major requirements—supreme love for the Creator, and an equal love for our neighbor as we have for ourselves. This latter requirement is comprehended in what is commonly known as the Golden

Rule. These two major commandments constitute the foundation of all true righteousness, and no one, either now or in the age to come, can be in harmony with the true God while ignoring this law or refusing to be governed by it.

Selfishness, up till now, has always been preeminently in the saddle. From the material and outward appearance, selfishness has been profitable and necessary. It has too often seemed true that those who did not remain on the bandwagon of self-interest have been hopelessly left behind in their pursuit of happiness. “Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up,” declares the prophet of the LORD.—Mal. 3:15

Love to Replace Selfishness

During the past six thousand years, Satan has been the great taskmaster of the human race, and he has governed by the evil principle of selfishness. With the establishment of the new kingdom, the whole order of things will be reversed. Then Jesus will be the ruler, and love, instead of selfishness, will be taught and encouraged and rewarded.

Then will come the actual fulfillment of that wonderful angelic prophecy, “On earth peace, goodwill toward men.” This change from selfishness to love will not come suddenly. The prophet suggests the gradual method by which the world will be instructed in the law of love when he says that “when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”—Isa. 26:9

The judgment work mentioned by Isaiah will be coincident with the dispensing of kingdom blessings. But it will be nothing like the traditional judgment day which has been used to frighten so many people into joining a denominational church organization. So thorough will be the kingdom system of instruction in righteousness that the prophet tells us God’s law will be written even in the hearts of the people.—Jer. 31:33

The Blessings Around the Corner

No one needs to wait, however, until the kingdom is actually established in order to begin learning and putting into practice the law of God. What should hinder any of us, even now from making a sincere effort actually to love our neighbors as ourselves? There are so many ways of doing good to others—ways that are within reach of all of us. It doesn’t cost money to give a smile, a word of cheer, or otherwise to share with others the joy that should be in our own hearts. To the extent that we know of the love of God as it is revealed in his Word we should be glad to tell others about it. There is no better way to comfort distressed hearts than to tell them the glad message concerning the messianic kingdom soon to be established.

Today, the comparatively few of earth’s millions who may not for the moment be afflicted with one or another of the countless maladies with which fallen man is tormented are living in almost constant fear of the time when they will be among the sufferers. Because of the dread spectres of poverty, disease, bombing planes, and nuclear weapons which are ever in the offing in this selfish, sin-sick world, men’s hearts are continuously filled with fear, and this mars the slight happiness that might otherwise be enjoyed temporarily by a few. But in the new world, when the rule of Christ’s kingdom is in full operation, even the fear of evil will be removed. The promise is that nothing will be permitted to hurt nor destroy in all that holy kingdom. (Isa. 11:9) Ah yes, how wonderfully true it will be then that the weeping bereaved ones will have their tears, as well as the causes of their tears, all wiped away, when thus they realize the kingdom work complete.—Isa. 25:8

What a glorious privilege, then, is now ours, of telling the whole world these blessed tidings, as we have and can make opportunities! When we note the fearfulness of our friends and neighbors as they look after those things which are coming upon the earth, let us be quick to heed the instructions of the LORD bidding us to “say to them of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even with a recompense; he will come and save you.”—Isa. 35:4

There is nothing better we can do at the present time to show our appreciation to God for the hope of the kingdom which he has given us through his Word than thus to make it known to others. We cannot stop the mad rush of a selfish world toward the precipice of sure destruction; but we can tell as many as will listen that God is soon to establish a new world, once inhuman selfishness has completely destroyed this “present evil world.” (Gal. 1:4) Thus we can be ambassadors of the new kingdom and, from the vantage point of faith in the sure fulfillment of the promises of God, can take our place beside those described by the prophet, who are saying unto Zion, “Thy God reigneth!”—Isa. 52:7; 61:1-3

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