

A scenic landscape featuring a field of vibrant pink flowers in the foreground, leading to rolling green hills and distant mountains. The sky is a mix of blue, purple, and orange, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The sun is visible on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene.

*Joy
Cometh
in the
Morning*

The Plan of God -- in Brief

An Abridged Version of the Larger Work "THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES"

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STUDY 1 -- The Bible Viewed in the Light of Reason

The Bible is the torch of civilization and liberty. Its influence for good in society has been recognized by the greatest statesmen, even though they for the most part have looked at it through the various glasses of conflicting creeds, which, while upholding the Bible, grievously misrepresent its teachings. The grand old book is unintentionally but woefully misrepresented by its friends, many of whom would lay down life on its behalf; and yet they do it more vital injury than its foes, by claiming its support to their long-revered misconceptions of its truth, received through the traditions of their fathers. Would that such would awake, re-examine their oracle, and put to confusion its enemies by disarming them of their weapons!

The Bible is the oldest book in existence; it has outlived the storms of thirty centuries. Men have endeavored by every means possible to banish it from the face of the earth: they have hidden it, buried it, made it a crime punishable with death to have it in possession, and the most bitter and relentless persecutions have been waged against those who had faith in it; but still the book lives.

The fact that it has survived so many centuries, notwithstanding such unparalleled efforts to banish and destroy it, is at least strong circumstantial evidence that the great Being whom it claims as its Author has also been its Preserver.

This book throughout constantly points and refers to one prominent character, Jesus of Nazareth, who it claims, was the Son of God. From beginning to end His name, and office, and work, are made prominent. That a man called Jesus of Nazareth lived, and was somewhat noted, about the time indicated by the writers of the Bible, is a fact of history outside the Bible, and it is variously and fully corroborated. That this Jesus was crucified because He had rendered Himself offensive to the Jews and their priesthood is a further fact established by history outside the evidence furnished by the New Testament writers. The writers of the New Testament (except Paul and Luke) were the personal acquaintances and disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, whose doctrines their writings set forth.

One plan, spirit, aim and purpose pervades the entire book. Its opening pages record the creation and fall of man; its closing pages tell of man's recovery from that fall; and its intervening pages show the successive steps of the plan of God for the accomplishment of this purpose. The harmony, yet contrast, of the first three and the last three chapters of the Bible is striking. The one describes the first creation, the other the renewed or restored creation, with sin and its penal-curse removed; the one shows Satan and evil entering into the world to deceive and destroy, the other shows his work undone, the destroyed ones restored, evil extinguished and Satan destroyed; the one shows the dominion lost by Adam, the other shows it restored and forever established by Christ, and God's will done in earth as in heaven; the one shows sin the producing cause of degradation, shame and death, the other shows the reward of righteousness to be glory, honor and life.

Though written by many pens, at various times, under different circumstances, the Bible is not merely a collection of moral precepts, wise maxims and words of comfort. It is more: it is a reasonable, philosophical and harmonious statement of the causes of present evil in the world, its only remedy and the final results as seen by divine wisdom, which saw the end of the plan from before its beginning, marking as well the pathway of God's people, and upholding and strengthening them with exceeding great and precious promises to be realized in due time.

The teaching of Genesis, that man was tried in a state of original perfection in one representative, that he failed, and that the present imperfection, sickness and death are the results, but that God has not forsaken him, and will ultimately recover him through a redeemer, born of a woman (Gen. 3:15), is kept up and elaborated all the way through. The necessity of the death of a redeemer as a sacrifice for sins, and of his righteousness as a covering for our sin, is pointed out in the clothing of skins for Adam and Eve; in the acceptance of Abel's offerings; in Isaac on the altar; in the death of the various sacrifices by which the patriarchs had access to God, and of those instituted under the law and perpetuated throughout the Jewish age. The prophets, though credited with understanding but slightly the significance of some of their utterances (1 Pet. 1:12), mention the laying of the sins upon a person instead of a dumb animal, and

in prophetic vision they see Him who is to redeem and to deliver the race led "as a lamb to the slaughter," that "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him," and that "by His stripes we are healed." They pictured Him as "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and declared that "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:3-6). They told where this deliverer would be born (Micah v. 2), and when He should die, assuring us that it would be "not for Himself." (Dan. 9:26). They mention various peculiarities concerning Him--that He would be "righteous," and free from "deceit," "violence," or any just cause of death (Isa. 53:8, 9, 11); that He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12); that He would be numbered among transgressors in His death (Isa. 53:12); that not a bone of Him should be broken (Psa. 34:20; John 19:36); and that though He should die and be buried, His flesh would not corrupt, neither would He remain in the grave.--Psa. 16:10, Acts 2:31.

The New Testament writers clearly and forcibly, yet simply, record the fulfillment of all these predictions in Jesus of Nazareth, and by logical reasonings show that such a ransom price as He gave was needful, as already predicted in the Law and the Prophets, before the sins of the world could be blotted out. (Isa. 1:18). They trace the entire plan in a most logical and forcible manner, appealing neither to the prejudices nor to the passions of their hearers, but to their enlightened reason alone, furnishing some of the most remarkably close and cogent reasoning to be found anywhere on any subject. See Rom. 5:17-19, and onward to the 12th chapter.

Moses, in the Law, pointed not alone to a sacrifice, but also to a blotting out of sin and a blessing of the people under this great deliverer, whose power and authority he declares shall vastly exceed his own, though it should be "like unto" it. Deut. 18:15, 19). The promised deliverer is to bless not only Israel, but through Israel "all the families of the earth." (Gen. 12:3, 1888:18; 22:18; 26:4).

These writers point out the harmony of this view with what is written in the Law and the Prophets; and the grandeur and breadth of the plan they present more than meets the most exalted conception of what it purports to be--"Good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people."

The thought of Messiah as a ruler of not only Israel, but also of the world, suggested in the books of Moses, is the theme of all the prophets. The thought of the kingdom was uppermost also in the teaching of the apostles; and Jesus taught that we should pray, "Your Kingdom come," and promised those a share in it who would first suffer for the truth, and prove themselves worthy.

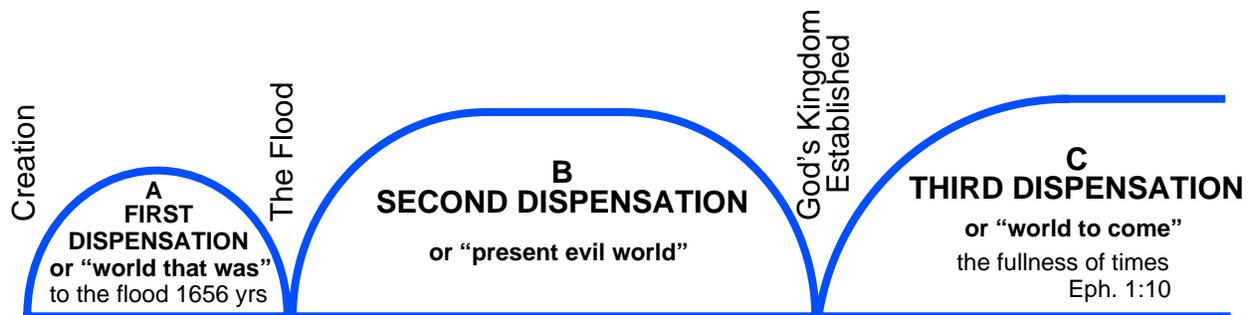
This hope of the coming glorious kingdom gave all the faithful ones courage to endure persecution and to suffer reproach, deprivation and loss, even unto death. And in the grand allegorical prophecy which closes the New Testament, the worth "Lamb that was slain" (Rev. 5:12), the worthy "overcomers" whom He will make kings and priests in His Kingdom, and the trials and obstacles which they must overcome to be worthy to share that kingdom, are all faithfully portrayed. Then are introduced symbolic representations of the blessings to accrue to the world under that Millennial reign, when Satan shall be bound and Adamic death and sorrow wiped out, and when all the nations of earth shall walk in the light of the heavenly kingdom--the new Jerusalem.

The Bible, from first to last, holds out a doctrine found nowhere else, and in opposition to the theories of all the heathen religions--that a future life for the dead will come through a RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

STUDY 2 -- The Development of the Divine Plan

Since God tells us that He has a definitely fixed purpose, and that all His purposes shall be accomplished, it behooves us, as His children, to inquire diligently what those plans are, that we may be found in harmony with them. Notice how emphatically Jehovah affirms the fixedness of His purpose: "Jehovah of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it be." "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" "I am God and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me...My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.... Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." (Isa. 14:24-27; 46:9-11). However haphazard or mysterious God's dealings with men may appear, those who believe this testimony of His Word must acknowledge that His original and unalterable plan has been, and still is, progressing systematically to completion.

Therefore, as interested sons of God, and heirs of a promised inheritance, we apply to our Father's Word, that we may understand His purposes from the plans and specifications therein given. There we learn that the plan of God, with reference to man, spans three great periods of time, beginning with man's creation and reaching into the illimitable future. Peter and Paul designate these periods "three worlds."



These three great epochs represent three distinct manifestations of Divine Providence. The first, from creation to the flood, was under the ministration of angels, and is called by Peter "THE WORLD THAT WAS." 2 Pet. 3:6.

The second great epoch, from the flood to the establishment of the kingdom of God, is under the limited control of Satan, "the prince of this world," and is therefore called "THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD." Gal. 1:4; 2 Pet. 3:7.

The third is to be a "world without end" (Isa. 45:17) under divine administration, the kingdom of God, and is called "THE WORLD TO COME--wherein dwells righteousness."--Heb. 2:5; 2 Pet. 3:13.

The first of these periods, or "worlds" under the ministration of angels, was a failure; the second, under the rule of Satan, the usurper, has been indeed an "evil world"; but the third will be an era of righteousness and of blessing to all the families of the earth.

The last two of these "worlds" are most particularly mentioned, and the statements relative to them are in strong contrast. The present, or second period, is called "the present evil world," not because there is nothing good in it, but because in it evil is permitted to predominate. "Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." (Mal. 3:15). The third world or epoch is mentioned as "THE WORLD TO COME--wherein dwells righteousness," not because there will be no evil in it, but because evil will not predominate. The blotting out of evil will be gradual, requiring all of the first thousand years. Evil will not rule then; it will not prosper; it will no longer be the wicked that will flourish; but "the righteous shall flourish" (Psa. 72:7), the "obedient shall eat the good of the land" Isa. 1:19), and "the evil doer shall be cut off."--Psa. 37:9.

So we see, the next dispensation is to be so dissimilar as to be the very reverse of the present one in almost every particular. Our Lord's words show why there is to be a difference between the present and the future dispensations. It is because He will be the Prince or Ruler of the world to come, that in it

righteousness and truth will prosper; while, because Satan is the prince (ruler) of the present evil world, evil prospers and the wicked flourish. It is because, as Jesus said, the prince of this world "hath nothing in Me"--and consequently no interest in His followers except to oppose, tempt, annoy and buffet them (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 12:7)--that in this present evil world or epoch, whosoever will live godly shall suffer persecution, while the wicked flourish like a green bay tree.--2 Tim 3:12; Psa. 37:35.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," and until the era or "world to come" does come, Christ's kingdom will not control the earth. And for this we are taught to hope and pray. "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth." Satan is the "ruler of the darkness of this world," and therefore "darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people." He now rules and works in the hearts of the children of disobedience.--Eph. 2:2; 6:12.

There must be some very important part of the great Architect's plan for man's salvation not yet fully developed--else the new Prince and the new dispensation would have been long ago introduced. Why it was postponed for an appointed time, and also the manner of the change from the present dominion of evil under Satan to that of righteousness under Christ, are points of interest which will be more fully shown hereafter. Suffice it now to say, that the kingdoms of this world, now subject to Satan, are at the proper time to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. (Rev. 11:15). The context shows that the transfer will be accomplished by a general time of trouble. In reference to it Jesus said, "No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house." (Mark 3:22-27). We are taught that Satan must first be bound, restrained and deposed, before Christ's reign of righteousness and peace can be established. This binding of Satan is accordingly shown to be the first work of the new dispensation.--Rev. 20:2.

It should be remembered that this earth is the basis of all these "worlds" and dispensations, and that though ages pass and dispensations change, still the earth continues--"The earth abides forever." (Eccl. 1:4). Carrying out the same figure, Peter calls each of these periods a separate heavens and earth. Here the word heavens symbolizes the higher or spiritual controlling powers, and earth symbolizes human government and social arrangements. So the first heavens and earth, or the order and arrangement of things then existing, having served their purpose, ended at the flood, But the physical heavens (sky and atmosphere), and the physical earth, did not pass away: they remained. So likewise the present world (heavens and earth) will pass away with a great noise, fire and melting--confusion, trouble and dissolution. The strong man (Satan), being bound, will struggle to regain his power. The present order or arrangement of government and society, not that of the physical sky and earth, will pass away. The present heavens (powers of spiritual control) must give place to the "new heavens"--Christ's spiritual control. The present earth (human society as now organized under Satan's control) must (symbolically) melt and be dissolved, in the beginning of the "Day of the Lord," which "shall burn as an oven" (Mal. 4:1). It will be succeeded by "a new earth," i.e., society reorganized in harmony with earth's new Prince--Christ. Righteousness, peace and love will rule among men when present arrangements have given place to the new and better kingdom, the basis of which will be the strictest justice.

Paul was given a glimpse of the next dispensation, or, as he calls it, "the world to come." He says he was "caught away" (physically or mentally, or both, he could not tell, things were so real to his view) down the stream of time to the new condition of things, the "new heaven," hence the "third heaven." He saw things as they will be under the spiritual control of Christ, things which he might not disclose. (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Doubtless these were the same things which John afterward saw, and was permitted to express to the Church in symbols, which may only be understood as they become due. John, in the revelation given to him by our Lord on the Isle of Patmos, was in vision carried down through this Christian Age and its changing scenes of church and state, to the end of the present evil world, or epoch, and there in prophetic visions he saw Satan bound, Christ reigning, and the new heaven and the new earth established; for the former heaven and earth were passed away.--Rev. 21:1.

A statement of the Word which belongs to one epoch, or dispensation, should not be applied to another, as things stated of one age are not always true of another. For instance, it would be an untruth to say of the present time that the knowledge of the Lord fills the whole earth, or that there is no need to say to your neighbor, Know the Lord. (Isa. 11:9; 31:34). This is not true in this age, and it cannot be true until the

Lord, having come again, has established His kingdom; for throughout this age there have been many seducing deceptions, and we are told that even in the very end of the age--"In the last days...evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:1, 13). It will be as the result of Messiah's reign during the Millennial age that knowledge and righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

A similar mistake, and a very common one, is to suppose that God's kingdom is now established and ruling over the earth, and that His will is now done among the nations. This is manifestly far from the truth, for the kingdoms of this world are supported and enriched through oppression, injustice and deceit, to as great an extent as the increasing intelligence of the people will permit. Satan, the present "prince of this world," must yet be displaced, and these kingdoms, now under his control, must become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Anointed, when He shall take unto Himself His great power, and reign.

By the light now due to the household of faith we discern that system and order which mark the stately steppings of our God through the ages past.

STUDY 3 -- "The Mystery Hid"-- Col. 1:26

While mankind was under the discipline of evil, and unable to understand its necessity, God repeatedly expressed His purpose to restore and bless them through a coming deliverer. But who that deliverer should be was a mystery for four thousand years, and it only began to be clearly revealed after the resurrection of Christ, in the beginning of the Christian or Gospel age.

Looking back to the time when life and Edenic happiness were forfeited by our first parents, we see them under the just penalty of sin filled with sorrow, and without a ray of hope, except that drawn from the obscure statement that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Though in the light of subsequent developments this is full of significance to us, to them it was but a faint and glimmering light. Nearly two thousand years rolled by with no evidence of a fulfillment.

About two thousand years after, God called Abraham, and promised that his seed should bless all the families of the earth. This looked as though God still held to His previously expressed purpose, and was now about to fulfill it. Time sped on; the promised land of Canaan was not yet in his possession; they had yet no offspring, and Abraham and Sarah were growing old. Abraham reasoned that he must help God to fulfill His promise; so Ishmael was born. But his assistance was not needed, for in due time Isaac, the child of hope and promise, was born. Then it seemed that the promised ruler and blessing of nations had come. But no: years rolled by, and seemingly God's promise had failed; for Isaac died, and his heir, Jacob, also. But the faith of a few still held firmly to the promise, and was sustained by God; for "the covenant which He made with Abraham" was assured by God's "oath unto Isaac, and confirmed to Jacob...and to Israel for an everlasting covenant."--1 Chron. 16:16, 17.

When at the time of Jacob's death his descendants were first called the TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL, and recognized of God as a "chosen nation" (Gen. 49:28; Deut. 26:5), the expectation that his nation as a whole, as the promised seed of Abraham, should possess Canaan, and rule and bless the world, seemed to be on the eve of realization; for already, under the favor of Egypt, they were becoming a strong nation. But hope was almost blasted and the promise almost forgotten when the Egyptians, having gained control of them, held them as slaves for a long period.

Truly God's promises were shrouded in mystery, and His ways seemed past finding out. However, in due time came Moses, a great deliverer, by whose hand God led them out of bondage, working mighty miracles on their behalf. Before entering Canaan this great deliverer died; but as the Lord's mouthpiece he declared, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me." (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22). This gave a further insight into God's plan, showing that not only would their nation, as a whole, be associated in some way with the future work of ruling and blessing, but that one to be selected from among them would lead to victory and to the fulfillment of the promise. Then Joshua, whose name signifies deliverer, or savior, became their leader, and under him they won great victories,

and actually entered the land promised in the covenant. Surely then it seemed that the true leader had come, and that the promise was about to have complete fulfillment.

But Joshua died, and they made no headway as a nation until David, and then Solomon, were given them as kings. There they reached the very zenith of their glory; but soon, instead of seeing the promise accomplished, they were shorn of their power, and became tributary to other nations. Some held fast the promise of God, however, and still looked for the great deliverer of whom Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon were only types.

About the time when Jesus was born, all men were in expectation of the Messiah, the coming king of Israel and, through Israel, of the world. But Israel's hope of the glory and honor of their coming king, inspired as it was by the types and prophecies of His greatness and power, caused them to overlook another set of types and prophecies, which pointed to a work of suffering and death, as a ransom for sinners, necessary before the blessing could come. This was prefigured in the Passover before they were delivered from Egypt, in the slaying of the animals at the giving of the law covenant (Heb. 9:11-20; 10:8-18), and in the Atonement sacrifices performed year by year continually by the priesthood. They overlooked, too, the statement of the prophets, "who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Peter 1:2). Hence, when Jesus came as a sacrifice, they did not recognize Him: they knew not the time of their visitation. (Luke 19:44). Even His immediate followers were sorely perplexed when Jesus died; and sadly they said, "We trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." (Luke 24:21). Apparently, their confidence in Him had been misplaced. They failed to see that the death of their leader was a ratification of the New Covenant under which the blessings were to come, a partial fulfillment of the covenant of promise. However, when they found that He had risen from the tomb, their withered hopes again began to revive (1 Peter 1:3), and when He was about to leave them, they asked concerning their long-cherished and oft-deferred hope, saying "Lord, wilt You at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" That their hopes were in the main correct, though they might not know the time when they would be fulfilled, is evident from our Lord's reply: "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." Acts 1:6, 7.

What turn has God's plan now taken? must have been the query of His disciples when Jesus had ascended; for we must remember that our Lord's teachings concerning the Kingdom were principally in parables and dark sayings. He had said to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now; howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 16:12; 14:26). So they could not understand before the Pentecostal blessing came.

Even then, it was some time before they got a clear, full understanding of the work being done, and its relation to the original covenant. (Acts 11:9; Gal. 2:2, 12, 14). However, it would seem that even before they fully and clearly understood, they were used as the mouthpieces of God, and their inspired words were probably clearer and deeper expressions of truth than they themselves fully comprehended. For instance, read James' discourse in which he says: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name [a bride]. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, 'After this [after this people from the Gentiles has been taken out] I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David [the earthly dominion] which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.'"--Acts 15:14-16.

James began to read in God's providence, in the sending of the Gospel through Peter to the first Gentile convert and through Paul to Gentiles in general, that during this age believing Jews and Gentiles were to be alike favored. He then looked up the prophecies and found it so written; and that after the work of this Gospel age is completed, then the promises to fleshly Israel will be fulfilled. Gradually the great mystery, so long hidden, began to be understood by a few--the saints, the special "friends" of God.

Paul declares (Col. 1:27) that this mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, now made manifest to His saints, is

“Christ In You, The Hope Of Glory.”

This is the great mystery of God which has been hidden from all previous ages, and is still hidden from all except a special class--the saints, or consecrated believers. But what is meant by “Christ in you”? We have learned that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38), and so we recognize Him to be the Christ--the anointed--for the word Christ signifies anointed. And the Apostle John says that the anointing which we (consecrated believers) have received abides in us. (1 John 2:27). So saints of this Gospel age are an anointed company--anointed to be kings and priests unto God (2 Cor. 1:21, 1 Pet. 2:9); and together with Jesus, their Chief and Lord, they constitute Jehovah's Anointed--the Christ.

In harmony with this teaching of John, that we also are anointed, Paul assures us that this mystery which has been kept secret in ages past, but which is now made known to the saints, is that the Christ (the Anointed) is “not one member, but many,” just as the human body is one, and has many members; but as all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Anointed--the Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12-28). Jesus is anointed to be the Head or Lord over the Church, which is His body (or His bride, as expressed in another figure--Eph. 5:25-30), and unitedly they constitute the promised “Seed”--the Great Deliverer: “If you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”--Gal. 3:29.

The Apostle carefully guards the Church against any presumptive claims, saying of Jesus that “God hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body,” “that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18). Yet, under the figure of the human body, he beautifully and forcibly shows our intimate relationship. This same oneness Jesus also taught, saying, “I am the vine, you are the branches.”--John 15:5.

This is indeed a wonderful message, and, as we come to the Word of God to inquire concerning our great high calling, we find the prophets all eloquent in proclaiming the grace [favor or blessing] that is come unto us (1 Peter 1:10); while types and parables, and hitherto dark sayings, now become luminous, shedding their light on the “narrow way” in which the anointed [Christ] company is called to run for the prize now disclosed to view. This was truly a mystery never before thought of--that God intends to raise up not only a deliverer, but a deliverer composed of many members. This is the “high calling” to which the consecrated believers of the Gospel age are privileged to attain. Jesus did not attempt to unfold it to the disciples while natural men, but waited until at Pentecost they were anointed--begotten to the new nature. From Paul's explanation we know that none but “new creatures” can now appreciate or understand this high calling. He says: “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom [plan] which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes [chief ones] of this world knew;...as it is written, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him;’ but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.”--1 Cor. 2:6-14.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul opens up the entire mystery, and shows how the Abrahamic covenant is to be fulfilled. He shows that the Law given to Israel did not interfere with the original covenant (Gal. 3:15-18), and that the seed of Abraham which is to bless all nations is Christ. (Verse 16). Then, carrying out the idea already alluded to, that the Christ includes all anointed of the Spirit, he says: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ; ...and if you are Christ's then YOU are[together with Jesus] Abraham's seed, and heirs, according to the promise made to Abraham. (Verses 27, 29). Following up the same line of reasoning, he shows (Gal. 4) that Abraham was a type of Jehovah, Sarah a type of the covenant or promise, and Isaac a type of Christ (head and body); and then adds, “We brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.” (Verse 28). So the plan of God was hidden in types until the Gospel age began the development of the Christ.

There has existed a necessity for keeping this mystery hidden, else it would not have been so kept. It was necessary, because to have revealed the plan in full to mankind would have been to frustrate it. Had men known, they would not have crucified either the Lord of glory or the Church which is His body. (1 Cor. 2:8). Not only would the death of Christ, as the price of man's redemption, have been interfered with, had not the plan been kept a mystery from the world, but the trial of the faith of the Church, as sharers in the

sufferings of Christ, would thereby have been prevented also; for "The world knows us not [as His joint-heirs] because [for the same reason that] it knew Him not." 1 John 3:1.

The greatness of the mystery, so long kept secret, and hidden in promises, types and figures, and the wonderful grace bestowed on those called to fellowship in this mystery (Eph. 3:9), suggest to us that the work to follow its completion, for which for six thousand years Jehovah has kept mankind in expectation and hope, must be an immense work, a grand work, worthy of such great preparations. What may we not expect in blessings upon the world, when the veil of mystery is withdrawn and the showers of blessing descend! It is this for which the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now, waiting for the completion of this mystery--for the manifestation of the Sons of God, the promised "Seed," in whom they shall all be blessed. Rom. 8:19, 21, 22.

STUDY 4 -- Our Lord's Return

"And He shall send Jesus Christ, which [who] before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must retain until the times of restoration of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."--Acts 3:20, 21.

That 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. True, Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20), and by His Spirit and by His Word He has been with the Church continually, guiding, directing, comforting and sustaining His saints, and cheering them in the midst of all their afflictions. But though the Church has been blessedly conscious of the Lord's knowledge of all her ways and of His constant care and love, yet she longs for His promised personal return; for, when He said, "If I go, I will come again" (John 14:3), He certainly referred to a second personal coming.

The specific work of the first advent was to redeem 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, so 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 influences 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 families of the earth.

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 eighteen centuries.

This period between the first and second advents, between the ransom of 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 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 the one. For God has evidently designed the permission of evil for six thousand years, as well as that the cleansing and restoration of all shall be accomplished during the seventh thousand.

So 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 for some of 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 paid longer beforehand than men would have expected.

The Apostle informs us that Jesus has been absent from earth--in the heaven--during all the intervening time from His ascension to the beginning of the times of restoration, or the Millennial age--"whom the heaven must retain until the times of restoration of all things," etc. (Acts 3:21). Since the Scriptures teach that the object of our Lord's second advent is the restoration of all things, and that at the time of His appearing the nations are so far from being converted as to be angry (Rev 11:18) and in opposition, it must be admitted either that the Church will fail to accomplish her mission, and that the plan of God will be this far frustrated, or else, as we claim and have shown, that the conversion of the world in the present age was not expected of the Church, but that her mission has been to preach the Gospel in all the world for a witness, and to prepare herself under divine direction for her great future work. God has not yet by any means exhausted His power for the world's conversion. Nay, more: He has not yet even attempted the world's conversion.

Some 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 purchased 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 purchased 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."

"God is love," and "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes 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 lights every man that comes 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.

We read that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death "for every man." (Heb 2:9). But if He tasted death for the one hundred and forty-three 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 gave 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?

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 everything. He could have testified it to these in their past life-time; 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 paid 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; and all the above, and many more Scriptures, would be meaningless, or worse, if death ends all hope for the ignorant masses of the world.

Since God does not propose 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 all in Christ shall 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.

As death came by the first Adam, so life comes by Christ, the second Adam. Everything that mankind lost through being in the first Adam is to be restored to those who believe in the second Adam. When awakened, with the advantage of experience with evil, which Adam lacked, those who thankfully accept the redemption as God's gift may continue to live everlastingly on the original condition of obedience. Perfect obedience will be required, and perfect ability to obey will be given, under the righteous reign of the Prince of Peace. Here is the salvation offered to the world.

Though many of the prophecies and promises of future blessing 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 atonements 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.

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 restoration of the Sodomites clearly taught, we may feel satisfied of the truth of this glorious doctrine of Restoration 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 were 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 you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."--Matt. 11:23.

So our Lord teaches that the Sodomites did not have a full opportunity; and He guarantees them such opportunity; and He guarantees them such opportunity when He adds (Verse 24), "But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for you." The character of the Day of Judgment and its work will be shown in succeeding pages. 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.

We need not wonder that Jews, Sodomites, Samaritans, and all mankind, will be ashamed and confounded when in His own "due time" God shows forth the riches of His favor. Yea, many of those who are now God's children will be confounded and amazed when they see how God so loved THE WORLD and how much His thoughts and plans were above their own.

Christian people generally believe that God's blessings are all and only for the selected Church, but now we begin to see that God's plan is wider than we had supposed, and that though He has given the

Church “exceeding great and precious promises, “ He has also made bountiful provision for the world which He so loved as to redeem. The Jews made a very similar mistake in supposing that all the promises of God were to and for them alone; but when the “due time” came and the Gentiles were favored, the remnant of Israel, whose hearts were large enough to rejoice in this wider evidence of God’s grace, shared that increased favor, while the rest were blinded by prejudice and human tradition. Let those of the Church who now see the dawning light of the Millennial age, with its gracious advantages for all the world, take heed lest they be found in opposition to the advancing light, and so for a time be blinded to its glory and blessings.

Seeing, then, that so many of the great and glorious features of God’s plan for human salvation from sin and death lie in the future, and that the second advent of our Lord Jesus is the designed first step in the accomplishment of those long promised and long expected blessings, shall we not even more earnestly long for the time of His second advent than the less informed Jew looked and longed for His first advent? Seeing that the time of evil, injustice, and death is to be brought to an end by the dominion of power which He will then exercise, and that righteousness, truth and peace are to be universal, who should not rejoice to see His day? And who that is now suffering with Christ, inspired by the precious promise that “if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him,” will not lift up his head and rejoice at any evidence of the approach of the Master, knowing thereby that our deliverance and our glorification with Him draw nigh? Surely all in sympathy with His mission of blessing and His spirit of love will hail every evidence of His coming as the approach of the “great joy which shall be to all people.”

STUDY 5 -- The Permission of Evil

Evil is that which produces unhappiness; anything which either directly or remotely causes suffering of any kind.--Webster. This subject, therefore, not only inquires regarding human ailments, sorrows, pains, weaknesses and death, but goes back of all these to consider their primary cause--sin--and its remedy. Since sin is the cause of evil, its removal is the only method of permanently curing the malady.

No difficulty, perhaps, more frequently presents itself to the inquiring mind than the questions, Why did God permit the present reign of evil? Why did He permit Satan to present the temptation to our first parents, after having created them perfect and upright? Or why did He allow the forbidden tree to have a place among the good? Despite all attempts to turn it aside, the question will obtrude itself--Could not God have prevented all possibility of man’s fall?

The difficulty undoubtedly arises from a failure to comprehend the plan of God. God could have prevented the entrance of sin, but the fact He did not should be sufficient proof to us that its present permission is designed ultimately to work out some greater good. God’s plans, seen in their completeness, will prove the wisdom of the course pursued. Some inquire, Could not God, with whom all things are possible, have interfered in season to prevent the full accomplishment of Satan’s design? Doubtless He could; but such interference would have prevented the accomplishment of His own purposes. His purpose was to make manifest the perfection, majesty and righteous authority of His law, and to prove both to men and to angels the evil consequences resulting from its violation. Besides, in their very nature, some things are impossible even with God, as the Scriptures state. It is “impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18). “He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13). He cannot do wrong, and therefore He could not choose any but the wisest and best plan for introducing His creatures into life, even though our short-sighted vision might for a time fail to discern the hidden springs of infinite wisdom.

The Scriptures declare that all things were created for the Lord’s pleasure (Rev. 4:11)--without doubt, for the pleasure of dispensing His blessings, and of exercising the attributes of His glorious being. And though, in the working out of his benevolent designs, He permits evil and evil doers for a time to play an active part, yet it is not for evil’s sake, not because He is in league with sin; for He declares that He is “not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.” (Psa. 5:4). Though opposed evil in every sense, God permits (i.e., does not hinder) it for a time, because His wisdom sees a way in which it may be made a lasting and valuable lesson to His creatures.

It is a self-evident truth that for every right principle there is a corresponding wrong principle; as, for instance, truth and falsity, love and hatred, justice and injustice. We distinguish these opposite principles as right and wrong, by their effects when put in action. That principle the result of which, when active, is beneficial and productive of ultimate order, harmony and happiness, we call a right principle; and the opposite, which is productive of discord, unhappiness and destruction, we call a wrong principle. The results of these principles in action we call good and evil; and the intelligent being, capable of discerning the right principle from the wrong, and voluntarily governed by the one or the other, we call virtuous or sinful.

This faculty of discerning between right and wrong principles is called the moral sense, or conscience. It is by this moral sense which God has given to man that we are able to judge of God and to recognize that He is good. It is to this moral sense that God always appeals to prove His righteousness or justice; and by the same moral sense Adam could discern sin, or unrighteousness, to be evil, even before he knew all its consequences. The lower orders of God's creatures are not endowed with this moral sense. A dog has some intelligence, but not to this degree, though he may learn that certain actions bring the approval and reward of his master, and certain others his disapproval. He might steal or take life, but would not be termed a sinner; or he might protect property and life, but would not be called virtuous--because he is ignorant of the moral quality of his actions.

God could have made mankind devoid of ability to discern between right and wrong, or able only to discern between right and wrong, or able only to discern and to do right; but to have made him so would have made him so would have been to make merely a living machine, and certainly not a mental image of His Creator. Or He might have made man perfect and a free agent, as He did, and have guarded him from Satan's temptation. In that case, man's experience being limited to good, he would have been continually liable to suggestions of evil from without, or to ambitions from within, which would have made the everlasting future uncertain, and an outbreak of disobedience and disorder might always have been a possibility besides which, good would never have been so highly appreciated except by its contrast with evil.

God first made His creatures acquainted with good, surrounding them with it in Eden; and afterward, as a penalty for disobedience, He gave them a severe knowledge of evil. Expelled from Eden and deprived of fellowship with Himself, God let them experience sickness, pain and death, that they might forever know evil and the inexpediency and exceeding sinfulness of sin.

By a comparison of results they came to an appreciation and proper estimate of both; "And the Lord said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." (Gen. 3:22). In this their posterity share, except that they first obtain their knowledge of evil, and cannot fully realize what good is until they experience it in the Millennium, as a result of their redemption by Him who will then be their Judge and King.

The moral sense, or judgment of right and wrong, and the liberty to use it, which Adam possessed, were important features of his likeness to God. The law of right and wrong was written in his natural constitution. It was part of his nature, just as it is a part of the divine nature. But let us not forget that this image or likeness of God, this originally law-inscribed nature of man, has lost much of its clear outline nature of man, has lost much of its clear outline through the erasing, degrading influence of sin; hence it is not now what it was in the first man. Ability to love implies ability to hate; hence we may reason that the Creator could not make man in His own likeness, with power to love and to do right, without the corresponding ability to hate and to do wrong. This liberty of choice, termed free moral agency, or free will, is a part of man's original endowment; and this, together with the full measure of his mental and moral faculties, constituted him an image of his Creator. To-day, after six thousand years of degradation, so much of the original likeness has been erased by sin that we are not free, being bound, to a greater or less extent, by sin and its entailments, so that sin is now more easy and therefore more agreeable to the fallen race than is righteousness.

That God could have given Adam such a vivid impression of the many evil results of sin as would have deterred him from it, we need not question, but we believe that God foresaw that an actual experience of the evil would be the surest and most lasting lesson to serve man eternally; and for that reason God did

not prevent but permitted man to take his choice, and to feel the consequences of evil. Had opportunity to sin never been permitted, man could not have resisted it, consequently there would have been neither virtue nor merit in his right-doing. God seeks such to worship Him as worship in spirit and in truth. He desires intelligent and willing obedience rather than ignorant mechanical service. He already had in operation inanimate mechanical agencies accomplishing His will, but His design was to make a nobler thing, an intelligent creature in His own likeness, a lord for earth, whose loyalty and righteousness would be based upon an appreciation of right and wrong, of good and evil.

The principles of right and wrong, as principles, have always existed, and must always exist; and all perfect, intelligent creatures in God's likeness must be free to choose either, though the right principle only will forever continue to be active. The Scriptures inform us that when the activity of the evil principle has been permitted long enough to accomplish God's purpose, it will forever cease to be active, and that all who continue to submit to its control shall forever cease to exist. (1 Cor. 15:25, 26; Heb 2:14). Right-doing and right-doers, only, shall continue forever.

God not only foresaw that, having given man freedom of choice, he would, through lack of full appreciation of sin and its results, accept it, but He also saw that, becoming acquainted with it, he would still choose it, because that acquaintance would so impair his moral nature that evil would gradually become more agreeable and more desirable to him than good. Still, God designed to permit evil, because, having the remedy provided for man's release from its consequences, He saw that the result would be to lead him, through experience, to a full appreciation of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" and of the matchless brilliancy of virtue in contrast with it--teaching him the more to love and honor his Creator, who is the source and fountain of all goodness, and forever to shun that which brought so much woe and misery. So the final result will be greater love for God, and greater hatred of all that is opposed to His will, and consequently the firm establishment in everlasting righteousness of all such as shall profit by the lessons God is not teaching through the permission of sin and correlative evils. However, a wide distinction should be observed between the indisputable fact that God has permitted sin, and the serious error of some which charges God with being the author and instigator of sin. The latter view is both blasphemous and contradictory to the facts presented in the Scriptures. Those who fall into this error generally do so in an attempt to find another plan of salvation than that which God has provided through the sacrifice of Christ as our ransom-price. If they succeed in convincing themselves and others that God is responsible for all sin and wickedness and crime, and that man as an innocent tool in His hands was forced into sin, then they have cleared the way for the theory that not a sacrifice for our sins, nor mercy in any form, was needed, but simply and only JUSTICE. So, too, they lay a foundation for another part of their false theory, viz., universalism, claiming that as God caused all the sin and wickedness and crime in all, He will also cause the deliverance of all mankind from sin and death. And reasoning that God willed and caused the sin, and that none could resist Him, so they claim that when He shall will righteousness all will likewise be powerless to resist Him. But in all such reasoning, man's noblest quality, liberty of will or choice, the most striking feature of his likeness to his Creator, is entirely set aside; and man is theoretically degraded to a mere machine which acts only as it is acted upon. If this were the case, man, instead of being the lord of earth, would be inferior even to insects; for they undoubtedly have a will or power of choice. Even the little ant has been given a power of will which man, though by his greater power he may oppose and thwart, cannot destroy.

Many have imbibed the erroneous idea that God placed our race on trial for life with the alternative of eternal torture, whereas nothing of the kind is even hinted at in the penalty. The favor or blessing of God to His obedient children is life--continuous life--free from pain, sickness and every other element of decay and death. Adam was given this blessing in the full measure, but was warned that he would be deprived of this "gift" if he failed to render obedience to God—"In the day that you eat thereof, dying, you shall die." He knew nothing of a life in torment, as the penalty of sin. Life everlasting is nowhere promised to any but the obedient. Life is God's gift, and death, the opposite of life, is the penalty He prescribes.

God assures us that as condemnation passed upon all in Adam, so He has arranged for a new head, father or life-giver for the race, into whom all may be transferred by faith; and that as all in Adam shared the curse of death, so all in Christ will share the blessing of life, being justified by faith in His blood. (Rom. 5:12, 18, 19). So seen, the death of Jesus, the undefiled, the sinless one, was a complete settlement

toward God of the sin of Adam. As one man had sinned, and all in him had shared his curse, his penalty, so Jesus, having paid the penalty of that one sinner, bought not only Adam, but all of his posterity--all men--who by heredity shared his weaknesses and sins and the penalty of these--death. Our Lord, "the man Christ Jesus," Himself unblemished, approved, and with a perfect seed or race in him, unborn, likewise untainted with sin, gave His all of human life and title as the full ransom-price for Adam and the race or seed in him when sentenced.

And so it is written: "As all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive." Corrected translation, 1 Cor. 15:22.

Those who can appreciate this feature of God's plan, which, by condemning all in one representative, opened the way for the ransom and restoration of all by one Redeemer, will find in it the solution of many perplexities. They will see that the condemnation of all in one was the reverse of an injury: it was a great favor to all when taken in connection with God's plan for providing justification for all through another one's sacrifice. Evil will be forever extinguished when God's purpose in permitting it shall have been accomplished, and when the benefits of the ransom are made co-extensive with the penalty of sin. It is impossible, however, to appreciate rightly this feature of the plan of God without a full recognition of the sinfulness of sin, the nature of its penalty--death, the importance and value of the ransom which our Lord Jesus gave, and the positive and complete restoration of the individual to favorable conditions, conditions under which he will have full and ample trial, before being adjudged worthy of the reward (lasting life), or of the penalty (lasting death).

In view of the great plan of redemption, and the consequent "restoration of all things," through Christ, we can see that blessings result through permission of evil which, probably, could not otherwise have been so fully realized.

It seems clear that substantially the same law of God which is now over mankind, obedience to which has the reward of life, and disobedience the reward of death, must ultimately govern all of God's intelligent creatures; and that law, as our Lord defined it, is briefly comprehended in the one word, Love. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27). Ultimately, when the purposes of God shall have been accomplished, the glory of the divine character will be manifest to all intelligent creatures, and the temporary permission of evil will be seen by all to have been a wise feature in the divine policy. Now, this can be seen only by the eye of faith looking onward through God's Word at the things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began--the restoration of all things.

STUDY 6 -- The Day of Judgment

"God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained"--"Jesus Christ, the righteous." "For the Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."--Acts 17:31; 1 John 2:1; John 5:22.

A very vague and indefinite idea prevails in regard to the day of judgment.

The term judgment signifies more than simply the rendering of a verdict. It includes the idea of a trial, as well as a decision based upon that trial. And this is true not only of the English word judgment, but also of the Greek word which it translates.

The term day, both in the Scriptures and in common usage, though most frequently used to represent a period of twelve or twenty-four hours, really signifies any definite or special period of time. For instance, we speak of Noah's day, Luther's day.

Then again we read of the "day of Christ," the "day of judgment," and "His day"--terms applicable to the Millennial age, in which Messiah will reign over, rule and judge the world in righteousness, granting trial as well as rendering sentence. And of that period it is written: He shall judge the world in righteousness, and in His day shall show who is that blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (Acts 17:31; 1 Tim. 6:15). Why any should suppose this day of judgment to be of but twelve or twenty-four hours, while recognizing the wider meaning of the word day in other similar cases, is beyond

comprehension, except upon the supposition that they have been influenced by tradition, without proper evidence or investigation.

Those who will carefully consult a complete concordance of the Bible with reference to the Day of Judgment, and note the kind and amount of work to be accomplished within that period, will soon see the absurdity of the common view, and the necessity for giving to the term day its wider significance.

The first great judgment [trial and sentence] was at the beginning, in Eden, when the whole human race, as represented in its head, Adam, stood on trial before God. The result of that trial was the verdict-- Guilty, disobedient, unworthy of life; and the penalty inflicted was death—"Dying you shall die." (Gen. 2:17, margin). And so "In Adam all die." That trial time in Eden was the world's first judgment day, and the decision of the Judge (Jehovah) has ever since been enforced.

But God has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world individually. We are informed that when God gives the world this individual trial it will be under Christ as Judge, whom Jehovah will honor because of His obedience even unto death for our redemption. God has highly exalted Him, even to the divine nature, that He may be a Prince and a Savior (Acts 5:31), that He may be able to recover from death and grant judgment to all whom He purchased with His own precious blood. God has committed all judgment unto the Son, and has given Him all power in heaven and in earth.--John 5:22.

It is, then, the highly exalted, glorified Christ, who so loved the world as to give His life as its ransom-price, who is to be the Judge of the world in its promised future trial. And it is Jehovah Himself who has appointed Him to that office, for that very purpose. Since such are the plain declarations of the Scriptures, there is nothing to dread, but on the contrary there is great cause for rejoicing on the part of all, in looking forward to the Judgment Day. The character of the Judge is a sufficient guarantee that the judgment will be just and merciful, and with due consideration for the infirmities of all, until the willing and obedient are brought back to the original perfection lost in Eden.

This coming judgment will be on exactly the same principles as the first. The same law of obedience will be presented, with the same reward of life, and the same penalty of death. And as the first trial had a beginning, progressed, and culminated with a sentence, so also will the second; and the sentence will be life to the righteous, and death to the unrighteous. The second trial will be more favorable than the first, because of the experience gained under the results of the first trial. Unlike the first trial, the second trial will be one in which every man will stand the test for himself alone, and not for another. None then will die because of Adam's sin, or because of inherited imperfections. It shall no more be said, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge; but he that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." "The soul that sins, it shall die." (Ezek. 18:4; Jer. 31:29, 30). And it will be true of the world then, as it is of the Church now, that a man will not be judged according to that which he hath not, but according to that which he hath. (2 Cor. 8:12). Under the reign of Christ, mankind will be gradually educated, trained and disciplined until they reach perfection. And when they have reached perfection, perfect harmony with God will be required, and any who then fall short of perfect obedience will be cut off, being judged unworthy of life. The sin which brought death to the race through Adam was simply one disobedient act; but by that act he fell from his perfection. God had a right to demand perfect obedience of him, since he was created perfect; and He will demand the same of all men when the great work of restoring them is complete. None will be permitted to have everlasting life who then in the slightest degree fall short of perfection. To fall short of perfection, then, will be to sin willfully against full light and perfect ability.

Any who sin willfully, against full light and ability, will perish in the second death. And should any one, during that age of trial, under its full blaze of light, spurn the offered favors, and make no progress toward perfection for a hundred years, he will be reckoned unworthy of life and will be "cut off," though at a hundred years he would be in the period of comparative childhood. So it is written of that day: "As a lad shall one die a hundred years old; and as a sinner shall be accursed he who dies at a hundred years old." (Isa. 65:20--*Lesser*). All must have at least one hundred years of trial; and, if not so obstinate as to refuse to make progress, their trial will continue throughout the entire day of Christ, reaching a culmination only at its close.

The conclusion of the world's coming judgment is clearly shown in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46), in Rev. 20:15; 21:8 and in 1 Cor. 15:25. These and other Scriptures show that at its close the two classes will have been completely separated--the obedient and the disobedient; those in harmony with the letter and the spirit of God's law, and those out of harmony with it.

We do not wish to be understood as ignoring the present responsibility of the world, which every man has, according to the measure of light enjoyed, whether it be much or little, whether it be the light of nature or of revelation. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," and "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." (Prov. 15:3; Eccl. 12:14). The good and the evil deeds of the present time will receive a just recompense of reward either now or hereafter. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some they follow after." (1 Tim. 5:24). No others than the Lord's favored "little flock" have as yet sufficient light to incur the final penalty, the second death.

Under the sophistries of the great deceiver, Satan, both the world and the Church nominal have been robbed of the blessed assurances of the coming time of righteous judgment. They know that the Bible tells of a coming judgment day, but they regard it with only fear and dread; and because of this fear, there is to them no more unwelcome tidings than that the day of the Lord is at hand. They put it far away from them, and do not wish to hear it even mentioned. They have no idea of the blessings in store for the world under that glorious reign of Him whom God hath appointed to judge the world in righteousness. Among the greatest of the blinding influences which Satan has devised to keep men in ignorance of the truth regarding the judgment day have been the errors which have crept into the creeds and hymn books of the various religious sects. Many have come to esteem these errors as of paramount importance to the Word of God.

How differently did the prophets and apostles regard that promised day of judgment! Note the exultant prophetic utterance of David (1 Chron. 16:31-34). He says:

"Let the heavens be glad, And let the earth rejoice;
And let men say among the nations, Jehovah reigns.
Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; Let the fields rejoice, and all that are therein.
Then shall the trees of the wood sing aloud
At the presence of Jehovah, Because He comes to judge the earth.
Oh give thanks unto Jehovah, for He is good; For His mercy endures forever."

To the same day the Apostle also points, assuring us that it will be a glorious and desirable day, and that for it the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together--waiting for the great Judge to deliver and to bless the world, as well as to exalt and glorify the Church--Rom. 8:21, 22.

In John 5:28, 29 a precious promise for the world of a coming judgment-trial for life everlasting is, by a mistranslation, turned into a fearful imprecation. According to the Greek, they that have done evil--that have failed of divine approval--will come forth unto resurrection [raising up to perfection] by judgments, "stripes," disciplines.--See the Revised Version.

STUDY 7 -- Ransom and Restoration

"For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord [Ruler, Controller] of both the dead and the living."

That is to say, the object of our Lord's death and resurrection was not merely to bless and rule over and restore the living of mankind, but to give Him authority over, or full control of, the dead as well as the living, insuring the benefits of His ransom as much to the one as to the other. He "gave Himself a ransom [corresponding price] for all," in order that He might bless all, and give to every man an individual trial for life. To claim that He gave "ransom for all," and yet to claim that only a mere handful of the ransomed ones will ever receive any benefit from it, is absurd; for it would imply either that God accepted the ransom-price and then unjustly refused to grant the release of the redeemed, or else that the Lord, after redeeming all, was either unable or unwilling to carry out the original benevolent design. The unchangeableness of the divine plans, no less than the perfection of the divine justice and love, repels and

contradicts such a thought, and gives us assurance that the original and benevolent plan, of which the "ransom for all" was the basis, will be fully carried out in God's "due time," and will bring to faithful believers the blessing of release from the Adamic condemnation and an opportunity to return to the rights and liberties of sons of God, as enjoyed before sin and the curse.

Let the actual benefits and results of the ransom be clearly seen, and all objects to its being of universal application must vanish. The "ransom for all" given by "the man Christ Jesus" does not give or guarantee everlasting life or blessing to any man; but it does guarantee to every man another opportunity or trial for life everlasting. The first trial of man, which resulted in the loss of the blessings at first conferred, is really turned into a blessing of experience to the loyal-hearted, by reason of the ransom which God has provided. But the fact that men are ransomed from the first penalty does not guarantee that they may not, when individually tried for everlasting life, fail to render the obedience without which none will be permitted to live everlastingly. Man, by reason of present experience with sin and its bitter penalty, will be fully forewarned; and when, as a result of the ransom, he is granted another, an individual trial, under the eye and control of Him who so loved him as to give His life for him, and who would not that any should perish, but that all should turn to God and live, we may be sure that only the willfully disobedient will receive the penalty of the second trial. That penalty will be the second death, from which there will be no ransom, no release, because there would be no object for another ransom or a further trial. All will have fully seen and tasted both good and evil; all will have witnessed and experienced the goodness and love of God; all will have had a full, fair, individual trial for life, under most favorable conditions. More could not be asked, and more will not be given. That trial will decide forever who would be righteous and holy under a thousand trials; and it will determine also who would be unjust, and unholy and filthy still, under a thousand trials.

The ransom given does not excuse sin in any; it does not propose to count sinners as saints, and usher them into everlasting bliss. It merely releases the accepting sinner from the first condemnation and its results, both direct and indirect, and places him again on trial for life, in which trial his own willful obedience or willful disobedience will decide whether he may or may not have life everlasting.

One difference between the experiences of the Church under trial now and the experiences of the world during its trial will be that the obedient of the world will begin at once to receive the blessings of restoration by a gradual removal of their weaknesses--mental and physical; whereas the Gospel Church, consecrated to the Lord's service even unto death, goes down into death and gets her perfection instantaneously in the first resurrection. Another difference between the two trials is in the more favorable to righteousness, rewarding faith and obedience, and punishing sin; whereas now, under the prince of this world, the Church's trial is under circumstances unfavorable to righteousness, faith, etc. But this is to be compensated for in the prize of the glory and honor of the divine nature offered to the Church, in addition to the gift of everlasting life.

Adam's death was sure, though it was reached by nine hundred and thirty years of dying. Since he was himself dying, all his children were born in the same dying condition and without right to life; and, like their parents, they all die after a more or less lingering process. It should be remembered, however, that it is not the pain and suffering in dying, but death--the extinction of life--in which the dying culminates, that is the penalty of sin. The suffering is only incidental to it, and the penalty falls on many with but little or no suffering. It should further be remembered that when Adam forfeited life, he forfeited it forever; and not one of his posterity has ever been able to expiate his guilt or to regain the lost inheritance. All the race are either dead or dying. And if they could not expiate their guilt before death, they certainly could not do it when dead--when not in existence. The penalty of sin was not simply to die, with the privilege and right thereafter of returning to life. In the penalty pronounced there was no intimation of release. (Gen. 2:17). The restoration, therefore, is an act of free grace or favor on God's part. And as soon as the penalty had been incurred, even while it was being pronounced, the free favor of God was intimated, which, when realized, will so fully declare His love.

Had it not been for the gleam of hope afforded by the statement that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, the race would have been in utter despair; but this promise indicated that God had some plan for their benefit. When God swore to Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth

should be blessed, it implied a resurrection or restoration of all; for many were then dead and others have since died, unblessed. Nevertheless, the promise is still sure: all shall be blessed when the times of restoration or refreshing shall come. (Acts 3:19). Moreover, since blessing indicates favor, and since God's favor was withdrawn and His curse came instead because of sin, this promise of a future blessing implied the removal of the curse, and consequently a return of His favor. It also implied either that God would relent, change His decree and clear the guilty race, or else that He had some plan by which it could be redeemed, by having man's penalty paid by another.

God did not leave Abraham in doubt as to which was His plan, but showed, by various typical sacrifices which all who approached Him had to bring, that He could not and did not relent, nor excuse the sin; and that the only way to blot it out and abolish its penalty would be by a sufficiency of sacrifice to meet that penalty. This was shown to Abraham in a very significant type: Abraham's son, in whom the promised blessing centered, had first to be a sacrifice before he could bless, and Abraham received him from the dead in a figure. (Heb. 11:19). In that figure Isaac typified the true seed, Christ Jesus, who died to redeem men, in order that the redeemed might all receive the promised blessing. Had Abraham thought that the Lord would excuse and clear the guilty, he would have felt that God was changeable, and therefore could not have had full confidence in the promise made to him. He might have reasoned, If God has changed His mind once, why may He not change it again? If He relents concerning the promised favor and blessing? But God leaves us in no such uncertainty. He gives us ample assurance of both His justice and His unchangeableness. He could not clear the guilty, even though he loved them so much that "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up [to death] for us all."

As the entire race was in Adam when he was condemned, and lost life through him, so when Adam's life was redeemed by the man Christ Jesus, a possible race in his loins died also, and a full satisfaction, or corresponding price, was rendered to justice for all men; and He who bought all has full authority to restore all who come unto God by Him.

"As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by 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." (Rom. 5:18, 19). The proposition is a plain one: As many as have shared death on account of Adam's sin will have life-privileges offered to them by our Lord Jesus, who paid their penalty to Justice, who became Adam's substitute before the broken law, and "gave Himself a ransom for all." He died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18). It should never be overlooked, however, that all of God's provisions for our race recognize the human will as a factor in the securing of the divine favors so abundantly provided. Some have overlooked this feature in examining the text just quoted--Rom. 5:18, 19. The Apostle's statement, however, is that, as the sentence of condemnation extended to all the seed of Adam, even so, through the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Father's plan, by the sacrifice of Himself on our behalf, a free gift is extended to all--a gift of forgiveness, which, if accepted, will constitute a justification or basis for life everlasting. And "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be [not were] made righteous." If the ransom alone, without our acceptance of it, made us righteous, then it would have read, by the obedience of one many were made righteous. But though the ransom has been given by the Redeemer and has been accepted by Jehovah, only a few during the Gospel age have been, though many during the Millennial age will be, made righteous--justified--"through faith in His blood." Since Christ is the propitiation (satisfaction) for the sins of the whole world, all men may on this account be absolved and released from the penalty of Adam's sin by Him--under the New Covenant.

There is no unrighteousness with God; hence "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9). As He would have been unjust to have allowed us to escape the pronounced penalty before satisfaction was rendered, so also He here gives us to understand that it would be unjust were He to forbid our restoration, since by His own arrangement our penalty has been paid for us. The same unswerving justice that once condemned man to death now stands pledged for the release of all who, confessing their sins, apply for life through Christ. "It is God that justifies--who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."--Rom. 8:33, 34.

The completeness of the ransom is the very strongest possible argument for the restoration of all mankind who will accept it on the proffered terms. (Rev. 22:17). The very character of God for justice and honor stands pledged to it; every promise which He has made implies it; and every typical sacrifice pointed to the great and sufficient sacrifice--"the Lamb of God, which takes away the SIN OF THE WORLD"--who is "the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins [the Church's], and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2). Since death is the penalty or wages of sin, when the sin is cancelled the wages must in due time cease. Any other view would be both unreasonable and unjust. The fact that no recovery from the Adamic loss is yet accomplished, though nearly two thousand years have elapsed since our Lord died, is no more an argument against restoration than is the fact that four thousand years elapsed before His death, a proof that God had not planned the redemption before the foundation of the world. Both the two thousand years since and the four thousand years before the death of Christ were appointed times for other parts of the work, preparatory to "the times of restoration of all things."

STUDY 8 -- Natures Separate and Distinct

Failing to see that the plan of God for mankind in general contemplates a restoration to their former estate--the human perfection lost in Eden--and that the Christian Church, as an exception to this general plan, is to have a change of nature from human to spiritual, Christian people generally have supposed that none will be saved except those who reach the spiritual nature. The Scriptures, however, while holding out promises of life and blessing and restoration to all the families of the earth, offer and promise the change to spiritual nature only to the Church selected during the Gospel age; and not a single passage can be found which sustains such hopes for any others.

If the masses of mankind are saved from all the degradation, weakness, pain, misery and death which result from sin, and are restored to the condition of human perfection enjoyed before the fall, they are as really and completely saved from that fall as those who, under the special "high-calling" of the Gospel age, become "partakers of the divine nature."

The failure to understand rightly what constitutes a perfect man, the misapprehension of the terms mortal and immortal, and wrong ideas of justice, have together tended to this error, and mystified many Scriptures otherwise easily understood. It is a common view, though unsupported by a single text of Scripture, that a perfect man has never been on earth; that all that is seen of man on earth is only the partially developed man, and that to reach perfection he must become spiritual. This view makes confusion of the Scriptures instead of developing that harmony and beauty which result from "rightly dividing the word of truth."

The Scriptures teach that there have been two, and only two, perfect men--Adam and Jesus. Adam was created in the image of God: that is, with the similar mental powers of reason, memory, judgment and will, and the moral qualities of justice, benevolence, love, etc. "Of the earth, earthy," he was an earthly image of a spiritual being, possessing qualities of the same kind, though differing widely in degree, range and scope. To such an extent is man an image of God that God can say even to the fallen man, "Come, let us reason together."

As Jehovah is ruler over all things, so man was made a ruler over all earthly things--After our likeness, let him have dominion over the beasts, fowl, fish, etc. (Gen. 1:26). Moses tells us (Gen. 1:31) that God recognized the man whom He had made--not merely commenced to make, but completed--and God considered His creature "very good," that is, perfect; for in God's sight nothing short of perfection is very good, in His intelligent creatures.

There is a wonderful contrast between man as we now see him, degraded by sin, and the perfect man that God made in His image. Sin has gradually changed his features, as well as his character. Multiplied generations, by ignorance, licentiousness and general depravity, have so blurred and marred humanity that in the large majority of the race the likeness of God is almost obliterated. The moral and intellectual qualities are dwarfed; and the animal instincts, unduly developed, are no longer balanced by the higher.

But though defiled and degraded by sin and its penalty, death, working in him, man is to be restored to his original perfection of mind and body, and to glory, honor and dominion, during and by the Millennial reign of Christ. The things to be restored by and through Christ are those things which were lost through Adam's transgression. (Rom. 5:18, 19). Man did not lose a heavenly but an earthly paradise. Under the death penalty, he did not lose a spiritual but a human existence; and all that was lost was purchased back by his Redeemer, who declared that He came to seek and to save that which was lost.--Luke 19:10.

In addition to the above, we have proof that the perfect man is not a spiritual being. We are told that our Lord, before He left His glory to become a man, was "in a form of God"--a spiritual form, a spirit being; but since to be a ransom for mankind He had to be a man, of the same nature as the sinner whose substitute in death he was to become, it was necessary that His nature be changed. And Paul tells us that He took not the nature of angels, one step lower than His own, but that He came down two steps and took the nature of men--He became a man; He was "made flesh."--Heb. 2:16; Phil. 2:7, 8; John 1:14.

Notice that this teaches not only that angelic nature is not the only order of spirit being, but that it is a lower nature than that of our Lord before He became a man; and He was not then so high as He is now, for "God hath highly exalted Him," because of His obedience in becoming man's willing ransom. (Phil. 2:8, 9). He is now of the highest order of spirit being, a partaker of the divine (Jehovah's) nature.

But not only do we find proof that the divine, angelic and human natures are separate and distinct, but this proves that to be a perfect man is not to be an angel, any more than the perfection of angelic nature implies that angels are divine and equal with Jehovah; for Jesus took not the nature of angels, but a different nature--the nature of men; not the imperfect human nature as we now possess it, but the perfect human nature. He became a man; not a depraved and nearly dead being such as men are now, but a man in the full vigor of perfection.

Again, Jesus must have been a perfect man else He could not have kept a perfect law, which is the full measure of a perfect man's ability. And He must have been a perfect man else He could not have given a ransom (a corresponding price--1 Tim. 2:6) for the forfeited life of the perfect man Adam; "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." (1 Cor. 15:21). Had He been in the least degree imperfect, it would have proved that He was under condemnation, and therefore He could not have been an acceptable sacrifice; neither could He have kept perfectly the law of God. A perfect man was tried, and failed, and was condemned; and only a perfect man could pay the corresponding price as the Redeemer.

Now we have the question fairly before us in another form, viz.: If Jesus in the flesh was a perfect man, as the Scriptures show, does it not prove that a perfect man is a human, fleshly being--not an angel, but a little lower than the angels? The logical conclusion is unmistakable; and in addition we have the inspired statement of the Psalmist (Psa. 8:5-8) and Paul's reference to it in Heb. 2:7, 9.

Neither was Jesus a combination of the two natures, human and spiritual. The blending of two natures, human and spiritual. The blending of two natures produces neither the one nor the other, but an imperfect, hybrid thing, which is obnoxious to the divine arrangement. When Jesus was in the flesh he was a perfect human being; previous to that time He was a perfect spiritual being; and since His resurrection he is a perfect spiritual being of the highest or divine order. It was not until the time of His consecration even unto death, as typified in His baptism--at thirty years of age (manhood, according to the Law, and therefore the right time to consecrate Himself as a man)--that He received the earnest of His inheritance of the divine nature. (Matt. 3:16, 17). The human nature had to be consecrated to death before He could receive even the pledge of the divine nature. And not until that consecration was actually carried out and He had actually sacrificed the human nature, even unto death, did our Lord Jesus become a full partaker of the divine nature. After becoming a man He became obedient unto death, wherefore, God hath highly exalted Him to the divine nature. (Phil. 2:8, 9). If this Scripture is true, it follows that He was not exalted to the divine nature until the human nature was actually sacrificed--dead.

So we see that in Jesus there was no mixture of natures, but that twice He experienced a change of nature; first, from spiritual to human; afterward, from human to the highest order of spiritual nature, the divine; and in each case the one was given up for the other.

In this grand example of perfect humanity, which stood unblemished before the world until sacrificed for the world's redemption, we see the perfection from which our race fell in Adam, and to which it is to be restored. In becoming man's ransom, our Lord Jesus gave the equivalent for that which man lost; and therefore all mankind may receive again, through faith in Christ, and obedience to His requirements, not a spiritual, but a glorious, perfect human nature--"that which was lost."

While Jesus as a man was an illustration of perfect human nature, to which the mass of mankind will be restored, yet since His resurrection He is the illustration of the glorious divine nature which the overcoming Church will, at resurrection, share with Him.

Because the present age is devoted mainly to the development of this class which is offered a change of nature, and because the apostolic epistles are devoted to the instruction of this "little flock," it should not be inferred that God's plans end with the completion of this chosen company. Nor, on the other hand, should we go to the opposite extreme, and suppose that the special promises of the divine nature, spiritual bodies, etc., made to these, are God's design for all mankind. To these are the "exceeding great and precious promises," over and above the other precious promises made to all mankind. To rightly divide the word of truth, we should observe that the Scriptures recognize the perfection of the divine nature in the "little flock," and the perfection of the human nature in the restored world, as two separate things.

We have no record of any being, either spiritual or human, ever having been changed from one nature to another, except the Son of God; and this was an exceptional case, for an exceptional purpose. When God made angels He doubtless intended them to remain angels forever, and so with men, each being perfect on his own plane. At least the Scriptures give no intimation of any different purpose. As in the inanimate creation there is a pleasing and almost endless variety, so in the living and intelligent creation the same variety in perfection is possible. Every creature in its perfection is glorious; but, as Paul says, the glory of the celestial (heavenly) is one kind of glory, and the glory of the terrestrial (earthly) is another and a different glory.

Mortality and Immortality

We shall find their true significance in exact harmony with what we have learned from our comparison of Bible statements concerning human and spiritual beings, and earthly and heavenly promises. These words are usually given very uncertain meanings, and wrong ideas of their meanings produce erroneous views of subjects with which they stand connected, in general and in Scripture usage.

"Mortality" signifies a state of condition of liability to death; not a condition of death, but a condition in which death is a possibility.

"Immortality" signifies a state or condition not liable to death; not merely a condition of freedom from death, but a condition in which death is an impossibility.

The common but erroneous idea of mortality is, a state or condition in which death is unavoidable, while the common idea of the significance of immortality is more nearly correct.

The word immortal signifies not mortal; hence the very construction of the words indicates their true definitions. It is because of the prevalence of a wrong idea of the word mortal that so many are confused when trying to determine whether Adam was mortal or immortal before his transgression. They reason that if he had been immortal God would not have said, "In the day that you eat thereof you will surely die;" because it is impossible for an immortal being to die. This is a logical conclusion. On the other hand, say they, Had he been mortal, wherein could have consisted the threat or penalty of the statement, "You shall surely die"; since if mortal (according to their erroneous definition) he could not have avoided death anyhow?

The difficulty, it will be perceived, is in the false meaning given to the word mortality. Apply the correct definition, and all is clear. Adam was mortal --that is, in a condition in which death was a possibility. He had life in full and perfect measure, yet not inherent life. His was a life sustained by "every tree of the garden" save the one tree forbidden; and so long as he continued in obedience to and in harmony with

his Maker, his life was secure--the sustaining elements would not be denied. So seen, Adam had life; and death was entirely avoidable, yet he was in such a condition that death was possible--he was mortal.

The question arises, then, If Adam was mortal and on trial, was he on trial for immortality? The general answer would be, Yes. We answer, No. His trial was to see whether he was worthy or unworthy of a continuance of the life and blessings already possessed. Since it was nowhere promised that if obedient he would become immortal, we are bound to leave all such speculations out of the question. He was promised a continuance of the blessings then enjoyed so long as obedient, and threatened with the loss of all--death--if disobedient. It is the false idea of the meaning of the word mortal that leads people in general to conclude that all beings who do not die are immortal. In this class they therefore include our Heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus, the angels and all mankind. This, however, is an error: the great mass of mankind saved from the fall, as well as the angels of heaven, will always be mortal; though in a condition of perfection and bliss, they will always be of that mortal nature which could suffer death, the wages of sin, if they would commit sin. The security of their existence will be conditioned, as it was with Adam, upon obedience to the all-wise God, whose justice, love and wisdom, and whose power to cause all things to work together for good to those who love and serve Him, will have been fully demonstrated by His dealings with sin in the present time.

Nowhere in the Scriptures is it stated that angels are immortal, nor that mankind restored will be immortal. On the contrary, immortality is ascribed only to the divine nature--originally to Jehovah only; subsequently to our Lord Jesus in His present highly exalted condition; and finally by promise to the Church, the body of Christ, when glorified with Him.--1 Tim. 6:16; John 5:26; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:53, 54.

The proper recognition of the meaning of the terms mortal and immortal, and of their use in the Scriptures, destroys the very foundation of the doctrine of eternal torment. It is based upon the unscriptural theory that God created man immortal, that he cannot cease to exist, and that God cannot destroy him; hence the argument is that the incorrigible must live on somewhere and somehow, and the conclusion is that since they are out of harmony with God their eternity must be one of misery. But God's Word assures us that He has provided against such a perpetuation of sin and sinners: that man is mortal, and that the full penalty of willful sin against full light and knowledge will not be a life in torment, but a second death. "The soul that sins, it shall die."

The human race are God's children by creation--the work of His hands--and His plan with reference to them is clearly revealed in His Word. Paul says that the first man (who was a sample of what the race will be when perfect) was of the earth, earthy; and his posterity, with the exception of the Gospel Church, will in the resurrection still be earthy, human, adapted to the earth. (1 Cor. 15:38, 44). David declares that man was made only a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory, honor, dominion, etc. (Psa. 8:4-8). And Peter, our Lord, and all the prophets since the world began, declare that the human race is to be restored to that glorious perfection, and is again to have dominion over earth, as its representative, Adam, had.--Acts 3:19-21.

It is this portion that God has elected to give to the human race. And what a glorious portion! Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay--not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when they realize the resurrection work complete.--Rev. 21:4.

And this is the change in human society only. We call to mind also that the earth, which was "made to be inhabited" by such a race of beings, is to be a fit and pleasing abode for them, as represented in the Edenic paradise, in which the representative man was at first placed. Paradise shall be restored. The earth shall no more bring forth thorns and briars, and require the sweat of man's face to yield his bread, but

“the earth shall [easily and naturally] yield her increase.” “The desert shall blossom as the rose”; the lower animal creation will be perfect, willing and obedient servants; nature with all its pleasing variety will call to man from every direction to seek and know the glory and power and love of God; and mind and heart will rejoice in Him. The restless desire for something new, that now prevails, is not a natural but an abnormal condition, due to our imperfection, and to our present unsatisfactory surroundings. It is not God-like restlessly to crave something new. Most things are old to God; and He rejoices most in those things which are old and perfect. So will it be with man when restored to the image of God. The perfect man will not know or appreciate fully, and hence will not prefer, the glory of spiritual being, because of a different nature, just as fishes and birds, for the same reason, prefer and enjoy each their own nature and element most. Man will be so absorbed and enraptured with the glory that surrounds him on the human plane that he will have no aspiration to, nor preference for, another nature or other conditions than those possessed. A glance at the present experience of the Church will illustrate this. “How hardly,” with what difficulty, shall those who are rich in this world’s goods enter into the kingdom of God. The few good things possessed, even under the present reign of evil and death, so captivate the human nature that we need special help from God to keep our eye and purpose fixed on the spiritual promises.

STUDY 9 -- The Three Ways

“Wide is the gate of destruction, and broad that way leading thither; and many are they who enter through it. How narrow is the gate of life! How difficult that way leading thither! and how few are they who find it!” --Matt. 7:13, 14, Diaglott translation.

“And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, nor be found there; but they that walk there shall be delivered.” Isa. 35:8, 9.

Three ways, the “broad road,” the “narrow way” and the “highway,” are brought to our attention in the Scriptures.

The Broad Road to Destruction

This road is named this way because it is most easy to the degenerate human race. Six thousand years ago, as a sinner condemned to destruction, Adam (and the race represented in him) started upon this road, and after nine hundred and thirty years he reached its end--destruction.

For six thousand years the race has steadily pursued the broad, downward way. Only a few, comparatively, have tried to change their course and retrace their steps. In fact, to retrace all the steps, and reach the original perfection, has been impossible, though the effort of some to do so has been commendable, and not without beneficial results. For six thousand years sin and death have reigned relentlessly over mankind, and driven them upon this broad road to destruction. And not until the Gospel age was a way of escape brought to light.

The teachings of Jesus and the apostles bring to light life--a restoration to life, for all mankind, as based upon the merit and sacrifice of the Redeemer; and they show this to be the significance of many Old Testament types. They also bring to light immortality, the prize of the high calling of the Gospel Church.

The Narrow Way to Life

Our Master tells us that it is because of the narrowness of this way that the many prefer to remain on the broad road to destruction. “Strait [difficult] is the gate and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Recognizing the fact that only in the divine nature is life independent, unlimited, exhaustless, ever continuous and neither produced nor controlled by circumstances, we see that of necessity Jehovah is superior to those physical laws and supplies which He ordained for the sustenance of His creatures. It is this quality, which pertains only to the divine nature, that is described by the term immortality. As shown in the preceding chapter, immortal signifies death-proof, consequently disease and pain-proof. In fact, immortality may be used as a synonym for divinity. From the divine, immortal fountain proceed all life and blessing, every good and perfect gift, as from the sun the earth receives her light and vigor.

Man has not inherent life: he is no more a fountain of life than a diamond is a fountain of light. And one of the very strongest evidences that we have not an exhaustless supply of life in ourselves, or, in other words, that we are not immortal, is that since sin entered, death has passed upon all our race.

God had arranged that man in Eden should have access to life sustaining trees, and the paradise in which he was placed was abundantly supplied with numbers of "every [kind of] tree" good for food or for adornment. (Gen. 2:9, 16, 17). Among the trees of life good for food was one forbidden. While for a time forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge, he was permitted to eat freely of trees which sustained life perfectly; and he was separated from them only after transgression, that thereby the death-penalty might go into effect.--Gen. 3:22.

So the glory and beauty of humanity are seen to be dependent on the continued supply of life, just as the beauty of the diamond is dependent on the continued supply of sunlight. When sin deprived humanity of the right to life, and the supply was withheld, immediately the jewel began to lose its brilliancy and beauty, and finally it is deprived of its last vestige in the tomb. His beauty consumes away like a moth. (Psa. 34:11). As the diamond loses its beauty and brilliancy when the light is withdrawn, so man loses life when God withholds the supplies from him. "Yea, man gives up the ghost [life] and where is he?" (Job 14:10). "His sons come to honor, and he knows it not; and they are brought low, but he perceives it not of them." (Verse 21). "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go." (Eccl. 9:10). But since a ransom has been found, since the death penalty has been paid by the Redeemer, the jewel is to have its beauty restored, and is again to reflect perfectly the Creator's image when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. (Mal. 4:2). It is because of the sin-offering, the sacrifice of Christ, that "All that are in their graves shall come forth." There shall be a restoration of all things; first an opportunity or offer of restoration to all, and ultimately the attainment of human perfection by all who will obey the Redeemer.

This, however, is not the reward to which Jesus refers as the end of the narrow way. From other Scriptures we learn that the reward promised to those who walk the narrow way is the "divine nature"--life inherent, life in that superlative degree which only the divine nature can possess--immortality. What a hope! Dare we aspire to such a height of glory? Surely not without positive and explicit invitation could any rightfully so aspire.

We learn that Jehovah, who alone possessed immortality originally, has highly exalted His Son, our Lord Jesus, to the same divine, immortal nature; hence He is now the express image of the Father's person. (Heb. 1:3). So we read, "As the Father hath LIFE IN HIMSELF [God's definition of "immortality"--life in Himself--not drawn from other sources, nor dependent on circumstances, but independent, inherent life], so hath He given to the Son to have LIFE IN HIMSELF." (John 5:26). Since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, then, two beings are immortal; and, amazing grace! the same offer is made to the Bride of the Lamb, being selected during the Gospel age. Yet not all of the great company who are nominally of the Church will receive this great prize, but only that "little flock" of overcomers who so run as to obtain it; who follow closely in the Master's footsteps; who, like Him, walk the narrow way of sacrifice, even unto death. These, when born from the dead in the resurrection, will have the divine nature and form. This immortality, the independent, self-existent, divine nature, is the life to which the narrow way leads.

This class is not to be raised from the tomb human beings; for we are assured by the Apostle that, though sown in the tomb natural bodies, they will be raised spiritual bodies. These all shall be "changed," and even as they once bore the image of the earthly, human nature, they shall bear the image of the heavenly. But "it does not yet appear what we shall be"--what a spiritual body is; but "we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him," and share in "the glory to be revealed."--1 John 3:2; Col. 1:27; 2 Cor. 4:17; John 17:22; 1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Thes. 2:14.

Not only is this high calling to a change of nature confined exclusively to the Gospel age, but it is the only offer of this age. Hence our Lord's words quoted at the beginning of this chapter include on the broad road to destruction all who are not on the way to the only prize now offered. All others are still on the broad road--these only have as yet escaped the condemnation that is on the world. This, the only way of life now open, because of its difficulty, finds few who care to walk in it. The masses of mankind in their weakness prefer the broad, easy way of self-gratification.

The narrow way, while it ends in life, in immortality, might be called a way of death, since its prize is gained through the sacrifice of the human nature even unto death. It is the narrow way of death to life. Being reckoned free from the Adamic guilt and the death penalty, the consecrated voluntarily surrender or sacrifice those human rights, reckoned theirs, which in due time they, with the world in general, would have actually received. As "the man Christ Jesus" laid down or sacrificed His life for the world, so these become joint-sacrificers with Him. Not that His sacrifice was insufficient and that others were needed; but while His is all-sufficient, these are permitted to serve and to suffer with Him in order to become His bride and joint-heir. So, then, while the world is under condemnation to death, and is dying with Adam, this "little flock," through the process of faith reckonings and sacrifice, already described, are said to die with Christ. They sacrifice and die with Him as human beings, in order to become partakers of the divine nature and glories with Him; for we believe that if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together.--Rom. 8:17, and 2 Tim. 2:11, 12.

In the beginning of the Millennial age, those who now walk the narrow way will have gained the great prize for which they ran, immortality; and being clothed with the divine nature and power, they will be prepared for the great work of restoring and blessing the world during that age. With the end of the Gospel age, the narrow way to immortality will close, because the select "little flock" that it was designed to test and prove will have been completed. "Now is the accepted [Greek, dektos, acceptable or receivable] time"--the time in which sacrificers, coming in the merit of Jesus and becoming dead with Him, are acceptable to God--a sacrifice of sweet odor. Death, as the Adamic penalty, will not be permitted forever; it will be abolished during the Millennial age; as a sacrifice it will be acceptable and rewarded only during the Gospel age.

The Highway of Holiness

While the special hope of the Gospel age is so surpassingly glorious, and the way to it is correspondingly difficult--narrow, hedged in by hardships and dangers at every step--so that few find it, and obtain the great prize at its end, the new order of things in the age to come is to be entirely different. As a different hope is held out, so also a different way leads to it. The way to immortality has been a way which required the sacrifice of the otherwise lawful and proper hopes, ambitions and desires--the sacrifice forever of the human nature. But the way to human perfection, to restoration, the hope of the world, requires only the putting away of sin: not the sacrifice of human rights and privileges, but their proper enjoyment. It will lead to personal purification and restoration to the image of God as enjoyed by Adam before sin entered the world.

The way back to actual human perfection is to be made very plain and easy; so plain that none may mistake the way; so plain that "the wayfaring man, and those unacquainted therewith, shall not go astray." (Isa. 35:8.--Leeser); so plain that none will need to teach his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know the Lord from the least unto the greatest. (Jer. 31:34). Instead of being a narrow way that few can find, it is termed "a highway," a public roadway--not a narrow, steep, rugged, difficult, hedged byway, but a way specially prepared for easy travel--specially arranged for the convenience and comfort of the travelers. Verses 8 and 9 show that it is a public road, open to all the redeemed--every man. Every man for whom Christ died, who will recognize and avail himself of the opportunities and blessings purchased by the precious blood, may go up on this Highway of Holiness to the grand goal of perfect restoration to human perfection and everlasting life.

So we have found a "Broad Road," on which at present the masses of mankind travel, deluded by the "prince of this world," and led by perverted tastes. We have found that it was opened up and that our race was started in its headlong course upon it by "one man's disobedience." We have found that the "Highway of Holiness" is to be opened up by our Lord, who give Himself a ransom for all and redeemed all from the destruction to which the "Broad Road" leads, and that it will, in due time, be accessible and easy for all the redeemed ones whom He bought with His own precious blood. We have found, furthermore, that the present "Narrow Way," opened up by the merit of the same precious blood, is a special way leading to a special prize, and is made specially narrow and difficult as a test and discipline for those now being selected to be made partakers of the divine nature and joint-heirs with our Lord Jesus in the Kingdom of glory soon to be revealed for the blessing of all. Such as have this hope--who see this prize--may count all other hopes as but loss and dross in comparison.--Phil. 3:8-15.

STUDY 10 -- The Kingdoms of This World

In the first chapter of the Divine Revelation, God declares His purpose concerning His earthly creation and its government: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him: male and female created He them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

So the dominion of earth was placed in the hands of the human race as represented in the first man Adam, who was perfect, and therefore fully qualified to be the lord, ruler or king of earth. This commission to multiply, and fill, and subdue, and have dominion over the earth was not to Adam alone, but to all mankind: "Let them have dominion," etc. Had the human race remained perfect and sinless, this dominion would never have passed out of its hands.

It will be noticed that in this commission no man is given dominion or authority over fellow-men, but the whole race is given dominion over the earth, to cultivate and to make use of its products for the common good. Not only its vegetable and mineral wealth is placed at man's command, but also all its varieties of animal life are at his disposal and for his service. Had the race remained perfect and carried out this original design of the Creator, as it grew in numbers it would have been necessary for men to consult together, and to systematize their efforts, and to devise ways and means for the just and wise distribution of the common blessings. And as, in the course of time, it would have been impossible, because of their vast numbers, to meet and consult together, it would have been necessary for various classes of men to elect certain of their number to represent them, to voice their common sentiments, and to act for them. And if all men were perfect, mentally, physically, and morally; if every man loved God and His regulations supremely, and his neighbor as himself, there would have been no friction in such an arrangement.

So seen, the original design of the Creator for earth's government was a Republic in form, a government in which each individual would share; in which every man would be a sovereign, amply qualified in every particular to exercise the duties of his office for both his own and the general good.

This dominion of earth conferred upon man had but one contingency upon which its everlasting continuance depended; and that was that this divinely-conferred rulership be always exercised in harmony with the Supreme Ruler of the universe, whose one law, briefly stated, is Love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind;...and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."--Rom. 13:10; Matt. 22:37-40.

Concerning this great favor conferred upon man, David, praising God, says: "You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor; You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands." (Psa. 8:5, 6). This dominion given to mankind in the person of Adam was the first establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth. Man exercised dominion as God's representative. But man's disobedience to the Supreme Ruler forfeited not only his life, but also all his rights and privileges as God's representative ruler of earth. He was thenceforth a rebel, dethroned and condemned to death. Then speedily the kingdom of God on earth ceased, and has not since been established, except for a short time, in a typical manner, in Israel. Although in Eden man lost his right to life and dominion, neither was taken from him suddenly; and while the condemned life lasts man is permitted to exercise the dominion of earth according to his own ideas and ability, until God's due time for him whose right it is to take the dominion which He purchased.

Our Lord's death redeemed or purchased not only man, but also all his original inheritance, including the dominion of earth. Having purchased it, the title is now in Him: He is now the rightful heir, and in due time, and shortly, He is now the rightful heir, and in due time, and shortly, He will take possession of His purchase. (Eph. 1:14). But as He bought man not for the sake of holding him as His slave, but that He might restore him to his former estate, so with the dominion of earth: He purchased it and all of man's original blessings for the purpose of restoring them when man is again made capable of exercising them

in harmony with the will of God. Hence the reign of Messiah on earth will not be everlasting. It will continue only until, by His strong iron rule, He will have put down all rebellion and insubordination, and restored the fallen race to the original perfection, when they will be fully capable of rightly exercising the dominion of earth as originally designed. When restored, it will again be the Kingdom of God on earth, under man, God's appointed representative.

The kingdom of Israel is the only one, since the fall, which God ever recognized as in any way representing His government, laws, etc. There had been many nations before theirs, but no other could rightfully claim God as its founder, or that its rulers were God's representatives. When the diadem was taken from Zedekiah and the kingdom of Israel was overturned, it was decreed that it should remain overturned until Christ, the rightful heir of the world, should come to claim it. So, inferentially, all other kingdoms in power until the re-establishment of God's kingdom are branded "kingdoms of this world," under the "prince of this world;" and hence any claims put forth by any of them to being kingdoms of God are spurious. Nor was this Kingdom of God "SET UP" at the first advent of Christ. (Luke 19:12). Then and since then God has been selecting from the world those who shall be accounted worthy to reign with Christ as joint-heirs of that throne. Not until His second advent will Christ take the kingdom, the power and the glory, and reign Lord of all.

All other kingdoms than that of Israel are Scripturally called heathen or Gentile kingdoms--the kingdoms of this world," under the "prince of this world"--Satan. The removal of God's kingdom in the days of Zedekiah left the world without any government of which God could approve, or whose laws or affairs He specially supervised. The Gentile governments God recognized indirectly, in that He publicly declare His decree (Luke 21:24) that during the interregnum the control of Jerusalem and the world should be exercised by Gentile governments.

This interregnum, or intervening period of time between the removal of God's scepter and government and the restoration of the same in greater power and glory in Christ, is Scripturally termed "The Times of the Gentiles." And these "times" or years, during which the "kingdoms of this world" are permitted to rule, are fixed and limited, and the time for the re-establishment of God's Kingdom under Messiah is equally fixed and marked in Scripture.

Even as these Gentile governments have been, they were permitted or "ordained of God" for a wise purpose. (Rom 13:1). Their imperfection and misrule form a part of the general lesson on the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and prove the inability of fallen man to govern himself, even to his own satisfaction. God permits them, in the main, to carry out their own purposes as they may be able, overruling them only when they would interfere with His plans. He designs that eventually all shall work for good, and that finally even the "wrath of man shall praise Him." The remainder, that would work no good, serve no purpose or teach no lesson, He restrains.--Psa. 74:10.

Man's inability to establish a perfect government is attributable to his own weaknesses in his fallen, depraved condition. These weaknesses, which of themselves would thwart human efforts to produce a perfect government, have also been taken advantage of by Satan, who first tempted man to disloyalty to the Supreme Ruler. Satan has continually taken advantage of man's weaknesses, made good to appear evil, and evil to appear good; and he has misrepresented God's character and plans and blinded men to the truth. So working in the hearts of the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2), he has led them captive at his will and made himself what our Lord and the apostles call him--the prince or ruler of this world. (John 14:30; 12:31). He is not the prince of this world by right, but by usurpation; through fraud and deception and control of fallen men. It is because he is a usurper that he will be summarily deposed. Had he a real title as prince of this world, he would not so be dealt with.

So it will be seen that the dominion of earth, as at present exercised, has both an invisible and a visible phase. The former is the spiritual, the latter the human phase--the visible earthly kingdoms measurably under the control of a spiritual prince, Satan. It was because Satan possessed such control that he could offer to make our Lord the supreme visible sovereign of the earth under his direction. (Matt. 4:9). When the Times of the Gentiles expire, both phases of the present dominion will terminate: Satan will be bound and the kingdoms of this world will be overthrown.

The fallen, blinded, groaning creation has for centuries plodded along its weary way, defeated at every step, even its best endeavors proving fruitless, yet ever hoping that the golden age dreamed of by its philosophers was at hand. It knows not that a still greater deliverance than that for which it hopes and groans is to come through the despised Nazarene and His followers, who as the Sons of God will shortly be manifested in kingdom power for its deliverance.--Rom. 8:22, 19.

The world is fast coming to realize that the "kingdoms of this world" are not Christlike, and that their claim to be of Christ's appointment is not unquestionable. Men are beginning to use their reasoning powers on this and similar questions; and they will act out their convictions so much more violently, as they come to realize that a deception has been practiced upon them in the name of the God of Justice and the Prince of Peace. In fact, the tendency with many is to conclude that Christianity itself is an imposition without foundation, and that, leagued with civil rulers, its aim is merely to hold in check the liberties of the masses.

O that men were wise, that they would apply their hearts to understand the work and plan of the Lord! Then would the present kingdoms melt down gradually--reform would swiftly follow, and liberty follow liberty, and justice and truth would prevail until righteousness would be established in the earth. But they will not do this, nor can they in their present fallen state; and so, armed with selfishness, each will strive for mastery, and the kingdoms of this world will pass away with a great time of trouble, such as was not since there was a nation. Of those who will be vainly trying to hold to a dominion which has passed away, when the dominion is given to Him whose right it is, the Lord speaks, urging that they are fighting against Him--a conflict in which they are sure to fail. He says:--

"Why do the nations tumultuously assemble, and the people meditate a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure [saying], I have anointed My king upon My holy hill of Zion.... Be wise now, therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss [make friends with] the Son [God's Anointed] lest He be angry, and you perish in the way; for His wrath may soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in Him."--Psa. 2:1-6, 10-12.

STUDY 11 -- The Kingdom of God

Any who have not carefully examined this subject, with concordance and Bible in hand, will be surprised, on doing so, to find its prominence in the Scriptures.

Our Lord Jesus in His talks with His followers strengthened and encouraged their expectations of a coming kingdom, saying to them, "I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging [ruling] the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:29, 30). And, again, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32). And when, instead of being crowned and enthroned, their recognized king was crucified, His disciples were sorely disappointed. As two of them expressed it to the supposed stranger on their way to Emmaus after His resurrection, they had "trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel"--delivering them from the Roman yoke, and making of Israel the Kingdom of God in power and glory. But they were sadly disappointed by the changes of the few days previous. Then Jesus opened their understanding by showing them from the Scriptures that His sacrifice was needful first of all before the kingdom could be established.--Luke 14:21, 25-27.

God could have given to Jesus the dominion of earth without redeeming man; for "The Most High rules over the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He pleases." (Dan. 4:32). But God had a grander design than could have been accomplished by such a plan. Such a kingdom could have brought blessings which, however good, could have been of only a temporary character, since all of mankind were under condemnation to death. To make the blessings of His kingdom everlasting and complete, the race had first to be ransomed from death and legally released from the condemnation which passed upon all in Adam.

That in explaining the prophecies Jesus revived the disciples' hope of a coming kingdom is evident from the fact that afterward, as He was leaving them, they inquired, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" His answer, though not explicit, did not contradict their hopes. He said, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath put in His own power."--Acts 1:6,7.

True, the disciples at first, in common with the entire Jewish nation, had an imperfect conception of the Kingdom of God in supposing it to be exclusively an earthly kingdom, even as many to-day err in an opposite direction in supposing it to be exclusively a heavenly kingdom. And many of the parables and dark sayings of our Lord Jesus were intended in due time to correct these misconceptions. But He always held forth the idea of a kingdom, a government, to be established in the earth and to rule among men. And He not only inspired in them a hope for a share in the kingdom, but He also taught them to pray for its establishment--"Your kingdom come; Your will be done ON EARTH as it is in heaven."

To the worldly-wise among the Jews, our Lord seemed an impostor and fanatic; and they considered His disciples mere dupes. His wisdom and tact, and His miracles, they could not well gainsay, nor reasonably account for; yet, from their standpoint of unbelief, His claim that He was the heir of the world, and would establish the promised kingdom which should rule the world, and that His followers, all of them from the humbler walks of life, would be joint-rulers with Him in that kingdom, seemed too absurd for consideration. Rome, with its disciplined warriors, its able generals and immense wealth, was the master of the world, and was daily growing more powerful. Who, then, was this Nazarene? and who were these fishermen, without money or influence, and with but a meager following among the common people? Who were these that they should talk about establishing the kingdom long promised to be the grandest and mightiest earth had ever known?

The Pharisees, hoping to expose the supposed weakness of our Lord's claims, and thereby to undeceive His followers, demanded of Him--When will this kingdom which you preach begin to make its appearance? when will your soldiers arrive? when will this Kingdom of God appear? (Luke 17:20-30). Our Lord's answer would have given them a new thought had they not been prejudiced against Him and blinded by their own supposed wisdom. He answered that His kingdom would never appear in the manner in which they expected it. The kingdom, which He preached, and in which He invited His followers to joint-heirship, was an invisible kingdom, and they must not expect to see it. "He answered them and said, The Kingdom of God comes not with observation [outward manifestation]; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for the Kingdom of God is [to be] in your midst." In a word, He showed that when His kingdom should come, it would be everywhere present and everywhere powerful, yet nowhere visible. So He gave them an idea of the spiritual kingdom which He preached; but they were unprepared and received it not. There was a measure of truth in the Jewish expectation concerning the promised kingdom, which will in due time be realized, as will be shown; but our Lord's reference here is to that spiritual phase of the kingdom, which will be invisible. And as this phase of the kingdom will be first set up, its presence will be unseen, and for a time unrecognized. The privilege of heirship in this spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God was the only offer then being made, and has been the one hope of our high calling during the entire Gospel age, which then began. Hence Jesus referred to it exclusively. (Luke 16:16). This will be more clearly seen as we proceed.

When the parables of our Lord are carefully examined, it will be found that they clearly teach that the coming or setting up of the Kingdom of God in power is future; and, as a matter of course, not until the King comes. So the parable of the young nobleman going into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return, etc. (Luke 19:11-15), clearly locates the establishment of the Kingdom at the return of Christ. And the message sent by the Lord to the Church long years afterward was, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10). From this it is evident that the kings who will reign with Him will not be crowned nor reign as kings in this life.

The Church at present, therefore, is not the Kingdom of God set up in power and glory, but in its incipient, embryo condition. And so, indeed all the expressions of the New Testament with reference to it teach. The kingdom of heaven now suffers violence at the hands of the world; the King was maltreated and crucified; and whosoever will follow in His footsteps shall suffer persecution and violence in some form. This, it will be observed, is true only of the real Church, and not of the nominal one. But the

promise is held out that if now we (the Church, the embryo kingdom) suffer with Christ, we also, in due time, when He takes to Himself His great power and reigns, shall be glorified and shall reign with Him.

With the early Church, the promises of kingdom honor and joint-heirship with the Master were strong incentives to faithfulness under present trials and persecutions, which they had been forewarned to expect; and in all the words of comfort and encouragement in the Apocalypse, given to the seven churches, none shine out more clearly and forcibly than those which declare, "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne;" and, "To him that overcomes will I give power over the nations.

These are promises which could not reasonably be misconstrued to apply to a present work of grace in the heart, nor yet to a reign over the nations in the present life; since they who would overcome must do so by death in the service, and gain the kingdom honors.--Rev. 20:6.

Two Phases of the Kingdom of God

While it is true, as stated by our Lord, that the Kingdom of God comes not--does not make its first appearance--with outward show, in due time it is to be made manifest to all by outward, visible and unmistakable signs. When fully set up, the Kingdom of God will be of two parts, a spiritual or heavenly phase and an earthly or human phase. The spiritual will always be invisible to men, as those composing it will be of the divine, spiritual nature, which no man hath seen nor can see (1 Tim 6:16; John 1:18); yet its presence and power will be mightily manifested, chiefly through its human representatives, who will constitute the earthly phase of the Kingdom of God.

Those who will constitute the spiritual phase of the kingdom are the overcoming saints of the Gospel age--the Christ, head and body--glorified. Their resurrection and exaltation to power precedes that of all others, because through this class all others are to be blessed. (Heb. 11:39, 40). Theirs is the first resurrection. (Rev. 20:5). The great work before this glorious anointed company--the Christ--necessitates their exaltation to the divine nature; no other than divine power could accomplish it. Theirs is a work pertaining not only to this world, but to all things in heaven and in earth--among spiritual as well as among human beings.--Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:20; Eph. 1:10; Phil. 2:10, 1 Cor. 6:3.

The work of the earthly phase of the Kingdom of God will be confined to this world and to humanity. And those (the Ancient Worthies) so highly honored as to have a share in it will be the most exalted and honored of God among men. As the spiritual nature is necessary to the accomplishment of the work of Christ, so perfect human nature is appropriate for the future accomplishment of the work to be done among men. These will minister among and be seen of men, while the glory of their perfection will be a constant example and an incentive to other men to strive to attain the same perfection. And that these Ancient Worthies will be in the human phase of the kingdom and seen of mankind is fully attested by Jesus' words to the unbelieving Jews who were rejecting Him. He said, "You shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God." It should be noticed also, that the Master does not mention that He or the apostles will be visible with Abraham. As a matter of fact, men will see and mingle with the earthly phase of the kingdom, but not with the spiritual; and some will, no doubt, be sorely vexed to find that they rejected so great an honor.

As Jerusalem was the seat of empire under the typical Kingdom of God, it will again occupy the same position, and be "the city of the Great King." (Psa. 48:2; Matt. 5:35). A city is a symbol of a kingdom or dominion, and so God's Kingdom is symbolized by the New Jerusalem, the new dominion coming from heaven to earth. At first it will consist of only the spiritual class, the Bride of Christ, which, as seen by John, will gradually come down to earth; that is, it will gradually come into power as the present empires break in pieces, during the Day of the Lord. In due time, however, the earthly phase of this city of government will be established, parts or members of which will be the Ancient Worthies. There will not be two cities (governments), but one city, one heavenly government, the one for which Abraham looked, "a city which hath foundations"--a government established in righteousness, being founded upon the sure rock foundation of the righteousness of Christ the Redeemer, the value of man's ransom which He gave, and the firmness of divine justice, which can no more condemn the redeemed than it could previously excuse the guilty.--Rom 8:31-34; 1 Cor. 3:11.

Glorious City of Peace! whose walls signify salvation, protection and blessing to all who enter it, whose foundations laid in justice can never be moved, and whose builder and designer is God! It is in the light which will shine from this glorious city (kingdom) of God that the nations (people) will walk on the highway of holiness, up to perfection and to full harmony with God.--Rev. 21:24.

The Iron Rule

Many erroneously suppose that when Christ's Millennial Kingdom is inaugurated every one will be pleased with its ruling. But not so. Its regulations will be far more exacting than those of any previous government, and the liberties of the people will be restricted to a degree that will be galling indeed to many now clamoring for an increase of liberty. Liberty to deceive, to misrepresent, to overreach and to defraud others, will be entirely cut off. Liberty to abuse themselves or others in food or in drink, or in any way to corrupt good manners, will be totally denied to all. Liberty or license to do wrong of any sort will not be granted to any. The only liberty that will be granted to any will be the true and glorious liberty of the sons of God--liberty to do good to themselves and others in any and in every way; but nothing will be allowed to injure or destroy in all that Holy Kingdom. (Isa. 11:9; Rom. 8:21). That rule will consequently be felt by many to be a severe one, breaking up all their former habits and customs, as well as breaking up present institutions founded upon these false habits and false ideas of liberty. Because of its firmness and vigor, it is symbolically called an iron rule--"He shall rule them with a rod of iron." (Compare Rev. 2:26, 27; Psa. 2:8-12 and 49:14). So will be fulfilled the statement, "Judgment will I lay to the line and righteousness to the plummet. And the hail [righteous judgment] shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters [truth] shall overflow the hiding place," and every hidden thing shall be revealed.--Isa. 28:17; Matt. 10:26.

Many will feel rebellious against that perfect and equitable rule because accustomed in the past, under the rule of the present prince, to lord it over their fellow mortals, and to live wholly at the expense of others without rendering compensating service. And many and severe will be the stripes which a present life of self-indulgence and gratification will naturally demand and receive under that reign, before such will learn the lessons of that kingdom--equity, justice, righteousness. (Psa. 89:32; Luke 12:47, 48). The lesson on this subject comes first to the living generation, and is near at hand.--James 5.

But, blessed thought! when the Prince of Life has put in force the laws of righteousness and equity with an iron rule, the masses of mankind will learn that "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." They will learn that God's plan and laws are best in the end for all concerned, and ultimately they will learn to love righteousness and hate iniquity. (Psa. 45:7; Heb. 1:9). All who under that reign have not learned to love the right will be counted unworthy of lasting life and will be cut off from among the people.--Acts 3:23; Rev. 20:9; Psa. 11:5-7.

STUDY 12 -- The Day of Jehovah

The "Day of Jehovah" is the name of that period of time in which God's Kingdom, under Christ, is to be gradually "set up" in the earth, while the kingdoms of this world are passing away and Satan's power and influence over men are being bound. It is everywhere described as a dark day of intense trouble and distress and perplexity upon mankind. And what wonder that a revolution of such proportions, and necessitating such great changes, should cause trouble. Small revolutions have caused trouble in every age; and this, so much greater than any previous revolution, is to be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation--no, nor ever shall be.--Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21, 22.

It is called the "Day of Jehovah" because, though Christ, with royal title and power, will be present as Jehovah's representative, taking charge of all the affairs during this day of trouble, it is more as the General of Jehovah, subduing all things, than as the Prince of Peace, blessing all. Meantime, as false and imperfect views and systems fall, the standard of the new King will rise, and eventually He shall be recognized and owned by all as King of kings. So it is presented by the prophets as Jehovah's work to set up Christ's dominion: "I will give you the Gentiles for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." (Psa. 2:8). "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom." (Dan. 2:44). The Ancient of days did sit, and there was brought before Him one like unto a son of man, and there was given him a dominion, that all kingdoms should serve and obey him. (Dan. 7:9, 13, 14, 22, 27). Added to these is Paul's statement that, when Christ shall accomplish the object of His reign,

“then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him [the Father] that PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIM.” -1 Cor. 15:28.

This period is called the “Day of Vengeance of our God,” and a “Day of Wrath.” (Isa. 61:2; 63:1-4; Psa. 60:5.) And yet the mind that grasps only the idea of anger, or supposes divine malice, seriously errs. God has established certain laws, in harmony with which He operates, and those who from any cause come into conflict with these reap the penalty or wrath of their own course. God’s counsel to mankind has been continually rejected, except by the few; and, as we have shown, He permitted them to have their own way and to drop Him and His counsels from their hearts. (Rom. 1:28).

The Present Situation

We here mark more particularly the present aspect of affairs in the world, as we now see them shaping themselves for the rapidly approaching conflict--a conflict which, when its terrible climax is reached, must necessarily be a short one, else the race would be exterminated. The two rival parties to this battle are already visible. Wealth, arrogance and pride are on one side, and widely-prevailing poverty, ignorance, bigotry and a keen sense of injustice are on the other. Both, impelled by selfish motives, are now organizing their forces all over the civilized world. With our eyes anointed with truth, wherever we look we can see that the sea and the waves are already roaring and lashing and foaming out against the mountains, as represented in the threats and attempts of anarchists and discontents whose numbers are constantly increasing. We can see, too, that the friction between the various factions or elements of society is rapidly getting to the point described by the prophets, when the earth (society) will be on fire, and the elements will melt and disintegrate with the mutually generated heat.

All this trouble will but prepare the world to realize that though men may plan and arrange ever so well and wisely, all their plans will prove futile as long as ignorance and selfishness are in the majority and have the control. It will convince all that the only feasible way of correcting the difficulty is by the setting up of a strong and righteous government, which will subdue all classes, and enforce principles of righteousness, until gradually the stony-heartedness of men will, under favorable influences, give place to the original image of God. And this is just what God has promised to accomplish for all, by and through the Millennial Reign of Christ, which Jehovah introduces by the chastisements and lessons of this day of trouble.--Ezek. 11:19; 36:25, 36; Jer. 31:29-34; Zeph. 3:9; Psa. 46:8-10.

Duty and Privilege of the Saints

An important question arises regarding the duty of the saints during this trouble, and their proper attitude toward the two opposing classes now coming into prominence. That some of the saints will still be in the flesh during at least a part of this burning time seems possible. Their position in it, however, will differ from that of others, not so much in that they will be miraculously preserved (though it is distinctly promised that their bread and water shall be sure), but in the fact that, being instructed from God’s Word, they will not feel the same anxiety and hopeless dread that will overspread the world. They will recognize the trouble as the preparation, according to God’s plan, for blessing the whole world, and they will be cheered and comforted through it all. This is forcibly stated in Psa. 41; Isa. 33:2-14, 15-24.

So comforted and blessed by the divine assurance, the first duty of the saints is to let the world see that in the middle of all the prevailing trouble and discontent, and even while they share the trouble and suffer under it, they are hopeful, cheerful and always rejoicing in view of the glorious outcome foretold in God’s Word.

The Apostle has written that “Godliness with contentment is great gain;” and though this has always been true, it will have double force in this Day of the Lord, when discontent is the chief ailment among all worldly classes. To these the saints should be a notable exception. There never was a time when dissatisfaction was so wide-spread; and yet there never was a time when men enjoyed so many favors and blessings. Wherever we look, whether into the palaces of the rich, replete with conveniences and splendors of which Solomon in all his glory knew almost nothing, or whether we look into the comfortable home of the thrifty and temperate wage-worker, with its evidence of taste, comfort, art and luxury, we see that in every way the present exceeds in bountiful supply every other period since the creation, many-fold; and yet the people are unhappy and discontented. The fact is that the desires of a selfish, depraved heart know no bounds. Selfishness has so taken possession of all, that, as we look out,

we see the whole world madly pushing and driving and clutching after wealth. A few only being successful, the remainder are envious and soured because they are not the fortunate ones, and all are discontented and miserable--more so than in any former time.

But the saint should take no part in that struggle. His consecration vow was that he would strive and grasp and run for a higher, a heavenly prize, and hence he is weaned from earthly ambitions, and labors not for earthly things, except to provide things decent and needful; for he is giving heed to the course and example of the Master and the apostles.

Therefore they have contentment with their godliness, not because they have no ambition, but because their ambition is turned heavenward and absorbed in the effort to lay up treasure in heaven and to be rich toward God; in view of which, and of their knowledge of God's plans revealed in His Word, they are content with whatever of an earthly sort God may provide. These can joyfully sing: "Content, whatever lot I see, Since 'tis God's hand that leadeth me."

If the example of the saints is one of contentment and joyful anticipation, and a cheerful submission to present trials in sure hope of the good time coming, such living examples alone are valuable lessons for the world. And in addition to the example, the counsel of the saints to those about them should be in harmony with their faith. It should be of the nature of ointment and healing balm. Advantage should be taken of circumstances to point the world to the good time coming, to preach to them the coming Kingdom of God, and to show the real cause of present troubles, and the only remedy.--Luke 3:14; Heb. 13:5; Phil. 4:11.

STUDY 13 -- Concluding Thoughts

In the preceding chapters we have seen that both the light of nature and that of revelation clearly demonstrate the fact that an intelligent, wise, almighty and righteous God is the creator of all things, and that He is the supreme and right Lord of all; that all things animate and inanimate are subject to His control; and that the Bible is the revelation of His character and plans so far as He is pleased to disclose them to men. From it we have learned that though evil now predominates among some of His creatures, it exists for only a limited time and to a limited extent, and by His permission, for wise ends which He has in view. We have also learned that though darkness now covers the earth, and gross darkness the people, yet God's light will in due time dispel all the darkness, and the whole earth will be filled with His glory.

We have seen that His great plan is one that has required ages for its accomplishment this far, and that yet another age will be required to complete it; and that during all the dark ages of the past, when God seemed to have almost forgotten His creatures, His plan for their future blessing has been silently but grandly working out, though during all those ages the mysteries of His plan have been wisely hidden from men. We have also seen that the day or age which is now about to dawn upon the world is to be the day of the world's judgment or trial, and that all previous preparation has been for the purpose of giving mankind in general as favorable an opportunity as possible, when, as individuals, they will be placed on trial for eternal life. The long period of six thousand years has greatly multiplied the race, and their buffetings and sufferings under the dominion of evil have given them an experience which will be greatly to their advantage when they are brought to judgment. And though the race as a whole has been permitted to suffer for six thousand years, yet as individuals they have run their course in a few brief years.

We have seen that while the race was undergoing this necessary discipline, in due time God sent His Son to redeem them; and that while the mass of mankind did not recognize the Redeemer in His humiliation, and would not believe that the Lord's Anointed would come to their rescue, yet from among those whose hearts were toward God, and who believed His promises, God has been, during these ages past, selecting two companies to receive the honors of His kingdom--the honors of sharing in the execution of the divine plan. These two select companies, we have seen, are to constitute the two phases of the Kingdom of God. And from the prophets we learn that this kingdom is soon to be established in the earth; that under its wise and just administration all the families of the earth will be blessed with a most favorable opportunity to prove themselves worthy of everlasting life; that as the result of their redemption by the

precious blood of Christ, a grand highway of holiness will be cast up; that the ransomed of the Lord (all mankind--Heb. 2:9) may walk in it; that it will be a public thoroughfare made comparatively easy for all who earnestly desire to become pure, holy; and that all the stumbling stones will be gathered out, and all the snares, allurements and pitfalls removed, and blessed will all those be who go up thereon to perfection and everlasting life.

It is manifest that this judgment, or rulership, cannot begin until Christ, whom Jehovah hath appointed to be the Judge or Ruler of the World, has come again--not again in humiliation, but in power and great glory: not again to redeem the world, but to judge [rule] the world in righteousness. A trial can in no case proceed until the judge is on the bench and the court in session at the appointed time, though before that time there may be a great preparatory work. Then shall the King sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall judge them during that age by their works, opening to them the books of the Scriptures and filling the earth with the knowledge of the Lord. And by their conduct under all that favor and assistance He shall decide who of them are worthy of life everlasting in the ages of glory and joy to follow.--Matt. 25:31; Rev. 20:11-13.

So we have seen that the second advent of Messiah, to set up His kingdom in the earth, is an event in which all classes of men may have hope, an event which, when fully understood, will bring joy and gladness to all hearts. It is the day when the Lord's "little flock" of consecrated saints has the greatest cause for rejoicing. It is the glad day when the espoused virgin Church with joy becomes the Bride, the Lamb's wife; when she comes up out of the wilderness leaning upon the arm of her Beloved, and enters into His glorious inheritance. It is the day when the true Church, glorified with its Head, will be endued with divine authority and power, and will begin the great work of the world, the result of which will be the complete restoration of all things. And it will be a glad day for the world when the great adversary is bound, when the fetters that have held the race for six thousand years are broken, and when the knowledge of the Lord fills the whole earth as the waters cover the sea.

A knowledge of these things, and the evidences that they are nigh, even at the door, should have a powerful influence upon all, but especially upon the consecrated children of God, who are seeking the prize of the divine nature. We urge such, while they life up their heads and rejoice, knowing that their redemption draws nigh, to lay aside every weight and hindrance, and to run patiently the race in which they have started. Look away from self and its unavoidable weaknesses and imperfections, knowing that all such weaknesses are covered fully by the merits of the ransom given by Christ Jesus our Lord, and that your sacrifices and self-denials are acceptable to God through our Redeemer and Lord—and this only. Let us remember that the strength sufficient which God has promised us, and by use of which we can be "overcomers," is provided in His Word. It is a strength derived from a knowledge of His character and plans, and of the conditions upon which we may share in them. So Peter expresses it, saying, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord, according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that BY THESE you might be partakers of the divine nature."--2 Pet. 1:2-4.

But to obtain this knowledge and this strength, which God proposes to supply to each runner for the heavenly prize, will surely test the sincerity of your consecration vows. You have consecrated all your time, all your talents, to the Lord; now the question is, How much of it are you giving? Are you still willing, according to your covenant of consecration, to give up all?--to give up your own plans and methods, and the theories of yourselves and others, to accept of God's plan and way and time of doing His great work? Are you willing to do this at the cost of earthly friendships and social ties? And are you willing to give up time from other things for the investigation of these glorious themes so heart-cheering to the truly consecrated, with the certain knowledge that it will cost you this self-denial? If all is not consecrated, or if you only half meant it when you gave all to the Lord, then you will begrudge the time and effort needful to search His Word as for hid treasure, to obtain the strength needful for all the trials of faith incident to the present (the dawn of the Millennium) above other times.

But think not that the giving will end with the giving of the needful time and energy to this study: it will not. The sincerity of your sacrifice of self will be tested in full, and will prove you either worthy or

unworthy of membership in that "little flock," the overcoming Church, which will receive the honors of the kingdom. If you give diligence to the Word of God, and receive its truths into a good, honest, consecrated heart, it will beget in you such a love for God and His plan, and such a desire to tell the good tidings, to preach the gospel, that it will become the all-absorbing theme of life thereafter; and this will not only separate you from the world and from many nominal Christians, in spirit, but it will lead to separation from such entirely. They will think you peculiar and separate you from their company, and you will be despised and counted a fool for Christ's sake; because they know us not, even as they knew not the Lord.--2 Cor. 4:8-10; Luke 6:22; 1 John 3:1; 1 Cor. 3:18.

Are you willing to follow on to know the Lord through evil and through good report? Are you willing to forsake all, to follow as He may lead you by His Word? --to ignore the wishes of friends, as well as your own desires? It is hoped that many of the consecrated who read this booklet may by it be so quickened to fresh zeal and fervency of spirit, through a clearer apprehension of the divine plan, that they will be able to say, "By the grace of God, I will follow on to know and to serve the Lord, whatever may be the sacrifice involved." Like the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11) let such studiously set themselves to prove what has been presented in the foregoing pages. Prove it, not by the conflicting traditions and creeds of men, but by the only correct and divinely authorized standard--God's own Word. It is to facilitate such investigation that we have cited so many Scriptures.

It will be useless to attempt to harmonize the divine plan herein set forth with many of the ideas previously held and supposed to be Scriptural, yet not proved so. It will be observed that the divine plan is complete and harmonious with itself in every part, and that it is in perfect harmony with the character which the Scriptures ascribe to its great Author. It is a marvelous display of wisdom, justice, love and power. It carries with it its own evidence of superhuman design, being beyond the power of human comprehension.

Doubtless questions will arise on various points inquiring for solution according to the plan herein presented. Careful, thoughtful Bible study will settle many of these at once; and to all we can confidently say, No question which you can raise need go without a sufficient answer, fully in harmony with the views herein presented. This harmony not only with the Bible, but with the divine character and with sanctified common sense, must have arrested the attention of the conscientious reader already, and filled him with awe, as well as with hope and confidence. It is marvelous indeed, yet just what we should expect of the TRUTH, and of God's infinitely wise and beneficent plan.

And while the Bible is opening up from this standpoint, and disclosing wondrous things (Psa. 69:18), the light of the present day upon the various creeds and traditions of men is affecting them in an opposite manner. They are being recognized even by their worshippers as imperfect and deformed, and hence they are being measurably ignored; and though still subscribed to, they are seldom elaborated; for very shame. And the shame attaching to these human creeds and traditions is spreading to the Bible, which is supposed to uphold these deformities of thought as of divine origin. Hence the freedom with which the various advanced thinkers, so-called, are beginning to deny various parts of the Bible not congenial to their views. How striking, then, the providence of God, which at this very time opens before His children this truly glorious and harmonious plan--a plan that rejects not one, but harmonizes every part and item of His Word. Truth, when due, becomes meat for the household of faith, that they may grow thereby. (Matt. 24:45). Whoever comes in contact with truth, realizing its character, has thereby a responsibility with reference to it. It must be either received and acted upon, or rejected and despised. To ignore it does not release from responsibility. If we accept it ourselves, we have a responsibility TOWARD IT also, because it is for ALL the household of faith; and each one receiving it becomes its debtor, and, if a faithful steward, must dispense it to the other members of the family of God. Let your light shine! If it again becomes darkness, how great will be the darkness. Lift up the light! Lift up a standard for the people!

AFTERWARD

"God's ways are equal: storm or calm,
Seasons of peril and of rest,
The hurting dart, the healing balm,
Are all apportioned as is best.
In judgments oft misunderstood,
In ways mysterious and obscure,
He brings from evil lasting good,
And makes the final gladness sure.
While Justice takes its course with strength,
Love bids our faith and hope increase:
He'll give the chastened world at length
His afterward of peace.

"When the dread forces of the gale
His sterner purposes perform,
And human skill can naught avail
Against the fury of the storm,
Let loving hearts trust in Him still,
Through all the dark and devious way;
For who would thwart His blessed will,
Which leads through night to joyous day?
Be still beneath His tender care;
For He will make the tempest cease,
And bring from out the anguish here
An afterward of peace.

"Look up, O Earth; no storm can last
Beyond the limits God hath set.
When its appointed work is past,
In joy you shall your grief forget.
Where sorrow's plowshare hath swept through,
Your fairest flowers of life shall spring,
For God shall grant you life anew,
And all your wastes shall laugh and sing.
Hope you in Him; His plan for you
Shall end in triumph and release.
Fear not, for you shall surely see
His afterward of peace."