

The Banner

WORLD WIDE REFORMATION

"He That Winneth Souls Is Wise"



THE BANNER

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WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

By J. W. Manns.

"Men with furrowed brows, careworn features, gray hair, and stooped form, are living evidences of the truthfulness of the word of the Lord to our first parents that if they violated His holy law they would die. Death is a tax levied upon man by sin, of which the Lord gave him due notice before his transgression. The tax is a debt, and the obligation must be settled.

"It is said, 'Man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?' Notice, it is man who dies, and wastes away, and gives up the ghost, and concerning whom the inquiry is made, 'Where is he' during the period of death?

"Satan endeavored to fore-stall this query by representing himself as the head of the only life insurance company, and induced the happy pair, as it were, to take out a policy. But the company was fraudulent. It had no life to impart. Death came. However, in the face of death on every hand, Satan has pretendedly clung to his theory that men do not die; and many people have come to believe his doctrine true.

"If men were left to answer the question of man's condition after death, we would most frequently be informed that 'the unregenerate are in a place of torture suffering the vengeance of an angry Deity, and the

righteous are in heaven enjoying the bliss of the loyal angels.'

"But man is not in position to answer the question. He can not recall any occurrence in life prior to his present existence in human form. If one shall arise and request that it be conceded that the real, intelligent, appreciative, thinking, understanding man is a separate entity from the man of clay, then perhaps he could inform us what his occupation was, and some of the detail incidents that occurred previous to the time of bodily encumbrance. If this can not be done, can we reasonably expect, after one has been locked up in the body—the prison house of clay—from twelve to ninety years, that he would be more intelligent at time of reprieve than he was before having been encumbered therewith?

"Those who have died without hope in God are the friends of someone, perhaps of you and me. Are such suffering the tortures of the condemned before the Judgment? Surely not. Elsewhere it is written, 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment;' and the Judgment must take place before one can reap his final reward.

"The Bible only can be relied upon to inform us of the condition of the dead between death and the day of final retribution. The patriarch Job was inspired to ask and reply: 'If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.' Job asserts that there will be a time of waiting after death for both righteous and wicked, before the time of reward; and then adds, 'If I wait, the grave is mine house.' Job 14:14; 17:13. This is God's plan. 'The meek will He teach His way.' Ps. 25:9.

"Note the historical record made in the almost world's war zone, of the ravages of death among fathers, husbands, lovers, brothers and sons. Do those unacquainted with God plunge from the world's battle field into the horrors of eternal loss? Surely not. God's way is best. Those worn and weary men who have fallen in

battle are unconscious of the suffering of comrades and bereaved loved ones. They sleep, rest, 'wait,' as said the patriarch, until all things are righted. The physicians, nurses, and other attendants who have been privileged to serve the wounded soldiers who survived the wholesale slaughter of the armies on the field of battle, have watched over thousands of individuals until the time when, as Inspiration records, 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.' Ps. 146:4.

"The generals who have fallen, plan no more engagements with the enemy, and neither they nor their comrades who have met a similar fate have any further anxiety for the interests of the home land, for 'their thoughts perished.'

"There could be no object in assigning, at time of death, a man whose thought has perished, to either heaven or hell. Better 'wait'—sleep—in the grave until the change comes.

"We read, 'The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything.' Eccl. 9:5. The dead rest until Christ, the Life-giver, sounds the bugle call, as upon one occasion He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth.' John 11:43, 44. Jesus, our divine Lord, said, when referring to death, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. . . . Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.' John 11:11, 14. At the divine call of the Master, Lazarus came forth from the grave, his resting place, where he had been for four days. Verses 43, 44. This is a beautiful example, and surely a Biblical answer to the question, 'Where are the dead?'

"Inspiration said of David, 'He is both dead and buried.' Acts 2:29. He further said of the patriarch, 'David is not ascended into the heavens.' Verse 34. Of Jesus it is written that He was resurrected from the tomb. Verses 24, 27, 31.

"Paul said: '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 Tim. 4:7, 8. Paul had conquered in Christ—had won the crown. He said Christ would tender him his crown 'at that day' when all those who love Christ's coming receive their reward of immortality.

"Of that glad reunion day it is elsewhere written: 'We shall not all sleep (die); but we shall all be changed, in a moment, . . . at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (the living) shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.' 1 Cor. 15:51-55. When this mysterious change occurs to all the sleeping saints and the living righteous, then death will be forever annihilated; for we hear the Master say, 'They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world (the world to come), and the resurrection from the dead, . . ; neither can they die any more.' Luke 20:35, 36.

"Death is a sleep. But the trump of the Lord will awake every slumbering child of God, from the time of righteous Abel to the dawn of that glad morning. 'For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' 1 Thess. 4:15-17, A. R. V.

"Of the ancient worthies Paul says, 'These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided . . . that they without us should not be

made perfect.' Heb. 11:39, 40.

"From the moment when Abel fell asleep in death under the murderous stroke of Cain, his brother, until the sounding of the trump of God, will be to Abel an unrecognized period, like that between two consecutive thoughts; for the dead are not conscious of the lapse of time.

"Said Jesus: 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead (like Lazarus), yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth (at the resurrection) and believeth in Me shall never die.' John 11:25, 26.

THE PULPIT

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand." Joel 2:1. This statement of Scripture indicates conditions among God's professed people in the last days, which makes them unfit to stand before Him at His coming. And conditions for which the leaders are responsible. "For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed." Isaiah 9:16. "My holy mountain" refers to the Church; and the command to "blow the trumpet" is given in view of the fact that "the day of the Lord is at hand;" and this people who are being deceived by their leaders desire that day. "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him: or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him." Amos 5:18, 19.

The conditions which seem to be predominant are partiality, injustice, Sabbath-breaking, Isaiah 56:1, 2; oppression, il-liberality, lack of pity for the poor, despising their own flesh, Isaiah 58:6, 7; that is their brethren which are of the household of faith with whom they say they are one. Neh. 5:5; they all possessing bones,

fat, blood, nerve, weaknesses, blunders, like the rest of mankind. Claiming superiority and perfection, because due to climatic influence complexion differs. "In Touch with God." p. 94. "I hate and, I despise your feast-days and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beast (see Hosea 14:2; last part). Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols (good singing) but let Judgment run down as water and righteousness as a mighty stream." Amos 5: 21-24, to see that He is speaking to the Church in these days a glance at the 18th verse will convince.

It has been strongly affirmed by a very able Christian writer that a lack of the personal Holy Spirit in the experience of the present religious community is the chief hindrance to the conversion of sinners or their surrender to Christ. "The world is not convicted of the moral turpitude of ignoring Christ. It is because the Holy Spirit has not been accepted by the Church. Obstructing the world's conviction is a terrible responsibility." Here we find the Church void of the principles of righteousness and judgment (justice, equity, etc.) Satisfied with a religion of words, forms, and doctrinal points is an obstacle to the waiting world who would see Jesus.

Christianity is not engaging the mind of the populace because professed Christians do not take Christ seriously and for all this the pulpit and the pulpit alone is responsible. Bread-winning outweighs inspiration in the pulpits of today. The Bible and the Bible alone is not used to awaken the conscience. Denominational wealth, numerical increase, the amount of missionaries we are sending out yearly, alarming financial reports, these are the absorbing themes of the nominal pulpit, whilst "Sound and alarm in my holy mountaint: let the inhabitants tremble," is unheeded.

"The words of the Bible and

the Bible alone should be heard from the pulpit. But the Bible has been robbed of its power, and the result is seen in a lowering of the tone of Spiritual life. In many sermons of today there is not that divine manifestation which awakens the conscience and brings life to the soul. The hearers cannot say, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Prophets and Kings, p. 626.

And another fact is that the greater part comprising Church membership dislikes these sermons. "The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desire of the sinful world-loving heart." Spirited sermons and those that call for self-denial and sacrifice are not appreciated." Therefore the pulpit has two choices, either give what the crowd wants, and they remain in the Church to be an obstacle to the sinner who would see Jesus; or give what they have no desire for, that is, lift up the voice like a trumpet and show their sins, and see them leave by the scores. But the devil found a text to hush the voice of conscience, and these traitors of the Cross of Christ make frequent use of it. "The Lord said that the wheat and the tares must grow together till the day of harvest."

What the Pulpits Are Doing.

The following will tell what the pulpits are doing:

"A well-known clergyman here, who comes under the head of sensationalist, was asked by a friend the other day why he so often violated good taste both in matter and manner, when speaking in the pulpit.

"I will tell you," was the reply. "I have no more liking for the kind of sermons I deliver than you have. They are mere trifles in rhetoric, and unsound in sentiment, but they are popular; and I must furnish the sort of article my congregation is willing to pay for. You are aware that my predecessor was an able and scholarly man, and extremely conscientious withal. But he failed to fill the pews, and he was requested to resign. If I had

obeyed my own inclination as to sermons, I should have shared his fate. I was anxious however, to retain the position; for I have a large family, and it is my duty to support them. Do you blame me for discharging that duty?

Churches now are nothing more than theological theaters, and preachers, the actors who are paid so much for performing cleverly and acceptably. When the priestly artists do not draw, their engagement is discontinued. We are forced to make our sermons attractive to those who come to hear them. In consulting our household expenses, we must make a liberal surrender of our tastes and conviction. I received \$10,000 a year. If I preached simpler and better sermons, reflecting my real views, I could not get \$3,000. So, you see, bread-earning outweighs both aspiration and inspiration." "Facts for the Times," p. 94. Copied from Cincinnati Times, July 28, 1870. Truly this candid minister's position is a fair representation of the nominal pulpit, Seventh-day Adventists not exempted. A certain Conference president once appealing to the knowledge of the writer said, "Brother Edwards, you know that if the Conference employ a worker and send him out into the field for twelve months, and he did not bring in at least twelve heads of faithful tithe-paying families, the Conference could not afford to employ him for another year." The nature of the statement makes it clear that, this knowledge is a common one among Seventh-day Adventists. "So the heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money, yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us." Micah 3:11. Other experiences could be given if space would permit. But according to the two given above, it is obvious that the soul and not the soul is the main object of these religious bodies. And the men used as teachers are hired servants and if they cannot perform the act that will bring and keep the paying

crowd, they are not needed. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies (destructive teachings) even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many (the majority) shall follow their pernicious (injurious) ways (by trading with the Word of God, verse 3, 2 Cor. 2: 17) by reason of whom the way of truth (Christianity) shall be evil spoken of" (by unbelievers or sinners). And through covetousness (the error of Bal-aa, love of money and honor) shall they with feigned words make merchandise (trade) of you." 2 Pet. 2:1-3. If the Conference will not keep a hired minister, because he does not bring, in one short year, sufficient faithful tithe-payers, much less will one be kept who will not make a liberal surrender of his conviction, and allow bread-winning to outweigh both inspiration and aspiration; but through the love of the truth and conscientiousness will faithfully rebuke and reprove the sins of those faithful tithe-paying families contrary to their desires, for which cause they will either stay at home and pay no more tithe or leave the Church. With these conditions prevailing among the people who are looking for and desiring the day of the Lord, that the sincere may be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, the faithful shepherd who esteemed the Word of God above his necessary food," Job 23:12; and the Law of his God more than thousands of gold and silver, are told to "lift up their voices like a trumpet and show His people these sins." Not only shown but it must be shown with such a power and authority (Titus 2:15) as to create serious reflection. "Lift up the voice like a trumpet," does not suggest that tame and compromising way that, now and then, we hear from the pulpit; that calls for no serious thinking, and is passed by with little or no comment.

C. A. EDWARDS.
(To be continued.)