

## **THE TEN FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH**

The holy bible, containing 66 books by holy men of old under God's inspiration was written for our learning so that mankind who fell from grace through sin in the garden of Eden may be reconciled to God by grace through Jesus Christ. There are therefore 10 fundamental truths, also referred to as the 10 strings, which are interwoven for righteousness. These 10 truths of the bible are as current today as they were in ancient times and ultimately essential for true understanding of Jehovah (the almighty) God and his purposes of creation through his only begotten son, Jesus Christ. The 10 (ten) fundamental truths of the bible are; Creation, Justice Manifested, Abrahamic Promise, The Birth Of Christ, Ransom Sacrifice, Resurrection, Mystery Revealed, Our Lord's Return, Glorification Of The Church, and Restoration Of All Things.

### **CREATION**

Creation is the act of God Almighty in bringing into existence things that were not there before, such as the heavens, the earth, their lights, (the sun, moon and stars), life forms, and elements. Creation is the first string in the symbolic harp of God, the harp with ten strings, signifying the ten fundamental doctrines of the Holy Bible. The book of Genesis, written by the prophet Moses at the inspiration of God, contains details about the creation of the world. But since the Holy Bible was written for man's benefit, the account of creation recorded therein deals more with man and his place of habitation, the earth. There is no disputing the fact that JEHOVAH is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. In Genesis 1:1 it is written: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." And the Almighty God declared: "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. – Isaiah 45:12,18

**EVOLUTION** The so-called intellectuals of the world have, at the instance of satan the Devil patched their imaginations together about the origin of the universe, which they call the theory of evolution. Prominent among the intellectuals who started advancing these assumptions right from the 18th century are Charles Darwin, who formulated the theory of natural selection, and Lamarck, who is credited with the use and disuse theory. The essential point of evolution is that the universe and the things therein were not created by God but that they evolved gradually over many generations from the simplest forms to what they are today. A notable scientist, in explaining further the concept of evolution as commonly accepted by biologists, states as follows: "The theory of evolution is a complex idea. It states that all living things are related to one another because they all came from the same common ancestor far back in geological times. It states that new species arose from preceding species of plants and animals that were simpler, that this has been happening since plants and animals first existed on this earth, and that it is still going on." – Evolution: Fact or Theory? by Cora Reno, page 18. According to the evolutionists the universe really sprung from an initial Big Bang some 15 billion years ago, which gave birth to space, time and all the matter and energy the universe holds. The Time magazine issue of June 25, 2001 which had as cover "How the universe will end" argues that "The entire visible universe grew from a speck far smaller than a proton to a nugget the size of a grape fruit, almost instantaneously when the whole thing was (less than) 1 sec old. This turbo-expansion was driven by something like dark energy but a whole lot stronger. What we call the universe, in short, came from almost nowhere in next to no time." Though the evolutionists themselves confess that they are at a loss as to what triggered the "turbo-expansion" of the initial speck of life and that "no one has yet been able to say precisely when that first evolutionary step on the road to humanity happened..." yet they assert with singular confidence that in the same issue of Time magazine quoted

above that "Our sun and solar system were formed 4.6 billion years ago, and the first life forms appeared on earth a surprisingly short time afterward. Modern humans showed up only 100,000 years before the present. Earth should remain habitable for another few billion years." ABSURDITIES Writing on the absurdity of the evolution theory, Cora Reno states "When we consider the body as a whole, we realize that it could not have come into existence by the ordinary working of the laws of science which we see around us every day. If we take only a part of it, such as the nervous system, we still find order and planning. If we examine only a small organ of that system, such as the eye, our wonder increases. As we study the cells that make up that organ we are amazed at their diversity and perfection. As we consider the molecular and atomic structures within those cells, we see not the happenings of luck and chance, but rather the planning of a master mind. In the instincts of the wild animals around us, we notice a different kind of design in the plan of God. Aside from creation, there is no satisfactory way to explain their complex behaviour. – Evolution: Fact or Theory, page 110. It is unfortunate that some so-called Christians have busied themselves striving to marry the evolution theory with the Bible. This is wrong. St. Paul warned Christians to avoid "...profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith..." – 1 Timothy 6:20,21. It is a sign of the times that those whom the world regard as intellectual giants should lay so much credence to fairy tales When people reject the word of God and feed on their own imaginations, they end up making folly of themselves. Any right-thinking person with the knowledge of God will know that the evolutionists are merely engaged in a foolish and useless exercise. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." so declared St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:19. (See also Jeremiah 8:8,9) And in his letter to the Colossians St. Paul stated: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." – Colossians 2:8. Jeremiah the prophet under the inspiration of God declared that God Almighty created the world by His wisdom and power in these words: "Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? For to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion." – Jeremiah 10:6,7,12; See also Proverbs 3:19. LOGOS, BEGINNING OF CREATION The beginning of JEHOVAH'S creation was the Logos in Greek, Word in English meaning spokesman or interpreter for God Almighty, who came to this earth and was known and called Jesus Christ. The Prophet Solomon speaking concerning Jesus Christ stated: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old..." (Proverbs 8:22) Jesus Christ spoke of himself as "the beginning of the creation of God." (Revelation 3:14; see also John 1:1-3,14,10; Ephesians 3:9) It was through Jesus Christ all things both in heaven and on earth were created as St. Paul makes clear: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him:..." – Colossians 1:15-17. It follows therefore that it was Jesus Christ whom God used to create Lucifer, one of the "Morning stars" who sang for joy when the earth was created. (Job 38:7) It was when Lucifer, due to pride and covetousness rebelled against his Maker that Jehovah sentenced him to damnation and renamed him Satan, Devil, Dragon and Serpent. God did not create the Devil nor anything evil for that matter. (Ezekiel 28:13,14,15; Revelation 12:9, 20:1,2; Job 34:10; Deuteronomy 32:4. The Almighty God was addressing His creative agent, the Word, when

he said: "...Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." (Genesis 1:26, 27) Chapters one and two of the book of Genesis speak of eight creative acts within six "days" of God's work, with two falling on the third and sixth days as follows: Light – Genesis 1:3-6 The waters divided by the firmament – Genesis 1:6-8 Dry land separated from the seas – Genesis 1: 11-13 | Vegetation – Genesis 1:11-13 Lights: sun, moon, stars – Genesis 1: 14-19 Fishes, birds – Genesis 1:20-23 Land animals – Genesis 1:24 | Man – Genesis 1:26 The seventh day was the Sabbath – Genesis 2:2 The Bible shows that a day with the Lord is about a thousand years as St. Peter explained in the following text: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." – 2 Peter 3:8. See also Psalm 90:4. That man and indeed the entire universe came into being through creation is confirmed by the prophet David who pointedly declared: "Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." – Psalm 100:3; Isaiah 42:5; Jeremiah 32:17 MAN The Bible states clearly that "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) It is evident therefore that the soul is the person himself as God did not infuse any other thing into man other than the breath of life. When the breath of life leaves one he becomes a dead soul. David having considered the wonders of God as shown in creation of man, declared: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." – Psalm 139:14; see also Psalm 104:24. Although man was the last of God's creation, yet God gave him dominion over the things He created in order to fulfill His purpose. Added to this is the fact that: He was created in the image and likeness of God; He was endowed with wisdom, knowledge and understanding more than the beasts. – Job 39:17; 35:11; Psalm 32:9 God made man for the purpose of serving Him. (Isaiah 43:7,21; Revelation 4:11; 15:4; 14:6,7) Those who refuse to serve or worship Him shall perish – Psalm 9:17; Isaiah 60:12; Psalm 49:12,20 etc. SOME OTHER CREATIONS The Earth: The earth is spherical in shape and hangs upon nothing. – Isaiah 40:22; Job 26:7 Water and the Seas: The Bible shows that there is a preponderance of water in the earth. There are waters above the firmament and under it. Apostle Peter described the earth as "...standing out of the water and in the water." (2 Peter 3:5; See also Psalm 24:2; Genesis 1:6,7-9) By the power of God, the waters are bound together as a garment. (Job 38:9; Proverbs 30:4) The waters go up the mountains, hills, valleys to water the earth and to give drink to living creatures (Psalm 104:8-13) The rivers flow into the sea (Ecclesiastes 1:7) The waters go up from the sea and are poured out upon the face of the earth. (Amos 9:6) God has given the sea a decree not to overflow the earth. – Ecclesiastes 1:7; Proverbs 8:27-29; Job 38:8-11; Jeremiah 5:22; Job 26:10. The Mountains and the wind – God Almighty created the mountains, they tower into the skies. They are testimonies to Jehovah's greatness and fill mankind with wonder and admiration. He also created the wind. – Psalm 90:2; Amos 4:13. The Earth, store house of Riches: The earth contains much heat, precious metals and stones, such as diamond, gold, silver, iron, brass, food, etc. – Job 28:1-2,6; Psalm 104:14,15; Genesis 2:10-12; Job 28:16-19. The Sun and The Moon: The sun rises in the East and sets in the West giving light to the earth. It stands for ever. (Psalm 19:4-6; Ecclesiastes 1:5; Matthew 24:27; Luke 17:24; John 11:9; Psalm 89:7-13, 36,37) The sun and the moon "divide the day from the night: and are for signs and for seasons, and for days and years." (Genesis 1:14) Human beings use the day for their activities and sleep in the night while animals are active in the night when they see more clearly and can move about undisturbed by man. An interesting account of the amazing order God made for created things is given in Psalm 104. Even small creatures like the ants, locusts, spiders, are

endowed with amazing intelligence: – Proverbs 6:6-9; Proverbs 30:25-28. **THE NEW CREATION** The purpose for which God created man is to show forth his praise. It is when mankind are given to the worship of God that His purpose for man would be fully realized. It is only by so doing that man will find peace and fulfillment and life. (Deuteronomy 6:24) To realize this, God Almighty has promised to bring about a new creation, where man will know no toil, pain, sickness or death. Man and animals and indeed all creatures will be in peace with one another as God promised through the prophet Isaiah: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying... They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.” (Isaiah 65:17-25) And in his account of the wonderful vision of God’s Kingdom which he saw the apostle John among other things wrote: “And 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 new...” – Revelation 21:4-5.

## **JUSTICE MANIFESTED**

Justice is one of the infinite qualities or attributes of God Almighty. It is with justice that He manifests His righteousness and vindicates His holy name. Without justice, there would be no order in the universe and it would not be possible to realise Jehovah’s grand purposes for creating mankind.

According to good dictionaries – the word “justice” means “the quality of being just; rightness; fairness, especially in the way people are treated and decisions are made”. It is an indisputable fact that God Almighty is the embodiment of absolute justice. His laws or judgments are equitable and are not grievous, and He is just and true in all His ways. Moses the prophet declared, “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” – Deuteronomy 32:4. See also Revelation 15:3.

Many years ago, David, a king and prophet in Israel was inspired to declare that Justice and judgment are the habitation of the throne of God. (Psalm 89:14) Because God is immortal and does not change (Malachi 3:6), He should be absolutely trusted to give His people their due reward. – Hebrews 6:18; Isaiah 40:8.

### **The fall of Adam and Eve**

The justice of God was clearly manifested in the Garden of Eden. It would be recalled that after man had been created, God Almighty gave him a law, the violation of which carried the death penalty as it is written: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:16, 17) When the devil appeared to Eve in the form of a serpent and lured her to eat the fruit, she told him of the law of God and the consequences of violating it. But the devil countered her, saying, “Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” – Genesis 3:4-5.

The great blunder the woman made was that she listened to the lies of the devil and was deceived. The Bible says: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." –

Genesis 3:6.

Sequel to their breaking the law given to them, God Almighty summoned the man and the woman for judgment, thus giving them a full and fair opportunity of defending themselves. (Genesis 3:8-13) From this example we learn the divine principle in executing judgment, which is that the laws, offences and the guilt should be clearly established so that those involved would be convinced of their transgressions. – Job 36: 9; Jude 15.

From the fair hearing which God Almighty gave the first couple, has grown the law of Natural Justice, the traditional name for legal standards of basic fairness, the breach of which will lead to the decision being set aside or judicial review being granted. The requirement is that persons affected by an action should be afforded a fair and unbiased hearing before the decision to act is taken and that one cannot be a judge in his own cause.

#### Punishment

The punishment meted to Adam and Eve by God Almighty was according to the order in which they committed the offence.

The first to be punished was the serpent. The Bible says: "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." (Genesis 3:14) Furthermore, God Almighty declared: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15) The curse is thus targetted primarily at the Tempter, satan the devil. The devil will be cast down from his exalted position, his empire will be destroyed, before he will receive a fatal bruise in the head.

The bruising of the serpent's head, refers to the killing of the devil by Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman (Galatians 3:16) as St. Paul explained in Romans 16:20. Before the devil is killed, he will attack or persecute "the woman", (God's Organisation), but he cannot prevent the work of God from going on. – Hebrews 2:14; Ezekiel 28:12-17; Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 12:17.

The next to receive punishment was Eve, and the Bible account says: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Genesis 3:16) Evidently, child delivery by the woman was meant to be painless and stress free; but thenceforth it would be a hazardous, agonizing or laborious affair. It is not surprising therefore that a woman who is about to deliver is said to be "in labour". The woman's subjection to the man was deepened by the fact that she had to depend on him for her upkeep, since the couple were, from that time, to labour for their food.

The Bible shows that although the woman Eve was deceived, the man was not deceived. (1Timothy 2: 13, 14) Adam deliberately broke the law given to him by God. But while under trial, he blamed the woman for his sin and even God Almighty for giving him the woman. He was guilty of self-justification. People of God should not do so. See Job 31:33, 40

In passing the sentence on Adam God Almighty stated further: "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." – Genesis 3:17.

For not being manly enough to resist the overtures from his wife to eat the fruit, the ground would not be as fertile as it was meant to be. The various food items which were specially made for the nourishment of man were no longer to grow spontaneously but through long and hard labour. Weeds and thorns would be growing more readily on the land than food-bearing plants. Adam started subsisting on imperfect food and became subject to continuous degeneration and ultimately to death.

Some may ask: "Why did Adam not die the very day he sinned?" The Bible shows that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years. Thus, Adam, died at the age of 930 years, died within God's "one day" (Genesis 5:5; Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8) Indeed, "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." – Romans 6:23.

#### Inherited Sin

All the children of Adam became sinners due to his fall. They became subject to sufferings, sickness, fears, sorrows and death. (Romans 3:23) That was why David declared: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 51:5) Also, Apostle Paul stated: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12) The Bible asks, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." – Job 14:4.

It could therefore be understood why the posterity of Adam had to inherit his sins as well as the sentence of death passed on him. However, they do not have to inherit his punishment permanently – for God Almighty would not allow people to suffer endlessly because of circumstances over which they have no control. That was why God sent Jesus Christ as a ransom for man, so that those who do not follow Adam's path of disobedience will have life by His grace.- Deuteronomy 19: 21; Galatians 3: 13; 1 Peter 2:22,23; 2 Corinthians 5:21. The goodness of God in sending Jesus Christ to save mankind is evidence of his justice. The Bible states: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:7, 8) St. Paul added: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." – Romans 5:17-19.

We should repose absolute trust in God Almighty, the embodiment of perfect justice, Who will always do what is right for His people. He deserves adoration and worship.

May God Almighty "the Judge of all the earth", continue to guide us to do His will at all times, by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### **ABRAHAMIC PROMISE**

By the promise of the Almighty God that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed, He unfolded His magnificent purpose of salvation for mankind. The advent of Jesus Christ who was typified by Isaac, Abraham's son, was the most significant stepping-stone in fulfilling the Lord's purpose; and the impact of his successful mission on the people of the world – Jews and non-Jews alike – confirms the reality of the promise. Indeed the Abrahamic promise is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Holy Bible.

Abraham was a man of high reputation. God brought him into prominence and he lived up to expectation. His faith and bent towards the righteousness of God are the qualities that had made him, by God's grace, a model for all true worshippers of the Lord.

After the death of Abraham's father in Haran, God told him to go out of his own country, from his kinsmen and his father's house, to a land that He would show him. This command was backed with the promise that Abraham would be made great and blessed and that in him blessing would redound to the whole world.

**Here is the Bible account:**

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." – Genesis 12:1-3.

Abraham stood high in the Lord's favour. His assurance that whoever blessed Abraham was blessed and that curse would go to anyone who cursed him was an evidence of this favour. The lesson to be learnt from this divine statement is that it is dangerous not to wish well anybody who is granted to be in the good graces of God or who is blessed by Him.

It was on the strength of this knowledge that Balaam refused to curse Israel when he was hired by Balak to do so. He said: "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?" – Numbers 23:8.

In obedience to the Lord's command, Abraham and his household set-out of Haran on their journey to Canaan. Then he was 75 years old.

One of the striking aspects of the Lord's utterance to Abraham is the auspicious promise "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." When the angels of God were going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah they revealed their mission to Abraham because of the promise God made to him said one of the angels: "... Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." – Genesis 18:17-19.

At that material time Abraham had two children – Ishmael and Isaac. Sarah – a Jewess – was the mother of Isaac; and Hagar, an Egyptian handmaid of Sarah who became Abraham's second wife, was the mother of Ishmael.

After Abraham had passed through the test of faith in which he was to offer Isaac as sacrifice, God through His angel said to him: "And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." (Genesis 22:16-18). It is noteworthy that on this occasion God made

His promise not only on oath but also more explicit in that He said that it was through the SEED of Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Who this seed should be – whether Isaac or Ishmael – was not immediately stated though God had earlier indicated, as it pleased Him, His preference for Isaac over Ishmael. – Genesis 17:19-21.

Both Isaac and Ishmael were blessed by God; but it was clear that Isaac had a greater favour from God than his brother Ishmael. After the death of Abraham it became manifest that the promised seed belonged to the family line not of Ishmael but Isaac. This is proved by the fact that God did confirm His promise to Isaac. As it is written: “And the LORD appeared unto him (Isaac) and said... I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries and I will perform the oath, which I swear unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven. And will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” – Genesis 26:2-5.

The Abrahamic promise did not stop with Isaac but was passed on to his son Jacob. In a dream God appeared to him and said: “...I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Read Genesis 28:10-14.

## **ISHMAEL**

Our Muslim friends believe that Ishmael being an elder brother to Isaac was vested with the right to inherit the promised blessing. And so in their view since Mohammed was a descendant of Ishmael he is the one people should look to for salvation. In a tract published by the Muslim Youth Wing in Warri recently it is stated: “Muhammad claimed lineal descent from Ishmael the first born of Abraham. The law of the Jews favours blessing and major inheritance to the first son of the so-called hated wife: Search your Bible book of (Deuteronomy 21:15 to 17. Allah promised to make Ishmael great also Genesis 17: 20-22; Genesis 21:17-21.

The Bible is not opposed to criticism. Therefore anybody is free to criticize the Christian Faith provided he does so without prejudice and without deliberate distortion of the truth or misrepresentation of facts.

In the first place it must be noted that the right of the first born son as stipulated in the Mosaic Law has nothing to do with the election of God. Aaron was the elder brother of Moses but when the time came for God to deliver the Israelites from their afflictions in Egypt it was Moses God chose to be their ruler, judge and deliverer. (Exodus 3:7-18; Acts 7:33-35) The anointing of David as a king and prophet – though he was the youngest of Jesse’s sons – is also a case in point. Before David was chosen, Eliab, Abinadab, Shammah and other seven sons of Jesse who were all older than he had been rejected by God. (1 Samuel 16:1-13) In the light of the foregoing, it is therefore very wrong of our Muslim neighbours or anyone else to quote out of context, portions of the Bible on this matter of Isaac and Ishmael or any other doctrinal issue.

That Ishmael was great it must be admitted. But the fact, which is indisputable and which God Himself made abundantly clear, is that it is through the seed of Isaac, all the nations of



the earth including Ishmael and his descendants would be blessed. This is the unchangeable will of God. This is the truth; and no matter how much it is distorted it remains the truth.

According to the Scriptures, the promised seed through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed is none other than Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour. Indeed he was born a Jew, a descendant of Abraham of the lineage of Isaac. With regard to his genealogy, St. Matthew wrote: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas (Judah) and his brethren – Matthew 1:1-2; see also Luke 3:23-24,33-34.

No one who has the understanding of the Abrahamic promise will ever think of the scope of Christ's mission as limited to the Jewish race. The announcement of Christ's birth was described by an angel of God as "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to ALL PEOPLE"; and after his birth Simeon spoke of him as "a light to lighten the gentiles". – Luke 2:10-11, 25-32.

What is more, it is written: "For 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.

"Charity begins at home" is a common saying. Jesus Christ began his work on earth from among his own people-the Jews-as purposed by God. (Romans 15:8; Acts 3:25,26.) But knowing that his mission was for the benefit of the human race and having laid the foundation, he at the end of his stay on earth after his resurrection said to his apostles: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." – Acts 1:8.

Moreover, he commanded them: "Go ye therefore, and TEACH ALL NATIONS, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." – Matthew 28:19,20

It was a matter of grace that the natural Jews were first given the opportunity to benefit from the ministry of Jesus Christ but, unfortunately, many of them did not understand or appreciate it. (Matthew 23:37-39; Acts 13:27-31, 46-48.) The apostles were given to understand that the promised seed of Abraham was no one else but Jesus Christ through whom life-everlasting and other blessings divine would come to mankind.

St. Peter, addressing the Jews declared: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." – Acts 3:25,26.

The blessings of Jesus Christ are open to anybody in any part of the world but only on the condition that that person believes or has faith in him. Thus it is written: "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already,

because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” – John 3:17-18, 36.

## **FAITH**

Since the advent of Jesus Christ faith and not blood relationship has become the mark by which the true children of Abraham – the Spiritual Jews – are identified. And so St. Paul, debating upon the promise of the Lord to Abraham, stated: “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” – Galatians 3:7-9.

Furthermore, St. Paul said: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” (Galatians 3:16) The New English Bible renders the text thus: Now the promises were pronounced to Abraham and to his ‘issue’. It does not say ‘issues’ in the plural, but in the singular, ‘and to your issue’; and the ‘issue’ intended is Christ.” This proves conclusively that Jesus Christ is the promised seed of Abraham through whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

Upon Jesus Christ rests the hope of man. He is our Redeemer and Saviour. Concerning him St. Peter said: “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” – Acts 4:11,12.

After Jesus Christ had been resurrected by God Almighty the Father, he declared: “...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matthew 28:18) This power is already being used by him and he will continue to wield it until the Father’s purpose will be accomplished. It is in exercise of this power he is gathering his people in all parts of the world through the gospel into his organisation so that they may be saved; it is by this unique power he will subdue satan the devil and bring iniquity to an end; and it is by the same power he will bring all things to perfection in the New Heavens and New Earth – God’s Kingdom of endless peace, glory and happiness.

Jesus Christ holds a pre-eminent position among the creation of God and he is the King of God’s universal and everlasting Government. Concerning him it is written: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” – Isaiah 9:6,7.

Daniel who was made to see the vision of Christ’s coronation in heaven, said: “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should

serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” – Daniel 7:13,14.

Jesus Christ was quite aware of the royal office he was predestined to occupy, and during his earthly ministry he did not hide his identity. He told Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, art thou a king then? Jesus answered; thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,” – John 18:36,37.

It is impossible for any mortal to give a full description of the beauties of the New World – the World without End – and the blessings of those who deserve to inherit it. St. Paul quoting the prophet Isaiah stated: “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” The apostle added: “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” – 1 Corinthians 2:9-10.

Unless men submit themselves to God Almighty so as to be guided by His Spirit they can never come to the knowledge of the truth in regard to the divine arrangement for the blessing of mankind in Christ Jesus – the antitypical SEED of Abraham. Owing to evil influence of Satan the devil majority of people are absolutely ignorant of the significance of the Abrahamic promise.

### **MISSION OF JESUS**

Sin has been the bane of human societies. It is responsible for the shortsightedness and ignorance of men about God and His purpose of creation. Some people, because of prejudice and racial discrimination, think of Jesus Christ as being of no consequence to their race, nation or tribe. But if they had known the truth of what Jesus Christ stands for they would have loved to embrace him.

The scope of the mission of Jesus Christ cuts beyond tribal or racial horizon: it is universal. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ and does his will is the child of God and is therefore under grace to share in the Abrahamic promise. The question of race, colour or tribe is completely ruled out. Said St. Paul: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” – Galatians 3:26-29.

What is man without Christ? To deny him or refuse to be identified with him is, according to the Scriptures, to mark oneself as having been cut off from the commonwealth of spiritual Israel.

The pleasures of this world are sin-ridden, basically artificial, and are temporal. Whatever the joys of this evil world, the glamour of its social life, the comfort and luxury attainable by man’s device are nothing to be compared to the glories and bliss of Christ’s Kingdom. A man who prefers to enjoy this world of sin and lose the World without End should be pitied. “For

what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" asked Jesus Christ. – Mark 8:36.

It was for good reason the holy men and women of old – the ancient faithful as well as the early disciples of Jesus Christ had been expecting the down of the Lord's reign. St. Peter said: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." – 2 Peter 3:13.

No system of imperfect human governments of the world can meet or satisfy the needs of mankind. God's Perfect Kingdom over which Christ has been made the King of kings is the ONLY HOPE of the world. When John the apostle saw the vision of the Lord's glorious kingdom – the New World – he said: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband... And 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." – Revelation 21:1-4.

It is when the kingdom of God is fully established both in heaven and on earth that the Abrahamic promise shall have been completely fulfilled. "In thy seed" said God Almighty, "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

## **BIRTH OF CHRIST**

Jesus Christ is the Beloved Son of the Almighty God who was sent to this evil world to show the light of life to men and shed his blood for the redemption of sinful mankind. In John 3:16-19, it is written: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

## **The Word**

The Bible clearly shows that the first thing ever created by the Almighty God was Jesus Christ, and he became the creative agent of the Father through whom all other things perfect, both visible and invisible, were created.

Jesus Christ is known as the Word translated from the Greek word LOGOS, which is significant of his role as the spokesman or one through whom the Father expresses His will to mankind. In John 1:1-3, it is written: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." Jesus Christ was created; but God the Father has neither beginning nor end but is "from everlasting to everlasting". (Psalm 90:2) Thus the "beginning" referred to in the text is the beginning of God's creation when the Word (Jesus) was created and he who also is God the Son was with God the Father. Indeed Jesus is a God and Isaiah in prophecy called him the "mighty God". – Isaiah 9:6,7.

It was the Word, NOT God Almighty that was made flesh, born on earth, and known as Jesus Christ. But the world which God gave him power to create did not recognise him when he came. As it is written: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." – John 1: 14,10-12.

### **CHIEF ANGEL**

In the pre-human days of Jesus Christ he was the chief of the angels of God in heaven who were sent by Him to communicate with the holy men and prophets of old, and deliver them from troubles on certain occasions. – Genesis 18:1-33; Exodus 3:1-6; Acts 7:30-34; Daniel 3:24-28.

As a result of the sentence of death passed upon man after he had sinned through disobedience, it became necessary that the blood of a perfect man should be shed according to God's purpose (Deuteronomy 19: 21; Hebrews 9:22) to redeem man from sin and restore him to perfection. It was impossible to get such a perfect blood from the offspring of Adam since they were all born in sin. (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23; 5: 12). It was to this end Jesus Christ through the infinite power of Jehovah, the Almighty Father, was transformed from the spirit plane to human in the womb of Mary the virgin and born into this woeful world.

Long before the human existence of Christ many prophecies were uttered about him. It was prophesied that he would be born a Jew and a prophet to whom all people should give ear (Genesis 49:10; Deuteronomy 18:15); that he would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); that a forerunner would prepare the way of the Lord (Isaiah 40:3); that he would ride into Jerusalem upon an ass (Zechariah 9:9); that he would be hated, despised and rejected of (ungodly) men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:1-3).

Furthermore, it was foretold that Jesus Christ would be betrayed by a familiar friend (Psalm 41:9); that the price of betrayal would be 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12,13); that he would be given gall and vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21); that he would be oppressed and brought like a lamb before the slaughter (Isaiah 53:4-7); and it was prophesied that he would be resurrected and his flesh would not see corruption. – Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:24-27.

Truly, in God's appointed time Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary and even angels in heaven sang for joy: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:7-14) All the prophecies concerning him fulfilled accordingly. When he was about the age of 30 years, he received baptism from John the Baptist at the River Jordan. On that historic occasion, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and rested on him, and the Almighty Father declared in heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."-Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-23.

### **PRIMARY PURPOSES**

Some of the primary purposes of Christ's coming to the earth are:

To preach the truth or good news of God's Kingdom in order to enlighten His sheep and free them from Satan's bondage and so that they may serve God Almighty in truth and be saved. – Luke 4:18-21; John 10:9,10; 18:37; Luke 19:10.

To give his life as a ransom by shedding his blood for the remission of sins. – Matthew 20: 28; 26: 28; 1 Timothy 2: 6; Revelation 1: 5.

In character Jesus Christ was exemplary, and excellent in all virtues. He was truthful, kind, gentle, humble and lowly in heart. He never compromised with evil, and all his words and doings were characterized by holiness. He was a man of unbending faith, resisting temptation and was the very embodiment of wisdom. In zeal for the work of God and righteousness he was beyond compare. He was merciful, patient, long-suffering, loving and benevolent. To all mankind he directed his soul-consoling call: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls..." – Matthew 11:28-30.

We cannot claim to be Christians if we are not making serious efforts to follow the good example of our Master and Saviour Jesus Christ. He himself said: "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord" –Matthew 10:25.

### **ONLY MEDIATOR**

It pays to be faithful and obedient in the Lord's service. Jesus Christ, because of his submission to the will of his Father, has been blessed above all creatures in heaven and on earth. About this St. Paul wrote: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." -Philippians 2:9-11. Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and men. (1Timothy 2:5) The Bible says it is through him alone that salvation to eternal life in God's Kingdom can be obtained. "Neither is there salvation in any other," declared St. Peter, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) And Jesus himself said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." – John 14:6.

### **RANSOM SACRIFICE**

The word "ransom," refers to the price or payment made to set free a prisoner or slave. The price is considered the equivalent of the person who is thereby freed from liabilities and charges.

"Ransom Sacrifice", is one of the ten fundamental doctrines of the Holy Bible. The sermon denotes the immeasurable love which God has for man by which He sent His only begotten son to die in place of sinful mankind. Apostle John states in 1 John 4:9,10 thus: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And in John 3:16 Jesus Christ himself states: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life".

### **LIFE LOST**

The question of ransom arose because of the life man lost in the Garden of Eden. After creating Adam and putting him in the beautiful Garden, God Almighty gave him a law to the effect that he could eat of every fruit in the garden except the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:16, 17) But the devil came in the form of a serpent and lured Eve into

eating the fruit after which she “gave also unto her husband...and he did eat”. (Genesis 3:1-6) The consequence of that disobedience was the sentence of death God passed on Adam, which among other things, reads thus: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”. – Genesis 3:16-19

As a result of the fall of Adam the entire human race came short of the glory of God, having been born in sin. (Romans 3:9,19,23) David the prophet declared: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”. (Psalm 51:5) Because man has been in the bondage of death due to sin, Apostle Paul declared: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”. – Romans 5:12

For man to be free from the bondage of inherited sin there must be a remedy for the life lost in the Garden of Eden. This remedy must be equivalent to the value of the perfect life which Adam had in consonance with the divine rule that a (perfect) life must go for a (perfect) life. (Deuteronomy 19:21) It was not possible for any one among the sons of men to pay back the life lost by Adam, since they were all born in sin. Who then will pay the price for man’s transgression? Who will ransom man from the bondage of sin and death? Jesus Christ was willing to carry out that duty and to him the task was assigned. – John 10:15, 17, 18; see also Romans 7:24, 25.

## **SHADOWS**

It is worthy of note that even in passing the sentence on the serpent, God Almighty had in verse 15 of Genesis chapter 3 stated that though the serpent (satan the devil) will initially bruise the heel of the seed, the seed of the woman (Jesus Christ, Galatians 3:16) will eventually bruise the head of the serpent (Romans 16:20). In several other places in the Old Testament, God Almighty, by express declarations and by picture language, gave the promise that He will redeem man from the burden of sin and death.

The blood sprinkled on the door posts of the Jews on the night of Passover, so that the destroying angel will pass over the house, (Exodus 12:1-30) foreshadowed the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul states: “...For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”. – 1 Corinthians 5:7.

Another pointer to the need for man’s redemption was the law God Almighty gave His servant Moses while the Jews were in the wilderness on the payment to the Lord of half a shekel by every male in Israel from 20 years old and above “as a ransom for his soul”. The law further states that: “The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less” – the benefit of redemption is offered equally to all; it is not a function of money. It should also be noted that the atonement money was for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, now represented by Jesus Christ, “A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man”. – Exodus 30:15; [compare Numbers 3:40-51]; Hebrews 8:2.

Also, in time of old, the Jews used to have a Day of Atonement, which marked the end of ten days of penitence, to cleanse the individual from defilement. On that day, the priest, clad in holy linen garments, made an atonement for himself, his family and for all the assembly of Israel, killing the bullock of the sin offering, sprinkling the blood on the mercy seat, killing the goat of the sin-offering and selecting the scapegoat on whose head was confessed the transgression of Israel for the year just passed. Thereafter, the sin-laden goat was led to

wander away into the wilderness. This provision was done as “an everlasting statute ... to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year”. – Leviticus 16:1-34.

It is vital to note, that the point was consistently being made that all the people were doomed and were therefore in need of atonement to stay alive.

### **CHRIST – THE RANSOMER**

St. Paul in a detailed treatise on the ransom sacrifice of Christ explained that sacrifices in time of old were only temporary palliatives pointing to and awaiting the coming of Jesus Christ. He wrote: “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? ...But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” – Hebrews 10:1-4.

Thus, Jesus Christ had to be translated from the heavenly realm into the womb of Mary so as to be born on earth as a perfect man to pay back the life lost at the Garden of Eden. – Hebrews 2:7,14.

John the Baptist identified Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God that “taketh away the sin of the world”. (John 1:29; see also Revelation 13:8) Moreover the Bible says: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) That was why Jesus Christ while on earth stated that he came to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28) At the Memorial Supper he stated clearly that the bread he gave the apostles meant or represented his body, while the wine stood for his blood “which is shed for many for the remission of sins”. – Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:24.

The ransom work covers the entire scope of the sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and therefore lies at the very heart of the gospel message. It is true that during his mission on earth, Jesus Christ, by his preaching and by example, taught man how to serve God. But even if they did all he commanded them to do, the faithful cannot have the liberty and salvation God promised them without the ransom paid by Jesus Christ by the forfeiting of his life.

During his first advent on earth, some of the wicked Jews reported Jesus Christ to the Chief Priests and Pharisees who were apprehensive of losing their influence and privileges due to the mass-following Jesus Christ was getting. At a meeting of the Pharisees-in-Council, Caiaphas, the High Priest declared: “Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not”. Apostle John then explained: “This spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad”. (John 11:49-52) Truly did St. Paul state: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”. -1 Timothy 2:5,6; see also Galatians 3:13; Hebrew 9:11-28; 1 John 3:4



By the death of Jesus Christ, the debt of sin against man was fully paid, not merely cancelled. His blood or life, which he surrendered as the “ransom”, effectively secured the deliverance of the children of God from the bondage of sin. Having died as a perfect man so as to “taste death for every man”, Jesus Christ was then in a position to redeem man from death. In one of his most lucid expositions on the subject, St. Paul said: “...Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” – Hebrews 2:9,14,15.

As opposed to the sacrifices made under the Mosaic law, the expiatory blood shed by Jesus Christ once made was perfect and effective for ever – it needed not to be renewed every year. St. Paul declared: “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” – Hebrews 10:10-12.

By his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ led captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8) and thus paved the way for the fulfillment of the promise God Almighty made through Hosea the prophet to wit: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes”. (Hosea 13:14) In God’s Kingdom fully established, death, which is man’s greatest enemy will be no more. – 1 Corinthians 15: 26.

### **LIVING UNTO CHRIST**

Having paid the supreme price to give the people of God liberty, the least that is expected of mankind is to show appreciation for the great sacrifice Jesus Christ made in dying that they may live. In John 15:13, 14 Christ Jesus declared: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you”. Those being ransomed must therefore be humble enough to obey the voice of Jesus Christ by living “soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world”. (Titus 2:11-14; John 10:14-18) “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Jesus Christ stated. (John 3:36) And Apostle John added: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” – 1 John 1:7.

In his letter to the Christians at Corinth Apostle Paul stated: “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”. (2 Corinthians 5:15, 17) In his epistle, St. Peter made it clear that the proofs of true discipleship are belief of the truth and love for one another, when he stated: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot...Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently”. – 1 Peter 1:18-22. See also John 13:34, 35

It must be pointed out that those who have come to the knowledge of the truth but do not keep the commandments of God through Jesus Christ will not get the benefit of the ransom sacrifice. Such ones as it were “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”. – Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29.

It is by appreciating the goodness of God in sending Jesus Christ into the world and by showing such appreciation through faithful service that those who have come to God will be in close communion with Him.

May God Almighty Who, in exercise of His love for mankind sent His only begotten Son to pay the ultimate price in order to reconcile man to Himself, help His sheep to live as true Christians by way of faithful service by His grace through Jesus Christ our Ransomer. Amen.

## **RESURRECTION**

AMONG the promises of God Almighty, that of the resurrection of the dead is one of the most outstanding showing the greatness of His power and His good purpose towards mankind. It is the pivot upon which rests the hope of Christians concerning the dead, and if not for this hope man cannot count himself as anything better than a beast.

Resurrection means a rising from the dead, or the act of bringing back to life. It is one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith in the Holy Bible.

When Adam sinned, the sentence of death was passed upon him by God. Consequently, his offspring having been born in sin were declared guilty and thus death, which is the penalty of sin, was brought upon the entire human race. – Genesis 3: 17-19; Romans 5: 12-19; 6: 23.

To think that this world will continue in sin under the wicked overlordship of the devil forever is ignorance of the divine purpose. God had promised to set up a new order of things both in heaven and earth-the New World now in the making -in which there shall be nothing evil. Concerning this grand arrangement of God, St. Peter declared: “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” – 2 Peter 3: 13.

## **THE LORD’S PROMISE**

In order that His faithful worshippers who have died may have the golden opportunity of enjoying the bliss of that New World – THE WORLD WITHOUT END – as a reward of their loyalty and services, God promised not only to redeem man from the power of the grave by the resurrection of the dead but also to bring death to an end. He declared: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” – Hosea 13: 14.

The ancient faithful before Christ built their hope upon the Lord’s promise. They knew that death was just a temporal state which could not bar them from coming back to receive their reward from God at His appointed time.

Job a prophet of God who underwent fiery temptations at the instance of the devil, spoke of the grave as a hiding place and hoped earnestly for the time when God would bring about his change at the resurrection. He said: “O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past, that Thou wouldest appoint me a set

time, and remember me!" (Job 14: 13) He asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Yes, of course. He then went on, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, (in the grave) till my change come. Thou (God) shalt call and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have desire to the work of Thine hands." (Verses 14 and 15).

Job did not stop at this, for the Spirit of God further moved him into a more positive, prophetic declaration of his belief, thus: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" – Job 19: 25-27.

There is also the instance of the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the resurrection of the dead. He said: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." – Isaiah 26: 19.

That children are also among those to be raised from the dead is a fact having concrete support of the Scriptures. When Herod, the wicked king, massacred innocent children in Bethlehem in his attempt to kill the infant, Jesus, God comforted the bereaved with the assurance that their children would come to life again from the grave termed "the land of the enemy" in fulfillment of His prophecy recorded in Jeremiah 31: 15-17. See also Matthew 2: 13-18.

When Jesus Christ came to this earth he confirmed in his teachings that resurrection is a reality. There was an occasion when he crossed swords with the Sadducees on the question of resurrection and defeated them. The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, and so they asked him: "Master, Moses said, 'If a man should die childless, his brother shall marry the widow and carry on his brother's family.' Now we knew of seven brothers. The first married and died, and as he was without issue his wife was left to his brother. The same thing happen with the second, and the third, and so on with all seven. Last of all the woman died. At the resurrection, then, whose wife will she be, for they had all married her?"-Matthew 22: 23-28; New English Bible.

In his answer, Jesus told them point- blank: "You are mistaken, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. At the resurrection men and women do not marry, but are like angels in heaven." – Matthew 22: 29, 30, New English Bible.

## **KEYS OF HELL**

Jesus Christ even made it known that he is the one whom the Heavenly Father had vested with the power to raise the dead. He said: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." (John 5: 21, 25-27) That was why he told Martha: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." – John 11: 25. He showed an example of the power when Lazarus who had died and had already been four days in the tomb, was raised to life by him. – John 11: 32-45.

The devil caused Jesus Christ to be killed by wicked men with the intent, no doubt, to defeat the all important purpose of God. But the Most High, in exercise of His infinite power, raised him from the dead the third day and crowned him with power, glory and honour. Jesus himself declared: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Revelation 1: 18) The "keys" in this context

are symbolic of the power or authority to release the dead from “hell”, that is, the grave; and put an end to death.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a clear demonstration of the certainty of God’s promise as regards the rising again of the dead, and has strongly enlivened the hope of all Christians. – I Peter 1: 3.

In defence of the Christian faith, the early apostles preached the resurrection from the dead. (Acts 4: 1-4; 17: 18) Because of St. Paul’s belief and teaching about it, he suffered persecutions and prosecutions at the hands of the unbelieving Jews. When he was indicted before King Agrippa he declared: “And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.” He then asked, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” – Acts 26: 6-8.

### **INDISPUTABLE FACT**

St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, stated that if there was no resurrection then all the preaching and sufferings of Christians were vain.

He added: “For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sin...If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” He proved clearly that resurrection is an indisputable fact.- 1 Corinthians 15: 12-33.

For anyone, therefore, to have doubt about the possibility of resurrection is an evidence of lack of faith. It was from the dust of the ground God made man, and if man turns to dust again there is no reason why it should be considered an impossibility for God to bring him back to life.

But some may ask, “How are the dead raised? and what kind of body will they have?” To such questions St. Paul gave an illustrative answer to the effect that the seed you sow in the ground does not grow into a plant unless it “dies” first. And when the green shoot comes up out of the seed, it is very different from the seed you first planted. For what you sow is just a dry little seed, perhaps of wheat, of some other kind. “But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body...So also is the resurrection of the dead”, said St. Paul. “It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.” – I Corinthians 15: 35-43.

One salient point which some people seldom consider is that it is not only the righteous that will be resurrected but the wicked as well. And everyone will be rewarded by God according to his works -good or bad. It is an understanding of these Scriptural facts that have always made the true worshippers of God to be zealous and steadfast in their faith not- withstanding the threats of death by the wicked. They know that even if they are killed because of their conviction God will raise them from the dead to glory in due course. So, too, a wicked man who escapes punishment in the life will come again to face the consequences of his actions.

While some at the resurrection, will be rewarded abundantly with everlasting blessings, others will be punished and covered with shame. Concerning this Daniel, under the inspiration of the Almighty God, prophesied: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” – Daniel 12: 2.

## **FIRST RESURRECTION**

The order and classification of resurrection are shown in the Scriptures. St. Paul stated: "But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." (1 Corinthians 15: 23).

There is the first resurrection which is that of Jesus Christ and the Saints who are the Anointed Christians numbering 144,000. Among the disciples of Jesus the anointed ones are the first class. They constitute the "Little Flock" of which the twelve apostles were foundation members. (Luke 12: 32; James. 1: 18) They die in the flesh but they are raised as spirits like Jesus to dwell in heaven-the New Heaven-and reign with Christ in his glorious Kingdom. – 1 Peter 3: 18; 2 Corinthians 5: 1-4.

When St. Paul stated, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15: 44) he was referring to the death and resurrection of those of the "Little Flock" of which he is one. And he added: "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." – 1 Corinthians 15: 49, 50.

The Scriptures show vividly that it is at the second presence of Jesus Christ in the last days that the first resurrection would take place. (John 14: 1-3; 1 Corinthians 15: 44-57; 2 Timothy 4: 6-8; Philippians 3: 20; 1 Thessalonians 4: 16; Revelation 20: 4-6, etc.) This is already fulfilling but being events of a spiritual nature many people including religious leaders and theologians do not know.

## **BETTER RESURRECTION**

The faithful men and women of old before Christ will have their part in what St. Paul described as a "better resurrection". (Hebrews 11: 4-40) They will all be raised from the dead to dwell on this earth, not in heaven, to receive their reward. Concerning them, St. Paul wrote: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." – Hebrews 11: 33-35.

What a wonderful, glorious and happy occasion it will be when those great just men and women will come back from "the land of the enemy" and team up with the faithful Christians on earth! But with the enemies of truth and righteousness. shame, wailing and torment will be their portion. Jesus Christ, knowing this, spoke of how there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth when those who falsely claim God's Kingdom would be driven out of it while the true Christians from all corners of the earth would be in it with Abraham and other ancient worthies who shall have then been resurrected. – Matthew 8: 11, 12; Luke 13: 28,29.

## **GENERAL RESURRECTION**

Finally, there will be a general resurrection during which all the remaining good people as well as bad ones will find their feet on earth again. The good will be rewarded with everlasting life in perfect peace and happiness in paradise on earth while the bad ones will be judged and punished according to their sins, Concerning this Jesus said: "Wonder not at this; for the hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." – John 5: 28,29, (Douay Version).

What is more, St. Paul confessed his faith about resurrection before Felix and said among other things: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they can heresy, so

worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” – Acts 24: 14, 15.

### **GREAT COMFORT**

It is because of this glorious hope of the resurrection of the dead, which is a great comfort to those having its understanding, true Christians do not mourn for the dead like the pagans who have no hope. To this end Paul the apostle, gave this exhortation: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” – 1 Thessalonians 4: 13, 14, 18.

### **MYSTERY REVEALED**

A mystery is something that cannot be understood except by divine revelation or explanation. The mysteries of God are the truths about His purposes of creation and His Kingdom which are hidden from men until the time is due for them to be revealed by His grace.

It is a matter of grace for anyone to be given the eyes of understanding to know those things that had been concealed by God. This privilege is given only to the chosen servants of God Almighty whom He gives His spirit to understand any aspect of His plan. Moses stated: “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deuteronomy 29:29) “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.” declared David the prophet in Psalm 25:9,14. Apostle Paul dwelling on this point stated: “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:11). Because it is the anointed servants, that God gives His spirit to understand His mysteries, Amos the prophet under inspiration stated: “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets”. – Amos 3:7.

One of those who saw this declaration demonstrated practically was Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He had a dream which made such a deep impression on him that he was anxious to know its meaning. But strangely enough, he forgot the dream. He thereupon became restless in his demand that his advisers should remind him of the dream and then give him the interpretation. This was of course beyond the ability of any mortal. On hearing of the crisis in the court, Daniel, the prophet pleaded for time for him to pray to the “God in heaven that revealeth secrets” so that the dream and its interpretation would be revealed to him. His prayer was answered, and he, in gratitude exclaimed: “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his. He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him” – Daniel 2:28,20,22.

Daniel the Prophet went on to tell the king his dream about the great image, typifying the kingdoms that will rule the world at different times, starting from that of Babylon. The full fulfillment of the dream in regard to the setting up of God’s Kingdom and the destruction of satan’s organisation on earth are to take place in this age. – Daniel 2:25-45.

Apart from interpreting dreams, Daniel was also privileged to see visions of the signs of the last days, the destruction of the wicked and the salvation of the people of God, which will take place in the last days. But Daniel could not understand the meaning of all that he heard, and at a point had to inquire from the angel what the interpretation was, as it is written: "And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." (Daniel 12:8,9) The text shows that the vision would remain a mystery until the meaning will be made bare at the time of the end.

## **JESUS CHRIST**

In the days of our Lord Jesus Christ, he preached the truth about God, and His Kingdom which were hitherto unknown to people. He was able to do so because of the anointing spirit which the Bible says was given to him without measure (John 3:34). Indeed, the name Christ, from the Hebrew equivalent, messiah, means "anointed", a name which signifies his role as Jehovah's Advocate and Vindicator.

On a certain occasion when he worshipped in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus Christ read from the prophecy in the book of Isaiah where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18,19. See also Isaiah 61:1-3) The Bible says that our Saviour Jesus Christ preached the truth to the people to the end "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, ... I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" – Matthew 13:35. See also Psalm 78:2.

In appreciation of the grace given him to expound the truth to the world, Jesus Christ himself declared, "...I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." – Matthew 11:25-27.

## **THE ANOINTING SPIRIT**

It is by virtue of the anointing spirit that the servants of God are commissioned to proclaim His word. In the days of Ezekiel the Prophet, he saw a vision the essence of which is to show that it is God Almighty Who gives His message to His prophets to deliver to His people, as it is written: "And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe." – Ezekiel 2:9,10.

The narration of the vision continues in chapter three, verses one to three, where it is written: "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." – Ezekiel 3:1-3. See also chapter 3:10,11; Isaiah 51:16.

It could be seen therefore that by the power of the anointing, the servants of God are sanctified and enabled to understand the mysteries of God the dispensation of which gives immense pleasure and joy. There was a time during his days on earth that the apostles came to Jesus Christ and asked him why he spoke to the people in parables. He answered and said: "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given". He added: "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears for they hear. For verily I say unto you, for many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear and had not heard them". – Mathew 13:11,16,17.

To give them more insight into the mysteries of God, Jesus Christ assured his apostles that they would be given the holy spirit that would enable them to understand the truth and to dispense it to the world. He said: "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth". – John 14:26; John 16:13 American Standard Version. See also John 15:26, 27.

This promise to the apostles was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when they received the anointing in the form of cloven tongues of fire. The Bible says that the people in the mixed audience who came to Jerusalem for the Pentecost festival were "all amazed and marvelled" to hear the apostles declare in their own languages "the wonderful works of God". See Acts 2:1-10.

By reason of their anointing the apostles are not taught by any man. Hence in 1 John 2:27 Apostle John states "But the anointing which ye receive of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him".

Moreover, Apostle Paul stated: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 1:11,12) Truly, those of the Apostles class are "stewards of the mysteries of God", "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints". – 1 Corinthians 4:1; Colossians 1:26.

The fact that the apostles are taught by God is further illustrated in a vision which Apostle John, saw while on exile in the Island of Patmos. He was told to eat a book given to him by the angel, as it is written: "And the voice which I heard from heaven speak unto me again and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter". – Revelation 10:8-10.

The eating of the scroll symbolize the empowerment of those of the apostles class with the Holy Spirit by virtue of which they are able to understand the scriptures and to dispense the truth with boldness, vigor and clarity. The scroll was bitter in his belly because of persecutions that will arise because of the word. Christ, the Revelator told John the apostle: "Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be



tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.” – Revelation 2:10.

## **HIDDEN WISDOM**

Obviously, no one can by academic training or personal efforts understand Jehovah’s mysteries, hence St. Paul stated: “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Furthermore, St. Paul in his letter to the Christians at Ephesus stated that God had made known to them (the apostles) the mystery of his will “according to his good pleasure which he had purposed in himself” (Ephesians 1:9) He spoke further in chapter 3 of how God by revelation made known to him hidden truths about His purposes by His grace. He stated: “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;” – Ephesians 3:1-5.

He spoke further of the grace given him by God to dispense the truth. “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.” – Ephesians 3:8-9.

## **THE 144,000 WITH HARPS**

The Bible shows that each and every one of the apostles, numbering 144,000, has the privilege of being taught by God himself through Jesus Christ. In Revelation 14:1-5 Apostle John recorded the vision he saw as follows: “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.” – Revelation 14:1-3.

The harp is a musical instrument, which in those days, had ten strings symbolizing the ten fundamental truths of the Holy Bible which are revealed to the saints. (Compare Psalm 49:4) The ten fundamental doctrines are: Creation, Justice Manifested, Abrahamic Promise, the birth of Christ, Ransom Sacrifice, Resurrection, Mystery Revealed, our Lord’s return, Glorification of the Church and Restoration. That each of the 144,000 Christians had the “Father’s name written in their foreheads” means that they have the accurate knowledge of God, the forehead being the seat of intelligence. The new song they were singing symbolizes the truth, which God will use the remnant, to be chosen in this age, to declare, the propagation of which is called the “strange work of God”. – Isaiah 28:21. See also Matthew 24:14-16, 31.

Since the mysteries of God have been revealed, it behoves all lovers of truth and righteousness to identify with the truth and follow it until the end so that they will be saved in God's kingdom fully established by His grace.

## OUR LORD'S RETURN

OUR Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has already fulfilled his glorious promise to come again. Indeed he has returned! But the pity of it is that the majority of those who profess the Christian Faith do not know this revelation of great importance in our age. Therefore, they continue to wait, expecting to see him in the sky coming down some day, while the signs of his presence are in fact staring everyone in the face.

The second coming of Jesus Christ is one of the fundamental truths contained in the Holy Bible. He himself stated positively during his first advent on earth that he would come again. He said to the apostles: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." – John 14:1-3.

The apostles were greatly inspired by the Lord's promise. Their hearts were filled with joy, their hopes were heightened and their faith in him was implicit. As a matter of fact, the second appearing of Christ was the pivotal point of doctrine in the teachings of the apostles, and they were unremitting in their efforts to propagate it.

St. Paul wrote to exhort Timothy as to the great gain in godliness. He charged him to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life. He added: "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Timothy 6:14) In his second epistle to Timothy he stated: that Jesus Christ would judge the living and the dead at his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:1) And giving instructions to Titus, he stated among other things: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." – Titus 2:13.

James the apostles as well exhorted the Christians of that time to be patient until the coming of Christ "for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:7,8) And St. Peter also wrote about his appearing. – 1 Peter 1:7.

What is more, Jesus Christ in the conclusion of his revelation to John the apostle in the Island of Patmos confirmed his promise when he said: "Surely I come quickly." And John did answer: "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." – Revelation 22:20.

From the foregoing, there can be no question as to the certainty of his coming again. But the issues on which opinions and interpretations of people are widely different are

1. How will he come?
2. Will he be visible to all persons?
3. When will he return?
4. Has he come? and
5. The purpose of his second coming.

## HOW HE COMES

In the book *GOD'S ANSWERS TO MAN'S QUESTIONS* the authors, W. E. Straw, J. C. Rogers and D. E. Robinson expressed the view of the Seventh Day Adventists and some other Church groups in the form of questions and answers as follows:

Question: "What is the purpose of His second coming?"

Answer: 'That where I am, there ye may be also.' Verse 3, last part.

Question: "Will our Lord return in the form of a person, or only like a spirit?"

Answer: "Christ was the 'Son of man' while on this earth, as also He was the 'Son of God.' He was a real man with flesh and bones even after His resurrection. 'Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself...for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.' Luke 24:39.

Question: "How many will see His return?"

Answer: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.' Revelation 1:7." (Pages 83-4) Thomas Williams, founder of "The Christadelphian Advocate" stated in his work *The World Redemption* that "when we say Christ's return, we mean His return in a real, tangible, personal sense, with no mystic or so-called spiritual meaning attached". (Page 144)

In the *Plain Truth* magazine of Herbert W. Armstrong (August, 1962) it was published: "The visible bodily return of Jesus Christ is not a mere theological 'idea'. It is a fact soon to be revealed – an absolute NECESSITY for a world on the verge of human annihilation."

It is a pity that the belief in the visible bodily return of Jesus Christ, which is held by majority of professed Christians, is based on nothing but misconceptions. This is not a highly spiritual nature and Christ had said that except the people were spiritually vigilant, understanding what the will of the Lord is, they would not know of his presence.

Without fear of criticism and without mincing words we must say that Jesus Christ would never appear in the flesh or in a tangible bodily form as to be seen by man on earth any longer. This is the truth of the Holy Bible, and any view to the contrary is erroneous.

As to how Christ would come some clergymen, theologians and evangelists often made reference to the words of the two angels who appeared at the time of his ascension. Here is the record: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. – Acts 1:9-11.

There is nothing in the utterance of the angels that gives the understanding that Jesus would come again in the flesh or in a bodily form. What they said is that he "shall so come in like manner and NOT "he shall so come in like form or shape or appearance". And what was the manner in which he went up to heaven? It was quiet, it was without any fanfare, and it was unnoticed by the world. Those who saw him ascending were his 11 apostles whom he had just addressed. – Acts 1:1-13.

So what we should understand from the statement of the angels is that the second coming of Jesus Christ would similarly be quiet and would not be marked by a flourish of trumpets nor would he be visible to the world. It was for this reason Christ said he would come as a thief in the night and that those who did not watch would not know when he would come. But those who watch by studying the Scriptures prayerfully and diligently to understand prophecies and the signs of the times, said he, are blessed. – Revelation 3:3; 16:15; 2 Peter 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 5:2.

If it were true that Jesus Christ would come in a fleshly body for THE WORLD or all men to see, there would have been no need for his disciples to ask for the signs of his presence as recorded in Matthew chapter 24, verse 3, or for anyone to watch. Christ told his apostles: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14:19,22) The apostles would see him because they in their resurrection at the second coming of Christ would be changed to spirits to be like our Lord. On this score, John the apostle, speaking on behalf of himself and others of his class, stated: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2 see also 1 Corinthians 15:50-52) The apostle did not say world would see Christ; rather he said, "WE shall see him." This point is clear enough.

Jesus Christ came to this world during his first advent as a human being, having flesh, blood and bones, and having been made lower than angels in order to taste death for humankind, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil". (Hebrew 2:9,14) He died in the flesh but was raised from the dead a Spirit which enabled him to preach to the disobedient spirits or angels who had been imprisoned by God since the days of Noah. (1 Peter 3:18-20) St. Peter further stated that the resurrected Christ "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (Verse 22) That the glorified Lord would lower himself again to take human nature of flesh and blood is unthinkable because it has no basis in the Scripture.

St. Paul categorically stated that Christ would not come again in the flesh. Said he: "Wherefore, henceforth we know no man according to the flesh. And if we have known Christ according to the flesh; but now we know him so no longer." – 2 Corinthians 5:16, Douay Version.

It is because Jesus would never appear again in the flesh among men that he warned his disciples: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not." – Matthew 24:23-26.

If Christ would come down and make Jerusalem in Palestine his seat as Herbert Armstrong and some others are teaching, why was Jesus so blunt in his warning, "Then if ANY man shall say unto you, lo, here is Christ, or there (Jerusalem inclusive); BELIEVE IT NOT"?

Now let us turn to some of the texts on which those who are hoping to see Christ face to face in the flesh base belief. First is St. Matthew's cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." – Matthew 24:27.

This text is no authority that Christ would come in a visible bodily form, certainly not. Rather it explains the fact that at the second presence of Jesus Christ who is the light of the world (John 8:12) men would be spiritually enlightened as to have the accurate knowledge of God that would make them know of Christ's return. But this knowledge would not cover the whole world instantly but by gradual process just "as the lightening (or sun) cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west". In the long run the whole world would know of his presence through the preaching of the saving gospel and by reason of the works he would do among men through his faithful worshippers, especially his anointed servants.

Another text some people often cite is that at Revelation 1:7, to wit: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

Many people lay emphasis on the clause "every eye shall see him" and give it a literal interpretation. It is wrong to interpret the text literally. When it is stated that "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" are we to understand that those who literally pierced him during his crucifixion would still be living at the time of his second coming as to see him face to face again?

The clouds show spiritually that he would be invisible. For instance on the occasion of his ascension it was a cloud that received him out of the sight of the apostles. (Acts 1:9) The eyes that would see him are not ordinary eyes but figurative ones which St. Paul also termed "eyes of your understanding" (Ephesians 1:17-19) The word see also means understand, discern or learn by search or inquiry or reflection. Therefore the expression, "every eyes shall see him" means in a plain language that everyone would discern or understand that Christ has come through the gospel or by reason of the events that would symbolize all opposers of truth and righteousness who are persecuting the work of Christ or those preaching his truth in these last days. It is all such ones Jesus Christ would make to wail when he shall execute vengeance upon them. – 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2:8-12.

## **SIGNS OF HIS PRESENCE**

The next issue to be tackled is whether Christ has come or not. From the fulfillment of Bible prophecies, there is no doubt that Jesus Christ has come. The Holy Bible plainly shows that he promised to return in the last days of this evil world in which we are now living.

In Matthew 24:3, it is written: "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" in his answer he first warned them against false prophets who would be many and went on to tell them of wars and rumours of wars which would precede the end of the world. But as regards the signs of his coming, he declared: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."

This prophecy of Jesus Christ began fulfillment when nations of men were engulfed in a global battle-World War 1. This was followed by a wide-spread epidemic-the Spanish Influenza and famines and earthquakes in different parts of the world. These signs already seen are conclusive proof of the second presence of Jesus Christ.

The moment anybody interprets these signs and others to be those that should precede the coming of Christ, they step into error. Ellen G. White in her book the Great Controversy, stated that the signs of the coming of Christ "Were witnessed before the opening of the nineteenth century" and dated the occurrence of the first signs back to "the year 1755". (page 348) Up till today some Christians are saying that Christ is coming and that his arrival is near.

## **GLORIFICATION OF THE CHURCH**

Glorification of the Church is one of the ten fundamental doctrines of the Holy Bible. It refers to the honours, privileges and exaltation which God Almighty will confer on His people, in this age of the second presence of Christ, in demonstration of His love for them and in accordance with His divine purpose.

The fact that God Almighty has promised to glorify His Church presupposes that His people had been in a state of degradation and decay. This was sequel to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, at the instance of satan the devil, as a result of which the human race lapsed from perfection to decay and corruption, and ultimately to death. When God Almighty reverses the distressful conditions which His people had suffered all through the ages, they will be raised from the poverty, fears and miseries of this evil world to a life of perfect peace and happiness.

In the context of this sermon, to glorify means to invest with "splendour of a very high degree". The word church is derived from the Greek word Ecclesia (or ekklesia) which means an assembly or body of professed believers or Christians.

## **THE CHURCH**

Christians are divided into two distinct classes, the Saints, Apostles' or "Little Flock" class, and the Other Sheep class. The 12 Apostles were the foundation members of the Apostles' class of Christians, (also known as the Church of the firstborn) the full number of which is 144,000. (Revelation 7:1-8; 14:1-5; Hebrews 10:22, 23) The Other Sheep consists of other worshippers of God who are not apostles.

It is common knowledge that individually and collectively, the people of God suffer many deprivations and persecutions at the instance of the devil. (James 5:10,11; Matthew 11:12; Hebrews 11:36-38) But the situation will not remain the same at this time of the second presence of Christ. (Psalm 102:16; Matthew 25:31) Consequently, the work of God in the last days will be of a much higher order than what obtained in years gone by. Hence in Haggai 2:8,9 it is stated: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts."

The “latter house” properly applies to the Kingdom of God or His true Church organisations that would be set up in the last days by Jesus Christ at his second presence through the remnants of the saints. (Isaiah 2:2; Matthew 24:15,16; 13:31,32) Wherever it is established, the kingdom will continue to rise even as satan’s organisation continues to fall. “Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.” (Job 8:7) Also, the Bible states: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end... The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this”. – Isaiah 9:7.

Evidently, those who serve God will not continue to wallow in abject poverty and want. Rather, they will be blessed by Him, spiritually, materially and otherwise in this age of the glorification of the Church. Apostle Paul, comparing the standard of the work in time of old to that which will be revealed later to the apostles, stated: “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.” – 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. See also Exodus 34:20-35; 28:1, 2.

Since God had promised to richly reward his faithful worshippers in this age, it is needful therefore for them to serve Him diligently and sincerely until the end by His grace. Apostle Paul affirmed positively that those who patiently continue in well doing will be rewarded with “glory and honour and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.” – Romans 2:7-9. See also Isaiah 49:3-5.

## **JESUS CHRIST**

Jesus Christ is the head of the Church. (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23) It is through him that God Almighty will glorify His Church. During his first advent he was made a little lower than the angels. (Hebrews 2:7) In fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, he was “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief”. – Isaiah 53:3; Psalm 69:8,9.

In Matthew 17:1-9 there is the record of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that the Lord Jesus took with him Peter, James and John into a high mountain, “And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.” (Matthew 17:2,3) The transfiguration was a vision (Matthew 17:9) to show the apostles the future glory and majesty of Jesus Christ. It also foretold the great honours which other faithful worshippers of God (represented in the vision by Moses and Elijah) will enjoy in God’s Kingdom fully established.

Moreover, knowing the immense glories that awaited him, our Lord Jesus Christ, after the successful completion of his mission on earth, prayed the Father thus: “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (John 17:4,5) True to His promise, our Lord Jesus Christ was highly exalted by God Almighty and given “a

name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father". – Philippians 2:9-11

It was with this glorious body Jesus Christ appeared to St. Paul (then known as Saul), who was for three days blinded by the brightness of his appearance, and could not eat or drink. – Acts 9:1-18.

On his ascension to heaven, Christ was asked to sit on the right hand of God until his enemies would be made his footstool. (Psalm 110:1) This waiting period expired in 1914. God Almighty then issued the command: "rule thou in the midst of thine enemies". (Psalm 110:2)

Consequently, satan was driven down from heaven and he, in an outburst of anger, plunged the world into the World War of 1914-1918, in an attempt to destroy all flesh. (Matthew 24:7, 8; Revelation 12:7-12) Concerning the coronation of Jesus Christ in heaven the Bible states: "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." – Daniel 7:13,14. See also Psalm 21:3-5; 45:7-9; John 18:36-38.

## **TIME OF REFRESHING**

Our Lord Jesus Christ during his mission on earth chose 12 apostles to assist him in carrying out his mission. At a point in time Apostle Peter had cause to ask our Lord Jesus Christ thus: "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." – Mark 10:28-30.

This promise of Jesus Christ applies to the apostles and to all faithful Christians by the grace of God. Those who continue in the work of God in spite of tribulations until the end will get life and other attendant blessings by God's grace. Jesus Christ, exhorting the apostles who are in the covenant of sacrifice with God (Psalm 50:5) stated: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." – Revelation 2:10.

Based on the assurance by our Lord Jesus Christ, St. Peter, addressing the crowd that gathered following the miraculous healing of the lame man at the Beautiful gate in Jerusalem, delivered an important address to the people in which he spoke of the blessedness that will be the lot of the people of God in this age of Christ's second presence. He stated: "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." – Acts 3:19-21

The "times of refreshing" and the "times of restitution of all things" refer to one and the same thing, the age of the second presence of Christ who had during his first advent declared: "For the



Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." (Matthew 16:27) The first class of those to be so rewarded is the saints. They will be changed into spirit beings and taken to heaven as promised by our Lord Jesus Christ in John 14:1-3,19,22. See also 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.

Then will fulfill the prophecy made earlier by David the prophet under the inspiration of God to wit: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." – Psalm 102:13-17. See also Isaiah 54:11,12.

St. Paul expressed hope in the promise of God to reward the saints at the second presence of Christ. In his second letter to Timothy he declared thus: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." – 2 Timothy 4:7,8. See also Philippians 3:20,21; Romans 8:17,18; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.

Apart from the apostles, all the other children of God who died serving Him will also be glorified. It was in the sense of the great privileges and honours the faithful will get in God's Kingdom fully established that Jesus Christ said the righteous shall at that time, "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father". (Matthew 13:43) Daniel the prophet under inspiration had stated: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." – Daniel 12:3.

The glorification each will receive will be according to his class and for each person according to his work and the grace of God on him. St. Paul stated: "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star different from another star in glory." – 1 Corinthians 15:40,41. See also 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

It is in the kingdom of God fully established that the glory which God promised His people will be fully realised. At that time the people of God will be raised to glory and honour by God's grace. They will be exposed to excellences that will exceed whatever contrivance, order or beauty we may have in this world. The Bible says: "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious." (Isaiah 60:13) God has promised that at that time He "will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir". (Isaiah 13:12) Indeed the Bible says: "...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." – 1 Corinthians 2:9. See also Isaiah 64:4.

## **EXHORTATION**

In view of the abundant promises God has made to His people, they are duty-bound to do His work faithfully and diligently until the end, knowing that their labours would not be in vain. In his

letter to the Hebrew Christians Apostle Paul declared: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." – Hebrews 6:10-12. See also 2 Corinthians 1:7.

We should be steadfast in the service of God irrespective of the hard conditions or tribulations we may go through in this world in the hands of satan and his agents. Apostle Paul, referring to people of his class, the saints stated: "For which cause we faint not but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day". He added: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) On the basis of this hope Apostle Paul further stated: "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." – Romans 8:18.

May God Almighty continue to strengthen us with His holy spirit so that we may remain in the way of God until the end so as to enjoy His rich and unfailing promises by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS**

The word, "restoration" according to good dictionaries means "the act of putting or being put back to a former state or position" or "to bring something back to an earlier condition". In the spiritual context, it means the bringing back or return of the perfect conditions which man lost following the fall of man at the Garden of Eden. Restoration, which is the tenth string in the symbolic "Harp of God", is the full expression of God's love for man whom He has created to show forth His praise.

The book of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 tell of the creation of the heavens and the earth and the things therein including man. Everything God created was perfect. All the beasts of the earth, the trees and herbs and fowls of the air were put under the subjection of man as food for him. Man was not to labour before he feeds as he was to choose from the large variety of foods in the beautiful Garden. The earth was to be filled with perfect creatures who will worship God in peace and happiness forever. The entire earth was to gradually become like the Garden of Eden, a place bereft of any iota of fear or want.

After creating Adam, God gave him a law that he should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning that the consequence of breaking the law was death. (Genesis 2:16,17) In spite of this clear warning, Adam listened to his wife, Eve, who had earlier been deceived by satan the devil, and ate the fruit for which reason the sentence of death was passed on them. In addition, the couple were driven from the Garden. Since then all the children of men had been living under hard conditions as they were born in sin. Like Adam and Eve, the children of men toil and labour until they get old and die. Some even die at infancy or in the bloom of youth. In the words of Apostle Paul, the whole creation has been groaning and travailing in pain until now. (Romans 8:22) In His infinite mercy however, God Almighty has determined that man will not continue in this condition, but, will through Jesus Christ, be restored to the idyllic conditions which he lost in the Garden of Eden.

### “TIMES OF REFRESHING”

Apostle Peter made reference to the divine promise of restoration following the healing of the lame man at the “Beautiful Gate” in Jerusalem. He told the Jews in those days: “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.” – Acts 3:19-21.

The “times of refreshing” and the “times of restitution of all things” spoken of by Apostle Peter both refer to the period of restoration. It is evident from his declaration that the restoration of all things will be done by Jesus Christ at his second presence. Having been given full powers as king of Jehovah’s kingdom to put all his enemies under his feet, (Psalm 110:1,2) Jesus Christ drove Satan the devil from heaven to this earth in the year 1914, as a result of which the devil plunged the world into the First World War of 1914-1918. But Jesus Christ stopped the war for his elect’s sake and thereafter resurrected the dead saints whom he granted immortality according to his promise in John 14:1-3,19. He then proceeded to gather the rest of the children of God by choosing the remaining ones of the saints to set up the Kingdom of God here on earth. (Matthew 24:15,16,31; Isaiah 2:2; Daniel 2:44; Zephaniah 2:1-3) Any true Church Organisation established on this earth, through the remnant of the saints in this age, is a Branch of the universal Kingdom. It will continue to grow under the guiding hand and protection of Jehovah’s appointed king, Jesus Christ, until all forces of wickedness headed by Satan the devil will be destroyed at the battle of Armageddon. (Matthew 13:31,32; Isaiah 60:22; Revelation 16:13,14; etc.) The Bible says the battle of Armageddon or the “Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty” is unprecedented in human history, being a global conflict between Jesus Christ and the devil, and that such an event will not happen again. – Daniel 12:1; Nahum 1:9; Matthew 24:21.

In the revelation which Jesus Christ gave to John the Apostle in the Island of Patmos, it is stated that a great multitude which no man can number from “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” shall be saved from this global war. All those who are saved at that time will go from life to life everlasting and will be wholly devoted to doing the will of God. – Mark 9:1; John 8:51; 11:26; Revelation 7:9,10,13-15.

After the battle of Armageddon, Christ will commence his one thousand years reign known as “the Millennial Reign of Christ”. This is a period of reconstruction when the earth shall be restored to its former state of perfection as it was in the Garden of Eden. (Revelation 20:4,6) It is this work of reconstruction that God used Ezekiel to refer to in the following text; “Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.” – Ezekiel 36:33-36.

When all the deserts, dry lands and other desolate places in the earth had been made habitable, the entire earth will be filled with righteous people, according to the number God Almighty has purposed as the Bible further states: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock,

as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD." – Ezekiel 36:37,38.

During the one thousand years uninterrupted reign of Jesus Christ, there will be the general resurrection of the just and the unjust. The just will be granted eternal life while the unjust will be given a period of one hundred years to work as a second opportunity to show their readiness to obey the commands of God Almighty. The obedient ones will enter into life while those who are disobedient will be "accursed" that is, they will die the "second death" – death without any chance of life again. – Isaiah 65:20; John 5:28,29; Revelation 20:13-15.

After the kingdom must have been fully established and the whole earth restored to its pristine glory, satan shall be brought back to life to see the beautified earth full of people doing the will of God. He will try to deceive the nations once again, but the anger of God symbolized by fire will destroy him forever. (Revelation 20:7-9) Thereafter, Jesus Christ will hand over the kingdom to God and He (God Almighty) shall be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:24-28.) Mankind will then enter the Sabbath or rest. (Hebrews 4:1,9) From then onwards, no one will have to work before getting his food or satisfying any material want. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." – Isaiah 65:24.

#### BEAUTIES OF THE KINGDOM

The beauties of the kingdom are beyond human imagination or contemplation. Hence the Bible says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9; see also Isaiah 64:4; 60:17) Concerning the glory that would come to the reconstructed earth the Bible says: "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious." – Isaiah 60:13. The men and the women in the kingdom of God will be well built, healthy, attractive and therefore captivating to behold. God says: "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." (Isaiah 13:12) There will be no more sickness and therefore no taking of drugs – "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Isaiah 33:24. See also Jeremiah 33:6) Also, there will be no more ignorance as the knowledge of God shall fill the earth "as the waters cover the sea". – Isaiah 25:7, 8; 11:9; Jeremiah 31:34; Habakkuk 2:14.

In God's Kingdom, there will be no conflicts or wars as instruments of war would be converted to peaceful uses. (Zechariah 9:10; Isaiah 2:4) In Micah 4:3,4 it is written: "He will arbitrate among the nations and dictate to strong nations far away. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall no longer fight each other, for all war will end. There will be universal peace, and all the military academies and training camps will be closed down. Everyone will live quietly in his own home in peace and prosperity, for there will be nothing to fear. The Lord himself has promised this." (The Living Bible) That is not all. In the restored earth animals would live in peace with human beings and with one another. The book of Hosea states: "And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely." – Hosea 2:18.

In addition, the prophet Isaiah states: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down

together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain ..." – Isaiah 11:6-9.

Because it is the only perfect solution to all human sufferings and woes, being what peoples of the earth both great and small have been looking for, the Kingdom of God is called the "desire of all nations." (Haggai 2:7) God states, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." – Isaiah 65:17-19.

It could therefore be understood why the Kingdom of God is said to be as beautiful as "a bride adorned for her husband", as it is written: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And 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 new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful." – Revelation 21:1-5.

It is because of the glorious plans which God has for His people in His kingdom that Jesus Christ asked us to pray for it to come so that the will of God will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. – Matthew 6:9,10. See also 2 Peter 3:13.

May God Almighty who has promised that, in the dispensation of the fullness of time, He will gather together in Christ all his creatures in heaven and earth to serve him in perfect peace and happiness, continue to direct his children on earth to serve him faithfully till the end so as to enjoy the benefits of the restoration by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.