

# The Bible Students Monthly

International Bible Students Association, Publishers.

Vol. II

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

No. 6

## Our Lord's Return

"If I go I will come again."—John 14:3.

**T**HAT our Lord intended his disciples to understand that for some purpose, in some manner, and at some time, he would come again is, we presume, admitted and believed by all familiar with the Scriptures, for, when he said, "If I go, I will come again" (John 14:3), he certainly referred to a second personal coming.

Quite a number think that when sinners are converted that forms a part of the coming of Christ, and that so he will continue coming until all the world is converted. Then, say they, he will have fully come.

These evidently forget the testimony of the Scriptures on the subject, which declare the reverse of their expectation; that at the time of our Lord's second coming the world will be far from converted to God; that "In the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:1-4); that "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (Verse 13.) They forget the Master's special warning to his "little flock"; "Take heed to yourselves lest that day come upon you unawares, for as a snare shall it come on all them [not taking heed] that dwell on the face of the whole earth." (Luke 21:34, 35.) Again, we may rest assured that when it is said, "All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him," when they see him coming (Rev. 1:7), no reference is made to the conversion of sinners. Do all men wail because of the conversion of sinners? On the contrary, if this passage refers, as almost all admit, to Christ's presence on earth, it teaches that all on earth will not love his appearing, as they certainly would do if all were converted.

Some expect an actual coming and presence of the Lord, but set the time of the event a long way off, claiming that through the efforts of the Church in its present condition the world must be converted, and thus the Millennial Age be introduced. They claim that when the world has been converted, and Satan bound, and the knowledge of the Lord caused to fill the whole earth, and when the nations learn war no more, then the work of the Church in her present condition will be ended; and that when she has accomplished this great and difficult task the Lord will come to wind up earthly affairs, reward believers and condemn sinners.

Some Scriptures, taken disconnectedly, seem to favor this view; but when God's Word and plan are viewed as a whole these will all be found to favor the opposite view, viz., that Christ comes before the conversion of the world, and reigns for the purpose of converting the world; that the Church is now being tried, and that the reward promised the overcomers is that after being glorified they shall share with the Lord Jesus in that reign, which is God's appointed means of blessing the world and causing the knowledge of the Lord to come to every creature. Such are the Lord's special promises: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in

my throne ... And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

The Apostle (Acts 15:14) tells us that the main object of the Gospel in the present age is "to take out a people" for Christ's name—the overcoming Church, which, at his second advent will be united to him and receive his name. The witnessing to the world during this age is a secondary object.

### "My Plans are Not as Your Plans"

A further examination of God's revealed plans will give a broader view of the object of both the first and second advents; and we should remember that both events stand related as parts of one plan. The specific work of the first advent was to die for men; and that of the second is to restore, and bless, and liberate the redeemed. Having given his life a ransom for all, our Savior ascended to present that sacrifice to the Father, thus making reconciliation for man's iniquity. He tarries and permits "the prince of this world" to continue the rule of evil, until after the selection of "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife," who, to be accounted worthy of such honor, must overcome the influence of the present evil world. Then the work of giving to the world of mankind the great blessings secured to them by his sacrifice will be due to commence, and he will come forth to bless all the families of the earth.—Heb. 9:24, 28; Acts 15:14; Rev. 3:21.

True, the restoring and blessing could have commenced at once, when the ransom price was paid by the Redeemer, and then the coming of Messiah would have been but one event, the reign and blessing beginning at once, as the Apostles at first expected. (Acts 1:6.) But God had provided "some better thing for us"—the Christian Church (Heb. 11:40); hence it is in our interest that the reign of Christ is separated from the sufferings of the Head by these 18 centuries.

This period between the first and second advents, between the giving of the ransom for all and the blessing of all, is for the trial and selection of the Church, which is the Body of Christ; otherwise there would have been only the one advent, and the work which will be done during the period of his second presence, in the Millennium, would have followed the resurrection of Jesus. Or, instead of saying that the work of the second advent would have followed at once the work of the first, let us say, rather, that had Jehovah not purposed the selection of the "little flock," "the Body of Christ," the first advent would not have taken place when it did, but would have occurred at the time of the second advent, and there would

have been but one. For God has evidently designed the permission of evil for six thousand years, as well as that the cleansing and restitution of all shall be accomplished during the seventh thousand.

Thus seen, the coming of Jesus, as the sacrifice and ransom for sinners, was just long enough in advance of the blessing and restoring time to allow for the selection of his "little flock" of "joint-heirs." This will account to some for the apparent delay on God's part in giving the blessings promised, and provided for, in the ransom. The blessings will come in due time, as at first planned; though for a glorious purpose, the price was laid down longer beforehand than men would have expected.

Those who claim that Jehovah has been trying for six thousand years to convert the world and failing all the time, must find it difficult to reconcile such views with the Bible assurance that all God's purposes shall be accomplished, and that his Word shall not return unto him void, but shall prosper in the thing whereto it was sent. (Isa. 55:11.) The fact that the world has not yet been converted, and that the knowledge of the Lord has not yet filled the earth, is a proof that it has not yet been sent on that mission.

### Different Classes of "Elect."

Glancing backward, we notice the selection, or election of Abraham and certain of his offspring as the channels through which the promised Seed, the blessing of all the families of the earth, shall come. (Gal. 3:16, 29.) We note also the selection of Israel from among all nations, as the one in whom, typically, God illustrated how the great work for the world should be accomplished—their deliverance from Egypt, their Canaan, their Covenant, their laws, their sacrifices for sins, for the blotting out of guilt and for the sprinkling of the people, and their priesthood for the accomplishment of all this, being a miniature and typical representation of the real priesthood and sacrifices for the purifying of the world of mankind. God, speaking to Israel, said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2.) This people alone was recognized until Christ came; yes, and afterwards, for his ministry was confined to them, and he would not permit his disciples to go to others—saying, as he sent them out, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not." Why so, Lord? Because, he explains, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:24.) All his time was devoted to them until his death, and there was done his first work for the world, the first display of his free and all-abounding grace, which in "due time" shall indeed be a blessing to all. When the called-out company (called to be sons of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord—who have made their calling and election sure) is complete, then this feature of the plan of God for the world's salvation will be only beginning.

Not until it is selected, developed, and exalted to power, will the Seed bruise the serpent's head. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your

feet shortly." (Rom. 16:20; Gen. 3:15.) The Gospel Age makes ready the chaste virgin, the faithful Church, for the coming Bridegroom. And in the end of the age, when she is made "ready" (Rev. 19:7), the Bridegroom comes, and they that are ready go in with him to the marriage—the second Adam and the second Eve become one, and then the glorious work of restitution begins. In the next dispensation the Church will be no longer the espoused virgin, but the Bride; and then shall "The Spirit and the Bride, say, Come! And let him that heareth say, Come! And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Rev. 22:17.

The Gospel Age, so far from closing the Church's mission, is only a necessary preparation for the great future work. For this promised and coming blessing "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." (Rom. 8:22, 19.) And it is a blessed fact that free grace in fullest measure, not merely for the living, but for those who have died as well, is provided in our Father's plan as the blessed opportunity of the coming age.

### Pre-Millennarians Come Short.

Those who can see something of the blessings due at the second advent, and who appreciate in some measure the fact that the Lord comes to bestow the grand blessing secured by his death, fail to see this last proposition; viz., that those in their graves have as much interest in that glorious reign of Messiah as those who at that time will be less completely under the bondage of corruption—death. But as surely as Jesus died for all, they all must have the blessings and opportunities which he purchases with his own precious blood. Hence we should expect blessings in the Millennial Age upon all those in their graves as well as upon those not in them; and of this we will find abundant proof, as we look further into the Lord's testimony on the subject. It is because of God's plan for their release that those in the tomb are called "prisoners of hope." What is, and is to be, their condition? Did God make no provision for these, whose condition and circumstances he must have foreseen? Or did he, from the foundation of the world make a wretched and merciless provision for their hopeless, eternal torment, as many of his children claim? Or has he yet in store in the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths of his plan, an opportunity for all to come to the knowledge of that only name, and, by becoming obedient to the conditions, to enjoy everlasting life? We

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# The Bible Students Monthly

PUBLISHED AT

13-17 HICKS ST., BROOKLYN, N. Y.

C. W. HEK, Editor.

Monthly—12 cts. a year. Single copies, 1c.

An Independent, Unsectarian Religious Newspaper, Specially Devoted to the Forwarding of the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement for the Glory of God and Good of Humanity.

read that "God is love," and "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." (1 John 4:8; John 3:16.) Would it not seem that if God loved the world so much he might have made provision, not only that believers might be saved, but also that all might hear in order to believe?

Again, when we read, "That was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9), our observation says, Not so; every man has not been enlightened; we cannot see that our Lord has lighted more than a few of earth's billions. Even in this comparatively enlightened day, millions of heathen give no evidence of such enlightenment; neither did the Sodomites, nor multitudes of others in past ages. Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death "for every man." (Heb. 2:9.) But if he tasted death for the entire race of over twenty billions, and from any cause that sacrifice becomes efficacious to only one billion, was not the redemption comparatively a failure? And in that case, is not the Apostle's statement too broad? When again we read, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10), and looking about us, see that it is only to a "little flock" that it has been good tidings, and not to all people, we would be compelled to wonder whether the angels had not overstated the goodness and breadth of their message, and overrated the importance of the work to be accomplished by the Messiah whom they announced.

Another statement is, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who give himself a ransom for all. (1 Tim. 2:5, 6.) A ransom for all? Then why should not all the ransomed have some benefit from Christ's death? Why should not all come to a knowledge of the truth, that they may believe?

## Plan of the Ages—The God-Given Key.

Without the key, how dark, how inconsistent, these statements appear; but when we find the key to God's plan, these texts all declare with one voice, "God is love"! This key is found in the latter part of the text last quoted—"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." God has a due time for every thing. He could have testified it to these in their past lifetime; but since he did not it proves that their due time must be future. For those who will be of the Church, the Bride of Christ, and share the Kingdom honors, the present is the "due time" to hear; and whosoever now has an ear to hear, let him hear and heed, and he will be blessed accordingly. Though Jesus gave our ransom before we were born, it was not our "due time" to hear of it for long years afterward, and only the appreciation of it brought responsibility; and this, only to the extent of our ability and

appreciation. The same principle applies to all; in God's due time it will be testified to all, and all will then have opportunity to believe and to be blessed by it.

The prevailing opinion is that death ends all probation; but there is no Scripture which so teaches. Since God does not purpose to save men on account of ignorance, but "will have all men to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4); and since the masses of mankind have died in ignorance; and since "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave" (Eccl. 9:10); therefore God has prepared for the awakening of the dead, in order to knowledge, faith and salvation. Hence his plan is, that "as all in Adam die, even so shall all in Christ be made alive, but each one in his own order"—the Gospel Church, the Bride, the Body of Christ, first; afterward, during the Millennial Age, all who shall become his during that thousand years of his presence (mistranslated coming), the Lord's due time for all to know him, from the least to the greatest.—1 Cor. 15:22.

Thus we see that all these hitherto difficult texts are explained by the statement—"to be testified in due time." In due time, that true Light shall lighten every man that has come into the world. In due time, it shall be "good tidings of great joy to all people." And in no other way can these Scriptures be used without wresting. Paul carries out this line of argument with emphasis in Rom. 5:18, 19. He reasons that, as all men were condemned to death because of Adam's transgression, so, also, Christ's righteousness, and obedience even unto death, have become a ground of justification; and that as all lost life in the first Adam, so all, aside from personal demerit, may receive life by accepting the second Adam.

Peter tells us that this restitution is spoken of by the mouth of all the holy prophets. (Acts 3:19-21.) They all teach it. Ezekiel says of the valley of dry bones, "These bones are the whole house of Israel." And God says to Israel, "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I . . . shall put my Spirit in you, and I shall place you in your own land; then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord."—Ezek. 37:11-14.

To this Paul's words agree (Rom. 11:25, 26)—"Blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles [the elect company, the Bride of Christ] be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved," or brought back from their cast-off condition; for "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." (Verse 2.) They were cast off from his favor while the Bride of Christ was being selected, but will be reinstated when the work is accomplished. (Verses 28-33.) The prophecies are full of statements of how God will plant them again, and they shall be no more plucked up. "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel . . . I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." (Jer. 24:5-7; 31:28; 32:40-42; 33:6-16.) These cannot refer merely to restorations from former captivities in Babylon, Syria, etc., for they have since been plucked up.

Though many of the prophecies and promises of future blessings seem to apply to Israel only, it must be remembered that they were a typical people, and hence the promises made

to them, while sometimes having a special application to themselves, generally have also a wider application to the whole world of mankind which that nation typified. While Israel as a nation was typical of the whole world, its priesthood was typical of the elect "little flock," the Head and Body of Christ, the "Royal Priesthood"; and the sacrifices, cleansings and atonement made for Israel typified the "better sacrifices," fuller cleansings and real atonement "for the sins of the whole world," of which they are a part.

## A Crucial Test—The Sodomites.

And not only so, but God mentions by name other nations and promises their restoration. As a forcible illustration we mention the Sodomites. Surely, if we shall find the restitution of the Sodomites clearly taught, we may feel satisfied of the truth of this glorious doctrine of restitution for all mankind, spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets. And why should not the Sodomites have an opportunity to reach perfection, and everlasting life as well as Israel, or as any of us? True, they were not righteous, but neither was Israel, nor we who now hear the Gospel. "There is none righteous; no, not one," aside from the imputed righteousness of Christ, who died for all. Our Lord's own words tell us that although God rained down fire from heaven and destroyed them all because of their wickedness, yet the Sodomites were not so great sinners in his sight as were the Jews, who had more knowledge. (Gen. 19:24; Luke 17:29.) Unto the Jews of Capernaum he said, "If the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."—Matt. 11:23.

Thus our Lord teaches that the Sodomites did not have a full opportunity; and he guarantees them such opportunity when he adds (v. 24), "But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." The character of the day of judgment and its work is shown elsewhere.\* Here we merely call attention to the fact that it will be a tolerable time for Capernaum, and yet more tolerable for Sodom; because, though neither had yet had full knowledge, nor all the blessings designed to come through the "Seed," yet Capernaum had sinned against more light.

And if Capernaum and all Israel are to be remembered and blessed under the "New Covenant," why should not the Sodomites also be blessed among "all the families of the earth"? They assuredly will be. And let it be remembered that since God "rained down fire from heaven and destroyed them all" many centuries before Jesus' day, when their restoration is spoken of, it implies their awakening, their coming from the tomb.

In "due time" they will be awakened from death and brought to a knowledge of the truth, and thus blessed together with all the families of the earth, by the promised "Seed." They will then be on trial for everlasting life.

With this thought, and with no other, can we understand the dealings of the God of love with those Amalekites and other nations whom he not only permitted but commanded Israel to destroy, saying, "Go smite Amalek and utterly destroy all they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and

suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." (1 Sam. 15:3.) This apparently reckless destruction of life seems irreconcilable with the character of love attributed to God, and with the teachings of Jesus, "Love your enemies," etc., until we come to recognize the systematic order of God's plan, the "due time" for the accomplishment of every feature of it, and the fact that every member of the human race has a place in it.

We can now see that those Amalekites, Sodomites and others were set forth as examples of God's just indignation, and of his determination to destroy finally and utterly evil-doers, examples which will be of service not only to others, but also to themselves, when their day of judgment or trial comes.

Some, who are willing enough to accept of God's mercy through Christ in the forgiveness of their own trespasses and weaknesses under greater light and knowledge, cannot conceive of the same favor being applicable under the New Covenant to others; though they seem to admit the Apostle's statement that Jesus Christ, by the favor of God, tasted death for every man. Some of these suggest that the Lord must, in this prophecy, be speaking ironically to the Jews, implying that he would just as willingly bring back the Sodomites as them, but had no intention of restoring either. But let us see how the succeeding verses agree with this idea. (Ezek. 16:60-63.) The Lord says, "Nevertheless I will remember my Covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then, thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed when thou shalt receive thy sisters . . . And I will establish my Covenant with thee and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done saith the Lord God."

## "All Israel Shall Be Saved."

To this Paul adds his testimony, saying, "And so all Israel [living and dead] shall be saved [recovered from blindness], as it is written, 'There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my Covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins . . . They are beloved for the fathers' sakes; because the gracious gifts and callings of God are not things to be repented of'—Rom. 11:26-29.

How different is this glorious plan of God for the selection of a few now, in order to the blessing of the many hereafter, from the distortions of these truths, as represented by the two opposing views—Calvinism and Arminianism! The former both denies the Bible doctrine of free grace, and miserably distorts the glorious doctrine of election; the latter denies the doctrine of election, and fails to comprehend the blessed fulness of God's free grace.

The day of trouble will end in due time, when he who spake to the raging Sea of Galilee will likewise, with authority, command the raging sea of human passion, saying, "Peace! Be still!" When the Prince of Peace shall "stand up" in authority, a great calm will be the result. Then the raging and clashing elements shall recognize the authority of "Jehovah's Anointed," "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together"; and in the reign of the Christ thus begun "shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

\* See Vol. I, "SCRIPTURE STUDIES," "The Divine Plan of the Ages."

## Thieves in Paradise

LUKE 23:43.—This greatly misunderstood text explained in PEOPLES PULPIT, Volume one, Number 7.

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## "WHERE ARE THE DEAD?"

This sermon was published in PEOPLES PULPIT, Volume one, Number 3. The interest aroused, and the great demand for copies of this sermon has been remarkable. A sample copy will be mailed to any one free.

# The Golden Rule

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets."—Matt. 7:12.

"How wise are God's commands,  
How just his precepts are!"

OUR conception of God measures our highest ideals and principles. Whoever, therefore, has a mean or slipshod conception of the Almighty is bound to be more or less mean and slipshod in his conduct of life, for every man or woman to some extent worships his own highest ideal. And this is authorized by our Redeemer's words, "Be ye like unto your Father which is in heaven." Our forefathers during the dark ages burned one another at the stake, and otherwise tortured one another, because of their misconception of the Divine character; because their ideals were too low. They truly believed what they formulated in their creeds and handed down to us; namely, that God in the present time is gathering from amongst men a handful of saints for the heavenly condition and that he will turn over the remainder—all who walk not after the spirit, but after the flesh—to eternal torment at the hands of demons.

Having before their minds this misconception of the Bible teachings, they merely copy that misconception. That civilized men have gotten beyond those standards of the dark ages is a matter for congratulation. We regret, nevertheless, that their freedom from an error has not brought them all the blessing that it should. They have attained the higher ideal mostly by ignoring the Bible, by denying its infallibility, by accepting their own judgment and reasoning in supposed contradiction of the Bible teachings. How sad is the fact that a majority of the noble minds of Christendom today deny that the Bible is a divinely inspired revelation of God and consider it merely the work of well-intentioned but ignorant men, in comparison with whom the theologians of today are past-masters every way, quite competent to write, out of their own wits, matter much superior to that of the Bible, the Divine inspiration of which they deny.

## The Foundation of God's Throne

The Bible declaration that justice is the foundation of the divine Kingdom or Throne gives the mind pictorially an appreciation of the value of justice in its relationship to every element of the divine character. "Be just before you are generous," is a proverb amongst men, which evidently is in full accord with what the Scriptures declare of God's character. He is first just—never anything less than just. His wisdom, his power, his love must all co-ordinate with and rest upon this quality of Justice. And so it is with all those who would copy this character. They must first be just. A character built upon a foundation to any extent ignoring this is faulty, improper, sinful. The first man, made in God's image and moral likeness, must have had justice as the foundation of his character. And all of his descendants still possess this quality, though in varying degrees. We call it also conscientiousness, righteousness. Some indeed have this quality in so weak a degree that it is easily overbalanced by their other stronger qualities of mind, such as acquisitiveness, approbateness, etc. It is for this reason that prisons are necessary to restrain all the stronger organs of men's minds and to encourage their conscientiousness, their sense of justice, righteousness. These standards of righteousness have, from the first, been considered and esteemed the Divine standards, and are still so esteemed, except by atheists.

During the dark ages reasoning minds tried the various expedients whereby to harmonize the justice of God with the "doctrines of demons," which misrepresented the Divine Program for mankind. (I Tim. 4:1.) But in our day the dawning light from every quarter reveals to the awakened conscience the fact that the old creeds require of humanity far higher standards than they accredit to our Maker. We are to be just, generous, kind, loving. The pattern held up to us in the misleading creeds portrays our Almighty Creator as claiming all of those qualities, but by his course of dealing with humanity violating them, every one.

Who, with an enlightened mind, can any longer claim that it would be just or kind or loving for God to bring into being a race of intelligent creatures, for the great mass of whom he had no better provision than an eternity of torture, and knew all this before he created them? Who can deny that it would have been more just, more kind,

more wise and more loving to leave the entire race uncreated than to make provision for the eternal torture of 999 out of every 1,000 of them, or a worse proportion, for surely the saints do not number one in a thousand of the world's population?

## "Thy Righteous Acts Shall Be Made Manifest"

The Bible freely tells us that many features of the Divine plan are now hidden in mystery, but the last book of the Bible, which prophetically pictures the future, assures us that in God's due time "The mystery shall be finished, which he hath declared to his servants, the prophets." (Rev. 10:7.) The same book assures us that in God's due time, when the mystery is cleared, "All nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy righteous acts have been made manifest."—(Rev. 15:4.) We are now living in the time when the "mystery" is ending and the righteous dealings of God, from the Scriptural standpoint, may be clearly seen.

But these revelations are not meant for the world in general now, but merely for "the elect," the "sanctified in Christ Jesus." "To you it is given to know the mysteries;" to outsiders these things are spoken in parables and dark sayings. (Matt. 13:11, 13.) But not until the elect shall be glorified and the Millennial Kingdom established will the "mystery" be made fully known to the world and every knee bow and every tongue confess. Hence, only those of a contrite heart may now see, now understand, the real character of God, his real purposes toward man, etc. Thus our Lord declares, "This is life eternal that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."—Jno. 17:3.

To the class addressed by our Lord, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see," and for these alone, is the message that the hell of the Bible is the tomb, the state of death. They were all condemned to death through Adam's sin and not one, according to the Scriptures, was condemned to eternal torment. It is for these to see and appreciate the love of God, which has made provision for the salvation of all men from the present state of degradation and sin and death. These alone may see that Jesus was "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and not merely the sins of the church. These may see that the blessings of salvation are for two classes of mankind—now for the saintly class, "the called according to God's purpose," and who are promised a share in the First Resurrection; and then during the Millennial Age, salvation for all of the race—an opportunity for restitution to man's original estate in the image and likeness of God.

## The Golden Rule for the Church

They make a great mistake who suppose that the Golden Rule, or indeed any of the messages of the Scriptures, were intended for the world of mankind. No; they are for the Church only, and this is shown not only by the fact that our Lord's words were addressed to his disciples, but also by the fact that the Apostolic Epistles similarly are addressed to the saints and the household of faith. Others cannot see, understand, appreciate, in the proper degree. The worldly mind can and does appreciate the maxim, "Honesty is the best policy"—in the long run, but it cannot appreciate the sentiment of our text, in the sense of being willing to adopt this as a principle and as a rule of life.

In harmony with this thought, we seek to impress the import of our text only upon those blessed of the Father who have been drawn, called, sanctified in Christ Jesus, and whose eyes to

some extent have seen justice to be the foundation of the Divine character. The Golden Rule does not express all of the Christian's duty; he is expected to make progress in conduct and character development much beyond this. But this further progress marks his development in love. The Golden Rule marks the very lowest standard which must measure our dealings with others in the Church and in the world—justice. In a word our text, although far above the ordinary course of humanity, should be in use every day and every hour by every follower of Christ. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." That our Lord was not giving this as a Gospel standard and love standard, we note the fact that he added the words, "This is the Law and the Prophets"—this is the teaching or demand of the law and the prophets upon all who would seek to do righteousness—Justice.

The measure of our development as New Creatures in Christ is whatever we attain in love above the standard of the Golden Rule. Justice demands us to render to others as we would have them render to us. Love says, I demand nothing, but show you the length and height and depth of Love Divine and wait expectantly to note your appreciation of this and how you will seek to be copies of God's dear Son, who laid down his life on our behalf. Addressing those who had made a consecration to discipleship, to walk in the Lord's footsteps, St. Paul says, "We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren"—after the example of Jesus.

## "Love Worketh No Ill"

All of the Lord's people are to love him and the brethren; yea, even their enemies. However, let us now stop short of love and merely consider what the simple justice of the Golden Rule would imply in our conduct. How do our daily lives square with this Golden Rule of absolute justice, omitting love entirely?

If you are an employer, do you treat your employee in harmony with this rule and do unto him as you would have him do unto you, if your positions were reversed? If you are an employee, inquire of yourself, "Do I treat my employer and his business as I would have him treat me and my business, if our relationship were reversed?" Do you treat your butcher, your baker, your grocer, etc., as you would like to have them treat you, if your positions were reversed? Are you polite to them and not inclined to give them unnecessary trouble? Do you pay them promptly? Or, if you are the tradesman, do you treat your customers as you would wish to have them treat you, if conditions were reversed? Do you charge them a reasonable price only? Do you give them proper weight and measure? Do you properly represent your goods to them, as you would have them represented to you? Are you a good neighbor? Do you see to it that your children are not a nuisance to others; that your chickens are not permitted to damage your neighbor's garden; that your dog is not a ferocious one, and that his bark does not keep the neighborhood awake? In a word, do you treat your neighbor justly, along the lines of the Golden Rule, doing unto him only as you would wish him to do to you?

Let us now step into your home and measure things there by the Golden Rule. As husbands, how do you treat your wives? As wives, how do you treat your husbands? Can you apply the Golden Rule to your words, to your conduct, to your demands of each other? Or do you act meanly, selfishly, taking advantage of each other, to the limit that the other will forbear? Do you deal with your children according to the lines of the Golden Rule? Are you an ideal parent, according to your own advanced standard of what a parent's duty should be to his children? Do you remember that you have a responsibility for their training; a responsibility so far as your circumstances will permit, for their environment and happiness and education and general preparation for usefulness in life? Or are you indifferent to their interests, neglectful of your responsibilities? Do you recognize that your children have certain rights and that these increase as they near maturity, or are you forgetful of these, disposed to keep the children under the restraints of childhood, souring their dispositions and making them unhappy, until they resent the injustice and a family quarrel results? As children, are you thoughtful of your parents, their welfare, their wishes, their happiness, as you would like your children to be thoughtful of yours? Do you remember the hours and weeks of feebleness and sickness and toil which you cost them in your infancy, and are you seeking to repay those kindnesses and seeking to make their last days the

happiest of their lives? Are you observing the Golden Rule toward your parents? How is it in your relationship to your brothers and sisters? When they borrow your things without leave, do you retaliate by borrowing theirs without leave, and thus keep up a continual fret and vexation of spirit in the family? Or do you practice the Golden Rule of justice and do nothing to your brother and sister, or their belongings, that you would not wish them to do to you or your things?

## The Golden Rule in Church

Surely in the Church you should remember the Golden Rule laid down by the Head of the Church. Nevertheless, I am sure that if you are unjust in your own family, and to your business associates, you will be unjust also in your dealing with the "Church, which is the Body of Christ." He that is unjust in little things would be unjust in greater ones. He who is faithful in little things will be faithful in the greater ones. He who practices the Golden Rule during the six days of his contact with business will surely be faithful on the seventh, but faithfulness to the Golden Rule on the one day only will never win Divine approval.

If I have taken upon me a denominational name, which stands for a denominational creed, do I really believe that creed and endorse it and uphold it? Or am I in a measure out of accord with it? Does it misrepresent me, or do I misrepresent it? Am I doing to my associates and to the Lord, the Head of the Church, as I would have them do to me? If not, I should square my conduct by the Golden Rule. I should be honest with my Lord, with my brethren and with myself, and make no false professions. Do I treat all the brethren as such, as the Apostle says, "Without partiality and without hypocrisy?" Or do I pick out some of special class or calibre or style, and measurably ignore some of the poorer or less literate, who, perhaps, need my assistance more? Am I doing to all these a brother's part, as I would that they should do to me, if our positions were transposed? As the pastor, am I thoughtful of the interests of the brethren? Do I watch out for their liberties? Do I seek to impart to them freely whatever knowledge I possess, or am I trying to hoodwink them and to keep them in ignorance, and to hold them down? In a word, am I doing for the Lord's sheep, as an under-shepherd, what I would wish to be done to me by an under-shepherd, if I were one of the Lord's sheep under his care? Or, as one of the Lord's sheep, under a pastoral head, am I seeking by word and act to encourage and assist the pastor, as I would like to have the Lord's people do for me, if I were in pastoral service?

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# The Two Salvations

"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 iii. 16.

"Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."—Ephesians 5, 25-27.

SOME apply the first text only and think of the Divine Program as being merely an endeavor to rescue mankind from sin and death to righteousness and eternal life in the present time. Such as hold this view are much confused, because it must be acknowledged that comparatively little has been done, or is now being done, for man's uplift. After six thousand years it is still true that "The whole world lieth in the Wicked One"; "Darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the heathen." In order to have any confidence at all in this theory those who hold it are obliged to greatly lower their standards. They are forced to hope that God will admit millions of unfit people, crude, rude, ignorant and wicked to eternal life and happiness, or perchance provide for them Purgatorial experiences, to make them fit, righteous and acceptable for life eternal. As a whole, Christian people are greatly bewildered. The tendency of their bewilderment is toward doubt, skepticism, atheism.

The other view, briefly stated, is that God never intended the salvation of the world, but merely the salvation of the Church, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the Truth." Those who hold this theory have great confusion also, because it seems incomprehensible that God would make no provision for "thousands of millions" of Adam's race, but arrange for them to be born in sin, shapen in iniquity, and to go down to the tomb (or worse) without a clear knowledge of God and his purposes and will respecting them.

As we have already frequently set forth, both of the described theories are erroneous. The Scriptures set forth two salvations, entirely separate and distinct. They are different as respects time, in that the one "salvation began to be spoken by our Lord" at his First Advent, and began to be applicable to his Church at Pentecost, and will wholly cease at his Second Coming in the end of this Age. The other salvation neither applied before our Lord's First Advent nor during this Gospel Age, but will apply to all mankind, except the Church, during the Millennium—the thousand years of the reign of Christ and the Church, specially designed for the blessing of the world and its uplifting out of sin and death conditions.

These two salvations are distinctly different as to kind, as well as respects

their plan of operation. The salvation of the Church during this Gospel Age—since Pentecost—means not only a deliverance from sin and death conditions to eternal life, but provides that the eternal life will be on the heavenly or spiritual plane and not on the earthly or human plane of existence. Thus the Apostle declares that our "inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled and fadeth not away and is reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (I Peter 1:4, 5.) Our Lord also told that in the resurrection we shall be like unto the angels. The Apostle also declares that at that time we shall be partakers of the divine nature and like our Lord and Redeemer.

The world's salvation which will follow will be wholly different from this. It will not include a change from earthly to spirit nature. It will mean a rescue from sin and death to the earthly perfection of the original man, in the image and likeness of his Creator, and surrounded by every necessary blessing for his comfort. Human perfection and the Eden home were lost through disobedience to God. The Divine arrangement is that the merit of our Lord's obedience unto death, when ultimately applied for mankind, shall fully cancel the death sentence upon him. More and better than this, God has promised that the same Sin-Offering shall seal a New Covenant between himself and mankind. The blessings of that New Covenant arrangement will then immediately begin. The great Redeemer will thenceforth be the great Mediator of that New Covenant. The whole world of mankind will be fully under his supervision and government for their blessing, their correction in righteousness, their uplifting out of sin and death conditions—back, back, back, to all that was lost in Eden. All of this was the original design of the Great Creator. All of this will be outworked through the Great Redeemer. All of this was secured or suretied by his death, finished at Calvary.—Heb. 7:22.

St. Peter, pointing down to that glorious time of the world's blessing, calls it "times of refreshing and times of restitution." He tells us that all the holy prophets described the blessings of those restitution times—the thousand years, the Millennium. (Acts 3: 19-21.) When once we get the eyes of our understanding opened, we find the Apostle's words thoroughly corroborated by the Divine records, which de-

scribe the wonderful blessings that are to come when the earth shall yield her increase. Then Paradise Lost shall be Paradise Regained. Then God will make his earthly footstool glorious. Then the blessing of the Lord shall make rich and he will add no sorrow therewith. Then streams shall break forth in the desert and the wilderness and solitary places shall be glad. But most glorious will be the change in humanity. The Lord promises to turn to the people a "pure message"—instead of the contradiction of creeds of heathenism and Churchianity. He promises that Satan shall be bound for that thousand years, that he may deceive the nations no more. He promises that then all the "blinded eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped."—Isaiah 35:5; II Cor. 4:4.

## Two Salvations—One Savior

Both of these salvations, according to the Bible, result from the death of Jesus our Redeemer, who died in obedience to the Divine will, "Died, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (I Peter 3:18.) The Scriptures clearly show not only the two salvations, but also two parts of the Redeemer's work, distinctly separating his work for the Church from his work for the world. In his death there was a Divine general provision for the sins of the whole world and a special provision for the sins of the Church. The two thoughts are frequently brought out in the Scriptures. One text distinctly declares, "He is the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins [the Church's sins], and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." His death constituted the satisfaction price. The Redeemer applied that merit for the Church's sins, "for us," long ago, eighteen centuries before we were born. Only when we became believers and entered into a Covenant of sacrifice did we obtain our share in the merit of that great sacrifice. The world has not yet received its share of that promised blessing, but the operation of the Divine Plan is sure and will bring it to them "in due time," as St. Paul declares.—I Tim. 2:6.

The drawing and calling of the Church has not been along the lines of human perfection, for all are sinners and none righteous or perfect. And many of those drawn of the Lord were by nature much more fallen and depraved than some who give no evidence of the work of grace in their hearts. The Lord's calling and drawing seem to be along the lines of justice, love of righteousness, faith, humility and obedience. These qualities will all belong to the perfect man. But all have lost them in varying degrees. Such as respond to the Lord's call now are accepted as being in the right heart-attitude which, if they had perfect bodies, would constitute them perfect men. In other words, they have qualities of heart which, if

brought to a knowledge of the Truth, would prove some of them to be pure in heart and such as the Lord would desire should have eternal life and all of his favors.

## Terms of Salvation Differ

Of course, these different salvations imply different terms or conditions. God's requirement of Adam, that he might continue to live forever and everlastingly enjoy Divine favor, his Eden Home, etc., was obedience to reasonable, just requirements. It was his violation of the Divine Law that brought upon him the sentence of death—"Dying thou shalt die"—with all that this has implied to him and his posterity of mental, moral and physical decline, weakness, death. The requirement of God for the world of mankind during the Millennial Age will similarly be—obedience to God's just, reasonable regulations, laws. Whoever then will render obedience may with proportionate rapidity go up on the highway of holiness toward perfection at its end. Whoever refuses obedience to the extent of his ability will fail to make progress and ultimately die the Second Death, from which there will be no redemption and no resurrection.

Such obedience as will be required of mankind in the great Mediator's Kingdom will include their co-operation in the resistance of their own fallen weaknesses. It will include the exercise of patience and kindness towards their fellow-creatures, fellow-sufferers. The Divine Law of love to God with all the heart, mind, soul, strength and for the neighbor as for one's self they must learn fully. As they will realize their own blemishes and strive to overcome them and ask, not the Father, but the Mediator, for forgiveness, they will be obliged to follow the Divine rule of exercising towards others similar mercy and forgiveness to that which they desire for themselves.

The conditions governing the salvation of the Church are wholly different from those which will appertain to the world. The Church is called out of the world under a Divine invitation to suffer with Christ in the present life and during this Gospel Age and then to reign with Christ during the Millennial Age, participating in his Mediatorial Kingdom for the blessing, uplifting, salvation of the world. It is not in vain, therefore, that our Lord and the Apostles, in setting forth the call of the Church, during this Age, specified particularly and frequently the necessity for all who would share in this salvation to participate with the Redeemer in his sacrificing, in "his death," and consequently participate in "his resurrection" and in his reign of glory. Hark to the words, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life;" "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my Throne."

## The Great White Throne; Day of Judgment Misunderstood

THE false view of the Day of Judgment began to be introduced in the Second Century and human fear and superstition continually made it worse and worse. The Bible, on the contrary, represented it as a period of glory and blessing. The Psalmist's declaration, calling upon humanity and all creation to rejoice because the Lord would come to judge the earth in righteousness and the poor with equity (Psalm 98:9), is worthy of note.

### A Blessed Judgment Day.

According to the Bible the world's Judgment Day will be the world's time of opportunity for coming to a knowledge of God and then being tried, tested, or judged, as to their willingness to serve and obey God and his righteous government. Those found heartily obedient will be granted everlasting life with every joy and blessing appropriate to man in his perfection. Those rebellious to the light of the righteousness of Jeheva will be destroyed in the Second Death without hope of any future whatever.

That will be the time when all the heathen will have their trial, after they shall all be brought by Messiah's Kingdom to a clear knowledge of the Truth. That will be the time when the great masses of Christendom will for the first time hear of the real character of God and his requirements of them. Although some of them may have been in churches occasionally and may have seen Bibles occasionally, nevertheless the eyes of their understanding were darkened. They saw not; they heard not; they understood not. The god of this world blinded them (II Corinthians iv, 4).

That Judgment Day, the thousand years of Messiah's Kingdom, will not only bind Satan, but chase away with the glorious beams of the Sun of Right-

eousness all the darkness, superstition and error of the world.

The Church will not be judged during that thousand-year Judgment Day because her trial, her judgment, takes place now—during this Gospel Age. The saintly few who will gain the great prize of joint-heirship with the Redeemer, Messiah, will be his Queen and sit with him in the Great White Throne of Judgment mentioned in the text; as the Apostle declares, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" (I Cor. vi, 2; Psa. 45:9.)

### Former Views Were Erroneous.

Our former and very unreasonable view was that man, "born in sin, shapen in iniquity," depraved in all of his appetites, would be condemned of God in the Judgment Day on account of this heredity and environment, for which he is not responsible. The theory was that the heathen also would be damned in that Judgment Day, because they did not know and did not accept "the only name given under heaven." The theory was also that the masses of civilized society would in that Judgment Day be damned because they would not, and because they did not, live perfectly, notwithstanding their heredity.

Now we see that the death sentence was upon Adam and all of his race, who were in his loins when he sinned. We see that they could not be put on trial a second time until released from the first sentence. We see that their release will be at the Second Coming of Messiah in the glory of his Kingdom, when he shall cause the knowledge of the Lord to fill the whole earth and open all the blinded eyes. Then, because of having satisfied the claims of Justice against the race, the Great Redeemer, as the Me-

diator of the New Covenant, will grant the world of mankind another judgment or trial—additional to the one given to Adam, in which they all failed and from the penalty of which failure Jesus redeemed them.

True, the measure of light and knowledge now enjoyed and wilfully sinned against will work a corresponding degradation of character; all downward steps will need to be retraced.

### "The Great White Throne."

Rev. 20:11.

Symbolically the whiteness of the throne indicates the purity of the justice and judgment which will be meted out by the Great Redeemer as the Messiah-King. The heavens and earth will flee away from the presence of that throne are not the literal, but the symbolical. The ecclesiastical heavens and the social earth of the present time will not stand in the presence of that August Tribunal. The people will not be judged nationally nor by parliaments and systems in society, but individually. The judgment or trial will not merely test those living at the time of the establishment of the Kingdom, but will include all the dead.

The books of the Bible will then all be opened—understood. All will then see that the Golden Rules laid down by inspiration through Moses and the Prophets, Jesus and his Apostles, are the very ones which God will require of men in the future and which Messiah will then enable the willing and obedient to comply with by assisting them up out of their sin and degradation. The judgment of that time, the test, will not be of faith, for knowledge will be universal and all the darkness and obscurity created by ignorance and superstition will have passed away. The test at that time will be of works, whereas the tests of the Church at the present time are of faith.

### Another Book of Life Opened.

Pastor Russell declared that the Lamb's Book of Life alone is open now and only those called to be members of the Bride class and who accept the call

are written therein. But in the great day of the world's trial or Judgment another book of life will be opened. A record will be made of all who, by obedience, show themselves worthy of everlasting life on the human plane, and, if faithful, they will eventually be accepted of the Father to life eternal. All the incorrigible, all those who after the most favorable opportunities, will not give their hearts to the Lord and be obedient to the laws of the Messianic Kingdom "shall be destroyed from amongst the people."—Acts 3:19-21.

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