

GOD'S PLAN OF THE AGES

The art of reasoning can be summed up in two words: "Cause" and "Effect." Everything that can be seen or discerned in any way is an *effect*, and proves the prior existence of a *cause*. The 92 primary elements, of which the earth is said to consist, are the effect. Each one is the end result, or effect, of a long series of actions and reactions which trace back to a primary cause. Our modern scientists tell us as much; but when we ask them how the primary cause came into being, they are silent. Some frankly admit that they don't know.

Yet, simple reason tells us that by carrying the principle of "Cause and Effect" back to the beginning of all things, we arrive at the *First Great Cause*, since we are dealing with the beginning of physical or material things.

At this point we must stop, since no human mind is capable of comprehending beyond the idea of a Great First Cause. It is at this point that the Bible enters the scene. It reveals the fact that Almighty God is the Great First Cause. No man can, by searching, understand this. The things that are secret belong to God, but the things He has revealed He has given to the children of men (Deut. 29:29). The Bible is God's Divine revelation given to mankind. It tells us that God is Almighty, and that He is the Creator of all things, holding all things in the hollow of His hand. That simply means that He has everything under control at all times. We are told that even the wrath of man shall praise Him (Psa. 76:10), and when the permission of evil has accomplished its purpose, it will be brought to an end to show forth the wisdom of our Creator.

The Bible does not claim to be a treatise on natural phenomena or science. It deals with the introduction of sin into the world; shows the evil consequences of sin; tells us what God is doing about it all, and how it will eventually be eradicated from the earth. Peace and harmony will be restored. The opening chapters of Genesis give us but a brief outline of Creation.

In the Beginning

The Bible opens with the words, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" In the beginning of what? Many err at this very point. The text continues, "and the earth **was** without form and void." Since the earth already "was" already in existence, then it must refer to the beginning of the ordering of the earth for man's habitation upon it. It cannot apply to the beginning of the Universe because the earth already was in existence.

Back in the Dark Ages when men thought that the earth was the center of the Universe and that all heavenly bodies revolved around it, the interpretation of the Bible was forced to fit their preconceived ideas. But added light on material things gives us a clearer perspective of the Bible today. The six days of creation were not literal days as was insisted on in the past but six "ages" or "epochs." The Bible contains much figurative or symbolic language.

These six "days" of Creation, referring to six periods of time, are of a length which is not stated. This agrees with what geologists tell us, that the earth passed through six stages of development. So instead of the Bible being "an old wives' tale," it predates our modern research by thousands of years.

If it is a record of the preparation of the earth's surface, how then can we explain the mention of the sun and the moon on the fourth day of creation? We must bear in mind that when the earth was in the process of preparation, it was surrounded by a great cloud of gases and vapors so that *"darkness was upon the face of the deep"* (Gen. 1:2). It was not until the fourth day that this cloud blanket was sufficiently thinned out so that along with the precipitation on the earth of various minerals, water, carbon, etc., the sun, moon and later the stars were *enabled* to shine through this envelope of darkness. Since nobody knows when the moon became a satellite of the earth, it may have become so at that time, and the placing of the moon in orbit around the earth may have had to do with the thinning of the envelope of vapor and gas.

Evolution

Most evolutionists, in their zeal to prove their theories, repudiate the Bible. However, even they have modified their views somewhat from what the first advocates claimed. To support their theory, they are still trying to find a common link between man and the lower animals. Some claim to have found such a link, but such so-called proofs are far-fetched.

Whether or not God used an evolutionary process with the plants and lower animals should not particularly concern us. However, when it comes to man, we are specifically told by God that he was created and did not go through any "evolutionary" process. The Bible, while it agrees with all true science, is not a "science textbook." This is not what God intended for it to reveal, but rather it was given to reveal His wonderful Plan of Salvation and man's recovery from sin and death. As far as man is concerned, no proof has been produced that he has been on earth for much more than 6,000 years. Some carbon 14 tests on charcoal, it is claimed, trace back for 10,000 years, from which it has been assumed that man has been on earth for this period of time, but logical explanations can be offered to show otherwise.

As has been stated, the six days of creation were not literal, twenty-four-hour days. In Psalms 90:4 we learn that *"A thousand years in thy sight is as yesterday,"* and in 2 Peter 3:8 we read, *"One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* We also read of *"the day of temptation in the wilderness"* (Psa. 95:8), which was forty years long. Thus the word *day* is an accommodative one, the length of which must be determined by the circumstances relating to it. It is not important that we know how long they were, so long as we see that "periods of time" are indicated.

Life

In Genesis 2:7 we have a detailed account of the Creation of man. We read that God formed man of the elements of the earth, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and *"man became a living soul."* God had planted a garden eastward in Eden and put the first man in this garden. It contained all kinds of herbs and fruits. Later we are told that God said, *"It is not good for man to live alone"* and determined that Adam should have a *"help-mate."* Thus He caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam, and He removed a portion from his side and formed a woman. Adam called her Eve. In Eden there are two special trees mentioned: *"the tree of life,"* and *"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."* Adam was told he could freely eat of all the trees except *"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."* This was God's express commandment - His will - and it entailed consequences, if violated. *"In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die"* (Gen. 2:17).

Sin and Death

We then learn that another being enters the scene. We read that the serpent spoke to Mother Eve and lied to her by contradicting the truth of what God had commanded. He told her that she would *“not surely die.”* He deceived her by lying, something she had never heard or known of before. Knowing that the fruit of the tree was attractive to the sight, smell and taste for human beings, Satan suggested that wisdom was a thing to be desired. He made no mention of any possible consequences of disobeying God. But he raised doubt in Eve’s mind and thus confused her.

Since Adam and Eve were the only human beings in existence, it is evident that Satan was a supernatural being. In Rev. 12:9 and 20:2, he is called both *“Satan”* and *“the Devil”* -- meaning opposer and enemy. He became the *“enemy”* and *“opposer”* of God from the time he tempted Eve. Our Lord called him a *“murderer from the beginning”* (of the creation of man) and *“the father of lies”* (John 8:44).

The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Tim. 2:14 that Adam was **not** deceived but that Eve was. Adam must have realized the consequences of his act, yet he deliberately ate the forbidden fruit. No doubt not wanting to live without Eve and not trusting God, but putting another ahead of his love and loyalty to his Creator, he chose to join her in disobeying God. As the direct result of their disobedience, we learn that *“their eyes were opened,”* and they suddenly realized that they were naked and became ashamed. There has been a lot of conjecture on this point. The Bible distinctly tells us that *the act of disobedience* was the *“original sin.”* *“By one man’s disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all”* (Rom. 5:19). Whatever else happened was the direct *result* of disobeying God. The procreation of the human race had God’s blessing, and the **act** of producing children is not sin. In Genesis 1:28 God commanded, *“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”*

The Curse

The curse that was pronounced on the human race was *death*. Death is the antithesis of life, its very opposite. Since man did not become a living soul when his body was formed until breath entered his nostrils, in like manner, when he dies his breath leaves his body, he loses all consciousness and ceases to be a living soul. Eccl. 9:5 states, *“For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten.”* And in Psalms 6:5 we are told, *“No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave (Hebrew ‘sheol’)?”*

Death is the penalty pronounced by God. All living things hate and fear death for themselves, and strive against it with all their might. Life is a boon, and even the tiniest insect seeks to perpetuate its life as long as it can. No rational being wants to die. The fact that doctors, drugstores, and hospitals do such a thriving business proves this.

The curse pronounced on Adam and Eve had a gradual process of fulfillment. It was not fulfilled instantaneously. The curse was, *“dying thou shalt die.”* The translators of the Bible never grasped the full significance of this curse and so they translated it, *“In the day thou eatest of it thou shalt surely die.”* The marginal reference gives the exact Hebrew. When the first pair was driven out of Eden, a slow process of dying began. Each day they lived they were dying until old age claimed them. A man who is truly alive never would age or die. Old age is the sum total of the gradual weakening and wearing out of the body. But Adam was so well formed and near to perfection that he lived for 930 years. Since this is just short of 1,000 years, which we are told is *“as a day with the Lord,”* then Adam died within that same “day” in which he sinned. Thus God’s Word was truly fulfilled. No one has lived a full 1,000 years.

Genesis 5:27 tells us the oldest man who ever lived was Methuselah who died at 969 years, which was also within the 1,000-year "day."

Every doctor's sign, every hospital, every drugstore, every funeral parlor is a witness to the outworking of the death curse on the human race. As previously stated, God had established many laws to govern the operation of His Universe. One of the laws of nature is the law of heredity. The offspring always inherit the characteristics and general form and appearance of their parents. Each creature brings forth "*after its kind*" (Genesis 1:25). So the parents can give to their offspring only what they have to give. Since Adam was now a dying man, he could beget only a dying race. Thus, we have all been born dying. Each day we live we are one day nearer the grave. "*For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything*" (Eccl. 9:5).

This is a sad and sorrowful picture. Every funeral is a witness to the outworking of the curse which disobedience brought. Not only do we have aches and pains throughout our lives, but we all must face death itself, mankind's great enemy.

Is there no hope? Is there no deliverance? Will there ever be a cessation of the curse? Yes, *thank God, there is hope* which the Bible holds out. There has been a way of deliverance provided. The curse of death will cease in God's "due time." God is not heartless. He is not unkind or thoughtless of His creatures. When He pronounced the curse on our first parents, He also gave them a ray of hope. He promised that "the seed of the woman would bruise (or crush) the serpent's head" (Gen. 3:15).

When Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden, they were compelled to earn their living by the sweat of their brows. They began to learn by bitter experience the results of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. When Cain killed his brother Abel, they saw the fruitage of their sinful course. In Genesis 5:3, 4 we learn that Adam begat many sons and daughters. He died at 930. Then the dying process was complete.

In the next several chapters of Genesis, we are told that "*the sons of God married the daughters of men*" and that men's hearts were filled with "*evil continually*," and that violence had filled the earth. Those "*sons of God*" were evidently the angels of heaven who came to earth and materialized, causing great evil in Noah's day. Instead of helping the human race as guardian angels, they, like Satan, became wicked in their hearts and led men further astray. They too became "satans" or "enemies" of God and man. Thus, God sent the flood and destroyed men, for he knew that it would be best and for their ultimate good in the coming kingdom not to allow them to continue in their evil. After this, the earth was repopulated by the offspring of Noah. God imprisoned the sinning angels in Tartaroo (the earth's atmosphere) until the great Judgment Day (2 Pet. 2:4, 5; Jude 6).

Babel

Several generations after the flood we find the descendants of Noah soon forgetting God again and attempting to build a tower reaching to heaven. The reason they did this is stated in Genesis 11:4: "*Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.'*" God did not allow them to finish it. They had all spoken one common language, but God confounded their language at the building of this tower of Babel, and they became confused and were scattered over the face of the earth. Hence, they (the world) have been in confusion about God and His Plan ever since. The word *Babel* means confusion.

Abraham

We next read of Abram, who lived about 200 years after the confusion of tongues at Babel. He was called of God while he was in Ur of Chaldea and asked to forsake his father's house and people and journey to a land that the Most High promised him. Abram must have been a person of influence among his own kin, because we are told that his father and his nephew with their families and servants went with him. The caravan evidently passed by the site of the tower of Babel in their journey from Chaldea to Haran. They followed the Euphrates river toward its source in the Lebanon mountains and rested in Haran where Abram's father died. At that time God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, and promised him that he would become the "*father of nations*," and that "in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed." This was the second great promise since God had promised Mother Eve that her seed would bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

Now Abraham was a man well along in years (75 years old) when the promise was made; and since his wife Sarah was barren, it took a lot of faith on his part to believe that promise. But it is written, "*He believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness*" (Gen. 15:6). Even though the Lord had pronounced the curse of death on the human race, He promised Abraham that the time would come when all the people of the earth would be blessed through the "*seed of Abraham*" (Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4).

Bear this thought in mind, as it is vitally important to this wonderful story: When Abraham was 100 years old, his son Isaac was born to his wife, Sarah, who was 90 years old. Then when Isaac had lived some years, God tested Abraham's faith once more by instructing him to sacrifice his son. Imagine, if you can, this test on Abraham who was asked to offer his "only son" as a sacrifice (Gen. 22:2). We read that Abraham did not hesitate, but went obediently to fulfill the command of God. He reasoned that the Most High, who had given him a son in his old age, was able to resurrect that son from death when it pleased Him to do so, for Abraham said to his servants whom he left at the foot of the mountain, "*we will return!*" As Abraham was about to slay his son, God substituted a ram, and Isaac was thus, *figuratively*, received back from the dead (Hebrews 11:19). So God's method of fulfilling His promise to Mother Eve and to Abraham was pictured as a resurrection from the dead. Since death is the antithesis of life, and the dead are all nonexistent, resurrection is God's way of restoring men to life again. The future resurrection of men will happen because of the offering of a satisfactory sacrifice -- *of a Father offering up His only begotten Son*. This sacrifice would be a substitution or redemptive price for the whole sinful race. But as in the case of Abraham, **Faith** is the necessary requirement for all who will be saved from their sins and resurrected from the state of death (Hosea 13:14). Abraham is called "*the father of the faithful*" (Rom. 4:16).

Job

Some years after the time that God called Abraham from Chaldea, another faithful man of God lived in the land of Uz, named Job. In the 1st and 2nd chapters of the Book of Job, we learn that Satan presumed to appear in the presence of God at the same time that the angels came to report to the Most High. Here we find this mighty angel, who had once been called Lucifer, the "*son of the morning*," now the active opposer and enemy of God, presuming to defy God to His face. Since the Almighty had been permitting the adversary to carry out his attempts in a limited manner in order to teach men the exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom. 7:13), God permitted Satan to tempt Job.

Even though Job could not understand why he was being tormented, he still trusted God and looked to Him for eventual deliverance. He said, "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.*" "*If a man die, shall*

he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.” “I know that my Redeemer liveth; though the worms destroy my body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 13:15, 14:14, 19:25, 26). Job trusted in God and loved righteousness. When he had been fully tested, God restored him double of all he formerly had. In this book we find a beautiful picture of the human race being tempted and tormented by Satan and his evil angel associates and learning the results of sin and evil.. We also find the deliverance from sin and death and eventual restoration to God’s favor and protection in the resurrection in the coming Kingdom of the *“King of Kings and Lord of Lords”* (Rev. 19:16).

Moses

When God delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage at the hand of Moses, He led them to the land of Promise. But the Israelites, because of disobedience and unbelief, were never able to appreciate the goodness of God, nor experience the full blessing of long life and prosperity promised to them. They, as the natural *“seed”* of Abraham, because of their disobedience, forfeited their right to become a *“kingdom of priests”* (Ex.19:6).

Moses prophesied in Deut. 18:15, 18, *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.” “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.”*

In a sense, Moses was an allegorical representation of that Great Prophet, who was also a Priest and King, Jesus Christ. As Moses, by the power of God, delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage and led them to the promised land, so the Great Deliverer will free the human race from the bondage of sin and corruption. He will introduce the *“times of restitution”* when, after the awakening from death, he will grant each one an opportunity to enter into God’s promised land, the Kingdom of the Lord. Moses, as the mediator, gave Israel the Law Covenant, which promised life to the man who could keep it. But no Jew ever received life under the Law Covenant. Why? Because the Law of the Lord is perfect, and no imperfect man could keep a perfect law (Psalms 19:7).

David and Solomon

The nation of Israel attained its nearest approach to the promised blessings in the days of David and Solomon. David, a King of Israel, was also a prophet and wrote many prophetic psalms, or songs. He, like Abraham, Job, and Moses, had faith in God and His promises. He is called *“a man after God’s own heart.”* He had great faith and displayed great loyalty to the Lord his God, and although he sinned grievously before the Lord, he repented deeply as shown in Psalm 51. He cemented Israel into a strong, compact nation. He defeated all of their enemies and accomplished many heroic feats because of his trust in God. Because of his faith and his loyalty to God, the Most High promised him that his seed would sit on the throne of the Lord forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16). In one of David’s prophecies, Israel was promised a perpetual Priest, a priest on his throne. He wrote, *“Thou art a priest forever after the manner of Melchizedec”* (Psalms 110:4).

The Prophets

Thus we find Moses prophesying about a great Prophet and Teacher, and David speaking about an everlasting Priest and King upon his throne. Both of these offices would be fulfilled in one great Prophet, Priest and King, the Messiah--the Lord Jesus Christ. He would be a Mediator of *“a better covenant, established on better promises”* (Heb. 8:6); a great High priest who could offer up **one** enduring sacrifice for sins; a great King who would be God’s *“right arm”* who would conquer death and the grave, destroying the enemies of the Most High, and eventually establishing the glorious Kingdom

of God on earth while raising the human race from the death condition into harmony and oneness with God as their Father. Mankind was made to find their fulfillment in their Creator and to enjoy Him forever. This being God's plan, it will succeed. Isa. 55:11 tells us, *"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."* All of these facts are presented by the prophets of God. Jeremiah tells us in chapter 31:31 that the days would come when God would make a New Covenant with the house of Judah and with Israel, not according to the Old (Law) Covenant which they broke, but a new one in which He would actually take away their sins: that the time would come when it will not be necessary to say, *"Do you know the Lord?", for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest."* In these words we learn that a great Deliverer from sin did come at his first advent to *"take out a people for his Name,"* his Church, and he will come again with his Bride to lead and teach the people righteousness in his coming kingdom (Isaiah 26:9; Rev. 22:17). The blessings of the New Covenant, beginning at Pentecost, will ripple throughout Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

The prophets had little understanding of the significance of some of their utterances which were hidden from them. They mention the laying of the sins upon a person instead of an animal, and in prophetic vision they see him who is to redeem and deliver the human 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 picture him as *"despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,"* and it was declared of him, *"The Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:3-6).* They told where this Deliverer would be born, 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,"* and that he had done *"no violence"* (Isa. 53: 8, 9, 11); his betrayal for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12); and that he would be *"numbered among the transgressors"* in his death (Isa. 53:12); that *"not a bone of him should be broken"* (Psa. 34:20); and that though he should die and be buried, his flesh would not see corruption, neither would he remain in the grave (Psalms 16:10). There were 27 prophecies that were fulfilled on the day of Messiah's death alone.

The prophets also taught that the coming Messiah would redeem not only Israel, but the Gentiles as well. Isaiah 49:6 says, *"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."* (See Isa. 60:1-3; 66:12; Mal. 1:11.) So this Great Prophet, Priest and King will come to bless all the families of the earth even as God promised to father Abraham.

Who is this great Messiah that was to come and fulfill all these prophecies? He is none other than Jesus of Nazareth whom the Scriptures call *"the Christ."* The word *Christ* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Messiah*. Both words mean *"anointed one"* (John 1:41).

God acknowledged him as His *"only begotten Son,"* sending the Spirit in the form of a dove to descend on him (Mat. 3:14-17; Acts 10:38). The place of his birth was foretold as the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Mat. 2:1,5,6). The place of his residence during his boyhood was also foretold in Isaiah 9:1,2. (See also Mat. 2:23; 4:13-16). His having been born of a virgin was prophesied in Isaiah 7:14. (See also Mat. 1:18-23.) His being taken into Egypt by Joseph was foretold in Hosea 11:1.

The Lamb of God

When Israel was led out of Egypt by Moses, the Passover service was instituted. The blood of the Paschal Lamb was applied to save the firstborn of Israel from death, and deliver Israel from bondage (Ex. 12:1-28). Jesus was called the *"Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world"* (Jn. 1:29). *"He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth"* (Isa. 53:7). This was also prophesied, unwittingly, by the High Priest of Israel to prevent the whole nation from perishing as he explained in John 11:49-52. He was killed by the insistence of the Jews, and died on the 14th of the month Nisan, at the very time that the Passover lambs were being slain (Ex. 12:6).

The Old Testament is filled with many allegories, types, shadows, and pictures, as well as containing many prophecies of God's "Lamb."

The Levitical priesthood, the Tabernacle in the Wilderness with all its furniture and arrangements, with the sacrificing of bulls, goats, sheep and heifers, were all types and shadows of the "better sacrifices" as explained in the book of Hebrews (Heb. 9:13, 14), as representing Jesus.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He came preaching repentance to the Jews and baptizing them unto repentance. He came to *"prepare the way of the Lord"* (Isa. 40:3; John 1:23). Why this practice of baptism?

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea toward the promised land, Paul tells us that they were all *"baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."* They were protected and led with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Israel went down into the Red Sea, walking on its bottom as the water was held back on either side until they had crossed it. Paul refers to this experience as a *"baptism"* which prepared them for the entering into the Law Covenant which was given them shortly thereafter by God at Mt. Sinai with Moses as their mediator (1 Cor. 10:1, 2).

The Law Covenant

Because *"The Law of the Lord is perfect"* (Psalms 19:7) and no Jew was perfect, they all failed to keep it. The Law promised lasting life to *"the man that lives by it"* (Lev. 18:5). The fact that no Jew ever received lasting life under the Law proved that none were able to keep it. The Law revealed to them their sinfulness and their need of acknowledging this fact, so that with repentant and contrite hearts they should have turned away from their sin to serve the Living God. This John called them to do, and to signify this repentance and conversion, he baptized them in the River Jordan. By taking this step, they were prepared to heed and follow the Messiah when he appeared to lead them by a Better Covenant based on Better Promises (Heb. 8:6).

Jesus' Baptism

Jesus came to John, at thirty years of age, and requested John to baptize him. John, seeing Jesus come, said, *"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world"* (John 1:29). Realizing that Jesus was without sin, he did not want to baptize him, but the Lord urged him to do so. The baptism of Jesus was not one of repentance, for he was without sin, but his baptism was a symbol of his consecration unto death to do his Holy Father's will. When he arose up out of the water, John beheld

the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus *“as a dove.”* This was an added witness of Jesus’ anointing. Thus, John *“prepared the way of the Lord.”*

Jesus of Nazareth

Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God and promising forgiveness of sins (Mat. 4-17). He began teaching and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people (Mat. 4:23). This was all in fulfillment of prophecy. (See Isa. 9:6, 7.) While as a Jew he was of the *“seed of Abraham,”* he also proved himself to be not only the Son of David, but also David’s Lord. (See Mat. 1:1; 22:42-44; Mark 12:37-40.) While the common people heard him gladly, the rulers, Scribes and Pharisees, and the Priests hated him because he fearlessly exposed them for the hypocrites that they were. (See John 15:18; Isaiah 53:2, 3)

He prophesied his own death and how he would draw all men unto himself (John 12:32, 34; 3:14). He, who was without sin, died on a tree and became a curse for us all (Isa. 53:3-12; Gal. 3:13). He *“poured out his soul unto death and made himself an offering for sin”* (Isa. 53:10, 12). He died between thieves, being numbered among the transgressors. He was not only the Son and Seed of Abraham and the Son of David, but he was also the Son of God, as God testified Himself before witnesses. (See Mat. 3:17; 17:5) As a Commander and Leader of the people (Isa. 55:4), he called the people to follow him and promised them forgiveness of their sins and everlasting life. (See Mat. 11:28; 1:21; 9:6; Jn. 3:16.)

The Kingdom of Heaven

John came preaching the message of repentance and that *“the kingdom of heaven was at hand”* (Mat. 3:2). Jesus continued with this theme, and invited the Jews to become members of that Kingdom. While the Law Covenant had been emphasizing the *justice* of God, Jesus began preaching the *love and grace* of God, saying, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world (it was already under condemnation) but that the world through him might be saved”* (John 3:16, 17). He said, *“Come unto me, all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Mat. 11:28). *“The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Mat. 20:28). *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”* (Jn. 6:51).

Thus, Jesus Christ spoke, showing that he was fulfilling all that the Old Testament prophets had written concerning him. He came to fulfill their prophecies, as well as the types, shadows, pictures and allegories, all of which pointed to him. He came as the sacrificial lamb, yes, as *“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”* (Rev. 13:8). He came as *the great Priest* to offer up to God one everlasting and acceptable sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. He came as the *great Teacher* to instruct men in righteousness and show them love, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.

He came to his own, his Jewish brethren, to offer them the opportunity, as the natural seed of Abraham, to become joint-heirs with him in the Kingdom of God. He preached not a visible kingdom, but one that was spiritual. He knew that he must first die and be changed to receive the very nature of God Himself, the divine; he was inviting the Jews to accept him as their Saviour and Messiah so that he might promise them a change of nature also to be like him and see him as he would be in his resurrection, and not as he was as a man (1 John 3:2). Since the Jews, as a nation, rejected him as their Saviour and King, the invitation went to the Gentiles from which God has been taking out a people for

His Name, to be joint-heirs with His Son in the Kingdom (Acts 15:14). In this manner the Kingdom of Heaven has been ruling in the hearts of all the followers of the Lord from Pentecost on. The followers of Jesus have been *“rescued out of the Kingdom of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love,”* the Kingdom of Light (Col. 1:12, 13). Thus, the Kingdom commenced some 2,000 years ago and will soon, at the Lord’s Second Coming, spread to all the families of earth.

Gentiles

Jesus first offered the *“high calling”* to the Jews. John 1:11 tells us, *“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”* This offer was extended to them for over three years. There were those who accepted him and John 1:12 tells us, *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”* Because the nation as a whole rejected him, we read Jesus’ sorrowful words at his necessary rejection of them in Matthew 23:37-39: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”*

The Call to the Gentiles

Three and a half years after Jesus’ death, the call was extended to the Gentiles. Peter had the privilege to bring Cornelius, a Roman centurion, into the early church as the first Gentile convert. (See the 10th Chapter of Acts). This new opportunity for the Gentiles is mentioned in Acts 15:14: *“Simon (Peter) has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself.”* The Apostle Paul describes how it became possible for God to now deal with Gentiles. In Eph. 2:11-19 he says, *“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called ‘uncircumcised’ by those who call themselves ‘the circumcision,’ remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household.”*

In Romans 11:17-24, Paul describes the Gentiles as *“wild olive branches”* replacing the *“natural branches”* (the Jews). This chapter also promises that one day Israel’s blindness will be removed and God will have mercy on them. Yes, in Christ’s coming kingdom, the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10 will have its fulfillment: *“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on {or to} me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.”*

The Little Flock

The Plan of God is simple, and yet there is so much confusion among Christians as to exactly what it is. How do we know what it really is? We can find this answer only in the Word of God, which

He gave to reveal to us not only His Plan but also His will for those who heed the call to follow His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is an essential element in coming to understand His Word. The Holy Spirit is given to all who believe that Jesus died for all their sins, repent, and accept the invitation of the Lord Jesus to become his disciples (Acts 2:38). Matthew 16:24 states the steps required to be his disciples: "Then Jesus said to his disciples, *'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'*" The call to discipleship is heard by many, but few choose to walk this narrow way of sacrifice and of "bearing his reproach." Unless one receives the truth in the love of it, he will not be able to endure to the end. In Luke 12:32 Jesus encourages his disciples with these words, *"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."* This little flock follows their leader, the Lamb of God, wherever he leads them (Rev. 14:4). They are *"in the world but not of it"* (Jn. 17:16). They are now a "new creation" in Christ Jesus, *"old things have passed away and all things have become new,"* and they are being led by the spirit of God (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:14). Totally yielded to their Lord, they will be able to overcome "the world, the flesh and the Adversary" by "the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11), living a life of trustful obedience to the will of God, *"looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter"* of their faith (Heb. 12:2).

PART TWO

The Son of God

It is more than likely that the searcher for Truth may be somewhat confused at this point and wondering how one man could be the redeemer of an entire race of men, especially when the Psalmist had written, *"No one can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him"* (Psa. 49:7). Since *"there are none that are righteous, no not one, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:10), who then was this Jesus who claimed to be able to forgive sins and ransom the entire race from the curse of death?

It is evident that no ordinary man could do this. But the texts that have already been quoted show that Jesus was no ordinary man. He was the Son of God, and God Himself testified to that fact (Mat. 3:16, 17). He was also *"holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners"* (Heb. 7:26), for only a perfect sacrifice (sinless) was acceptable to a Holy God.

"By one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death, as the result of sin; so death passed upon all men, because all have sinned. For by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:12, 19). This explains why no son of Adam was able to redeem his brother before God. But Jesus, who was the *"Only Begotten Son of God,"* and was never called the son of Adam, could do what fallen man could not do. How could this be? What follows will explain the problem some may have with this question.

The Logos

In John 1:1,2 we find an extraordinary statement. It is hidden in nearly all of the translations; but as found in the interlinear word for

word translation of the Emphatic Diaglott it reads, *"In a beginning was the Word; and the Word was with **the** God; and god was the Word. This (one) was in the beginning with **the** God."* The Westcott and Hort Interlinear Translation would also concur with the above translation. While there is disagreement from some of our Christian

friends on these verses, there are many other scriptures to support the thought that Jesus is a being totally separate and independent of **the** God who had no beginning but has always existed. Jesus was God's "*Only begotten Son*," as we have stated above. This implies that the Logos, or the Word, had a beginning. Psalm 2:7 states, "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, **Today** I have begotten You.'" (NKJV) This surely infers a beginning. The very word *father* means to beget and the word *son* means one who is begotten--an offspring.

The word *God* in John 1 is the Greek word *theos* which is of "an uncertain affinity," according to Strong's concordance. In the KJV it is translated: "God" 1320 times, "god" 13 times, "godly" 3 times, "God-ward" 2 times. It is a word that is used as a general name of deities or divinities and even magistrates. The context in which it is used determines its proper interpretation. In 2 Cor. 4:4 "*theos*" is used to refer to Satan as the "*god of this age*." The "Word" was, according to the Scriptures, a god or deity. He was not like the angels. He was unique and special, for we read in Hebrews 1:5, "For to which of the angels did God ever say, '*You are my Son; today I have become your Father*'? Or again, '*I will be his Father, and he will be my Son*.'" John 1:14 goes on to say, "*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, {Or the Only Begotten} who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" In Col. 1:15 & 16 Paul says of Jesus, "*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.*" He was the one in Gen. 1:26 that God spoke to when He said, "*Let **us** make man in our image, in our likeness....*" He was God's active agent in all the works of creation, and did as his Father instructed him. In 1 Cor. 8:5 and 6 we read that "... *for us, there is but **one God**, the Father, **from** whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but **one Lord**, Jesus Christ, **through** whom all things came and through whom we live.*" Again we read of this in Hebrews 1:2: "*But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and **through** whom he made the universe.*" While John identifies the Word as "god," and recognized him in his pre-existing status as a deity, he never confused him with **the** God, who was his Father. In Psalm 82:1 we read, "*God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the 'gods.'*" It was the Word who willingly gave up his high position, leaving behind his deity as we are told in Phil. 2:6-8, speaking of Christ Jesus, "*who being in the form of God, thought not by robbery to be equal with God; but **emptied himself**, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" "*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich.*" (2 Cor. 8:9). In Hebrews 2:9 we are told, "*But we see Jesus, who was **made a little lower than the angels**, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*" Yes, it was the Word or Logos, the Only begotten Son of God, whose life was transferred from his former glorious spiritual state into the womb of the virgin Mary by means of the Holy Spirit of God. Thus the Logos became "*a little lower than the angels*" by becoming flesh (human) and dwelling among men. Our Lord was not begotten by an imperfect human father, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was born perfect and not flawed by inherited sin. Hebrews 7:26 tells us, "*Such a High Priest meets our need -- one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*" Let us look again at Hebrews 2:9, for this tells us the purpose for which Jesus "*became flesh.*" "*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor **because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.***"

Yes, Jesus by his death redeemed all mankind from sin and the penalty of death. His death gained him power over the grave and assures us of the hope of a resurrection from the dead. God's Law required a "life for a life." Adam, as a perfect man, sinned and the penalty was death which was pronounced on him and on all his progeny as well. By his death, Jesus, who was also a *perfect* man, paid the ransom price for man's redemption. 1 Timothy 2:5&6 tells about the **man** Christ Jesus who did this for us: *"For there is **one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men -- the testimony given in its proper time.**"* He had to be a perfect man in order to satisfy justice. Jesus died and three days later God raised him from the dead. He no longer possessed the earthly nature of man, for that was what he *"laid down"* for the life of the world. He was raised a glorious Spirit Being who spent 40 days with his disciples, being seen of them 10 times before his ascension. During this time he appeared and disappeared to them at will, even when the doors were locked. In Eph. 1:19-21 Paul tells us, *"..... That power is like the working of his (God's) mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come."* Because of his faithfulness unto death, Jesus now is seated on his Father's throne and has been given *"all authority in heaven and in earth"* (Mat. 28:18). Yes, Jesus is only in subjection to his Father as we are told in 1 Cor. 15:28: *"And when all things shall be subdued unto him (Christ), **then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.**"*

The Soul

The difficulty that many have had in understanding much that is in the Scriptures is because of the many false teachings that have crept into the church. For instance, there is the teaching that a man is born with an "immortal soul," but this term is not found in the Bible. Genesis 2:7 is the first place that the word *soul* is used. *"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man **became** a living soul."* (KJV) It should be noted that it was only *after* God breathed into him the *"breath of life"* that man became a *"living soul."* Logic would then conclude that, this being so, at the time a man stops breathing and dies, he would become a *"dead soul."* Most of the other translations renders *"a living soul"* as *"a living being,"* which is one of the meanings of the original Hebrew word. We read in Ezekiel 18:4, *"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die."* (KJV) God is quite clear here - **the soul or the being who sins....dies.** It does not live on someplace. This was the case with Adam and has been the case with all mankind who have since gone into death. Romans 3:23 tells us, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* All were condemned in Adam.

Sin and Evil

Sin and evil have prevailed since Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Prior to that time, only righteousness existed in the lives of our first parents. God's Law was written in their hearts. What is righteousness? It is the condition in which only what is right and just exists. How do we know what is right and just? We can find the answer to this question only in the principles that are set down for us in the Scriptures. Since sin entered the world, there has not lived one righteous person on this earth with the exception of our Lord Jesus. Romans 3:10-12 affirms this fact: *"As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.'"* Isaiah 64:6 says, *"But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousness are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."* (NKJV) Faith in the Lord and His promises were the only means of being *accounted righteous* before God prior to His sending His Son. In

regard to Abraham, Romans 4:3 tells us, "What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham **believed** God, and it was **credited** to him as righteousness.'" No man is able to stand before God in his own merit.

Why did God permit evil? The answer to this question is essential to understanding God's plan for mankind. Man was created with the ability to choose freely without the slightest coercion from God. In His great wisdom, God knew that it would be only by the contrast that comes from the experience with sin that man would realize its serious consequences. After everyone is resurrected in Christ's future Kingdom, they will be able to fully realize, from experience, the results of sin and evil as they look back on its history. Only the foolish and hardhearted will choose not to seek righteousness and the blessings that come from living in accordance with its godly principles. God wishes His creation to worship Him in spirit and in truth as a free choice and not as mere robots, which they would have been had they not been able to freely choose.

Death and the Grave

Due to the false ideas in regard to the soul, other erroneous doctrines have come to us about death and the grave. Since Adam was non-existent before he was created, when he died he returned to that same state. Where did he go? He went nowhere. He simply ceased to be alive. The day that a man dies, that very day his thoughts perish (Eccl. 9:5, 10). His body returns to dust again. Man's only hope is in a future life when he is to be resurrected from the state of death. In death he is hidden in the Bible "hell," which is "sheol" in the Old Testament, and "hades" in the New. The words are generally translated "hell" and "grave" throughout the Bible. There is nothing wrong with the translation of the word *hell*, since it is an old English word meaning "a covered place." In olden times the farmer would "hell his potatoes" or cover them over. False doctrine arose that has fostered the meaning of "a state of conscious and perpetual torment" to the word *hell*, thus giving a false meaning to the word.

All of the dead enter "hell" or "sheol" when they die, and there they will remain until the time of awakening or resurrection. The translators of our Bible were not consistent in their translation since when they refer to the wicked, they usually translate the word *sheol* as "hell," but when the righteous are mentioned as going to "sheol," they rendered it "grave." (See Gen. 37:35, 42:38, Psa. 9:17, 16:10). That "sheol" is not a place of torment is shown in Job's prayer. If Job had believed that "sheol" was a place of suffering and torment, he would not have prayed, "O, that thou would hide me in the grave (sheol), that thou would keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou would appoint me a set time, and remember me" (Job 14:13).

Jesus Christ went to the Bible "hell" and remained there for three days, as Peter testified on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:22-32. He quoted from Psalms 16:10 and proved that it applied to our Lord and not to David. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption." He argued that David was still in hell or "sheol," and that his grave was still in existence at the time he was speaking. Thus Peter testified to Jesus' resurrection, stating that death could not hold him. He burst the bonds of death and ascended on high, leading captivity (death) captive (Eph. 4:8). "He was the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). "He was put to death flesh, but made alive spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

The Increase of Knowledge

We are living in a day of wonder and dread. It is a day of wonder because of the great increase of knowledge that has saturated the world in which we live. At the same time it is a day of dread because of how all this has been misused for selfish purpose and gain. In only a single generation, man has gone

from the horse and buggy to space travel to the moon and further; communication has gone from word of mouth or handwritten letters to satellites in space relaying information via radio and television to anywhere in the world in but seconds. The world has, in essence, become one community where no country is able to keep secrets from the world around them. Man now has what he calls the cyberspace "information highway" where almost any subject can be accessed through the personal computer, a common item in most homes. The increase in technological advances seems unending. Man has used this wonderful knowledge, however, mainly for evil purposes of destruction. Wars are now fought with such a variety of technological and sophisticated weapons that it would take volumes to describe them. What should be a boon and blessing to man has instead become instruments of greed, evil and oppression. Through television and the computer's ability to access the "internet," explicit sex and pornography, crime and violence can be brought into the home at the push of a button.

What is new today will probably be obsolete in less than five years. And the "new," in the hands of sinful man, most probably will be increasingly detrimental to man's welfare. With all this knowledge, man is not able to bring peace to his world. Wars, revolutions, and global unrest are prevalent everywhere. Pestilences, famines, and starvation are still severe problems despite man's progress. Man, in his greed, continues to upset the balance of nature, which is the reason for many of our problems today. Nuclear war is a grave concern. Nuclear power plants are sleeping giants of potential disasters. Earth's streams, rivers and oceans have been greatly polluted, endangering man's health. Yes, where knowledge should have been of benefit to man, it has for the most part become instead a curse which will probably continue to escalate, for the Scriptures predict a great time of trouble that will precede Jesus' setting up his earthly Kingdom.

All of this has been allowed by God in His Plan for a purpose. It is setting the scene for the Lord's coming establishment of his Kingdom. The words of Daniel 12:4, *"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase"* (NKJV), seem well to describe the time in which we are living.

I Create Calamities

Though God does not coerce, He does overrule and permit natural calamities to happen. We read in Isa. 45:7, *"I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things."* The Lord sometimes *allows* calamities to come upon people to get their attention. At other times, such as with Sodom and Gomorra, the calamity that destroyed these cities and the people was an act of mercy and love as well as one of judgment. Had these people been allowed to continue in their wickedness, their hearts might have become so entrenched with evil that it would have been impossible to reclaim them to righteousness in the Kingdom.

Death itself is an enemy to man as well as continuing calamities. But there are many plagues and disasters for which men are solely responsible. These happen because man thinks his ways are wiser and better than God's ways. They occur when men totally neglect the principles of nature and the moral laws laid out in the Bible.

Let it be known that *God always is motivated by love for His creatures* regardless of how it might appear to us. In our fallen human thinking, man seems always to look at things in a short-sighted way. But God always looks at the end result and to that which is best for the eternal welfare of all. Every experience or calamity that has ever befallen man has in it a lesson that, when understood and fully realized, will be of eternal value to him. In all his troubles, man has never been left without a hope for

something better. God's Word is full of numerous promises and prophecies that nurture a longing for a better day. That day when *"all the families of the earth will be blessed"* is not too far away (Gen. 12:2-3). Romans 8:19-21 tells us that though many in the world do not know it, *"The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. The creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."*

The Day of Wrath

After the Lord comes for his Saints, both dead and living (1 Thes. 4: 13-17), but before his Second coming to establish his Kingdom on earth, there will be a time of great trouble upon the earth and society. This will prepare men's hearts for the Lord's rule of righteousness. Zeph. 3:8&9 says, *"Therefore wait ye for me, saith Jehovah, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. **For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve him with one consent.**"* (ASV) All evil authority will be put down before the Lord Jesus assumes control of his Kingdom and begins his rule based on the righteous principles of truth.

Resurrection

"If in this life only we have hope, we are, of all men, most miser-able. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that sleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:19-22). So it is evident that the hope held out in the Bible is based on the resurrection from the dead. Jesus said, *"Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto a resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment"* (Jn. 5:28, 29). He said nothing about being in torment. In John 11:25 Jesus says to Martha, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."* So the hope of all believers is not for an immediate transfer to Paradise or to Heaven, but an expectation to remain *"asleep in Jesus,"* in the grave, until the time of the first resurrection when Jesus comes for his bride. Thus when Stephen died, the Scriptures tell us that *"he fell asleep"* (Acts 7:60).

There is one important point to keep in mind. The resurrection will occur in two phases. Those sharing in the first phase are said to share in *"the first resurrection"* (Rev. 20:6). These are those being called of God during this Gospel Age, from the First Advent of Christ until the time when the Church will be complete. We believe, because of prophecy, the Lord will take his Bride to himself in the near future. The rest of mankind will be raised in the second resurrection.

Restitution

Restitution means "restoration." It is a Bible doctrine and in full harmony with the Plan of God when rightly understood. On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles and inspired them to speak, Peter said, *"Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out; so that seasons of refreshment may come from the face of the Lord, and He may send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must retain **until the times of restitution of all things which God has spoken through the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began...** You are the children of the prophets...unto you first God has raised up His Son Jesus, and sent him to bless you, each one of you who shall turn from his evil ways"* (Acts 3:19-26).

Here, Peter was telling the Jews that God *was fulfilling* His promises to Abraham by offering them the first opportunity to become the followers of His Son, Jesus Christ. This, surely, was a great privilege to become a member of that spiritual kingdom of priests and assist in blessing all the families of the earth. The Abrahamic Promise was a twofold one: **first**, providing a Seed, Jesus Christ; and **secondly**, that through that “seed” all the families of the earth would be blessed..

But Peter had distinctly referred to the Lord Jesus remaining in heaven at the right hand of God, until the “*times of restitution*” when all things prophesied will be restored. This will occur in *the general resurrection* which will follow that of the Church. Since only the body members of Christ share in the “first” resurrection, then of necessity there must follow a second or general resurrection to effect the restoration of all things promised. This will take place when our Lord returns from Heaven at his Second Advent with his Bride.

What are some of the things that the Most High has promised to restore in this great time of “restitution”? In Isaiah 51:3 we read, *“For the Lord shall comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places. He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.” “...the desolate land shall be tilled, wherein it laid waste...and they shall say, this land that lay desolate is become like the garden of Eden”* (Ezek. 36:34, 35). *“Thy dead shall live. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust. The earth shall cast out the dead”* (Isa. 26:19). *“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose...Say to them of fearful heart, Be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with vengeance....He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And parched ground shall become a pool, and thirsty ground springs of water....And the ransomed of the Lord shall return....and sorrow and sighing shall flee away”* (Isa. 35:1, 4-7, 10). *“The wolf shall also dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them...and the lion shall eat straw like an ox...They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain”* (Isa. 11:6, 7, 9). *“For thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it, He has established it. He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited”* (Isa. 45:18). *“And they shall build houses and inhabit them. They shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them”* (Isa. 65:21). *“I will restore thy judges as at first, and thy counselors as at the beginning”* (Isaiah 1:26).

These are only a few of the many prophecies throughout the Bible which promise a return to the earth of Edenic conditions. All these wonderful prophecies will be fulfilled when the long promised Kingdom has come to this earth, that for which his people have long been praying, as our Lord taught us to do.

Joy in the Morning

Our Great Creator is preparing a “*feast of fat things*,” which will astound His human creatures, and “*be exceeding, abundant, beyond all we could ask or think...*” (Eph. 3:19-21). In 1 Corinthians 2:9, the Apostle Paul tells about what we might call ‘God’s Grand Surprise Party!’ “*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*” He has revealed many things to us at this time by His Spirit through His Word; but still, “*now we see as through a glass darkly*” what perfect life and beauty will actually be like. To His wondering creatures, looking at the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of

God, surpassing all man's expectations, He explains, *"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55:8,9). *"Prove me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, more than enough for all"* (Mal. 3:10). At that time, mankind will say, *"This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited"* (Ezek. 36:35). Yes, *"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning!"* (Psalm 30:5)

Judgment Day

Isaiah 26:9 tells us, *"When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world will learn righteousness."* This Day of Judgment will last for a thousand years. When Jesus comes with his Bride to set up his earthly kingdom, he will sit on his throne as *"King of King and Lord of Lords."* Isaiah 9:6&7 prophesies of this time, *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this."* Also in Isaiah 11:1-5 we read, *"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him -- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -- and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist."* Yes, Jesus will first establish righteousness and then peace. He *"will rule with a rod of iron"* and with justice. No evil will be permitted. This will be a time of *"crisis"* or trial by judgment. Such will be the conditions in the great Judgment Day of the Lord. Most of the world of mankind have not had the opportunity to truly know God or His Son, Jesus Christ. Their eyes have been blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4). This will not be the case in Jesus' Kingdom, for we read in Revelation 20:1&2, *"And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years."* At the beginning of this thousand years, all will be given an opportunity to learn righteousness unhindered by Satan and the influence of evil. Isaiah 11:9 foretells such a time when *"They will neither harm nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."*

Each individual will be responsible for their own decisions and for their own actions.

We read in John 3:16 Jesus' words, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* Believing in Jesus as their Saviour will be a prerequisite to life then, as it is now in this Gospel Age for those who are called to be Jesus' disciples. Learning the ways of righteousness will be a requirement. At that time Rev. 22:17 tells us, *"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."* Everyone will have this wonderful opportunity of freely drinking of the pure Word of the Lord. But no one will be forced to drink or learn righteousness. It will be up to the individual to choose to accept or reject it. Ezek. 18:32 tells us, *"For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!"* Yes, the choice

of each individual will determine their own destiny. This destiny, for the world of mankind in general, is described for us in Rev. 21:7&8: *"He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars ---- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."* This means eternal annihilation.

A Picture of the Kingdom

A Christian writer has penned these beautiful words, "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 thus they realize the resurrection work complete."

This grand recovery of mankind through Christ and his Bride, when he turns his Kingdom over to his Beloved Father, is what will truly satisfy our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for all his travail of soul on Calvary (Isa. 53:11). Let us give Praise to the precious Lamb of God, forever!

Soon shall Restitution glory
bring to earth a blessed rest;
And the poor and faint and weary
shall be lifted up and blest.

Just beyond the coming trouble
see the reigning Prince of Peace!
Lo! God's kingdom soon is coming,
and oppression then will cease.

He's now gathering out His jewels,
those who with him soon shall reign
And earth's weeping and sad farewells
Soon shall change to joyous strain.

Sing! O sing! Ye heirs of glory,
Shout the tidings as you go!
Publish wide redemption's story--
All, its healing balm should know.

Tell how Eden's bloom and beauty
Once again shall be restored.
Making all man's wide dominion
As the garden of the Lord.

O yes, sing, ye heirs of glory,
Shout your triumph far and near,
Let the notes of praise and singing
Sweetly fall on sorrow's ear.

Isaiah 35:1-10

"The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.' Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

Revelation 21:1-5

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful.'"

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