

Deliverance Promised

“The LORD God said . . . I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”
—*Genesis 3:14,15*

MAN, THE HIGHEST OF all God’s earthly creatures, endowed with faculties reflecting the image of the Creator, had failed to pass the simple test of obedience to which he was subjected. He had transgressed the law of his Creator, and now must die—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

(Gen. 3:19) In the Divine wisdom, all of Adam’s progeny have inherited the death penalty. All are born imperfect and, unable to resist the ravages of disease, ultimately die—for the “wages of sin is death.”—Rom. 6:23

THE SEED OF THE WOMAN

But God still loved his human children, and even while sentencing Adam and Eve to death gave an indication that an opportunity of deliverance from the penalty would be provided. It is not plainly

stated, but clearly implied, in the statement to the serpent that the ‘seed’ of the woman would ‘bruise’ its head. But even this obscure assertion seemed to give our first parents some hope that the Creator would do something about their plight, for when Seth was born Eve said, “God . . . hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.”—Gen. 4:25

Eve did not understand that the seed mentioned by God was the great Deliverer, the Messiah of promise and prophecy, and that it would be a long time before the ‘head’ of the serpent would be bruised by this seed. As the Creator’s plan unfolds throughout his Word, it becomes clear that the work of deliverance implied by God’s statement to the serpent will be accomplished by a powerful government, or kingdom, under the control of the seed of promise.

We read in the Book of Revelation, “I saw an angel come down from heaven, . . . And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:1,2) This language recalls to our minds the serpent’s activity in Eden and, together with the remaining verses of the chapter, assures us that the bruising mentioned by the LORD implies a complete deliverance from the miasma of sin and death into which humanity was plunged when induced by Satan to disobey God’s law.

A more definite promise of deliverance was given to Abraham. To him God said, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 22:18) In Acts 3:21, there is the expression, “times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by

the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Verse twenty-five reads, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." Thus the Apostle Peter reveals that the blessing which God promised would come to 'all the families of the earth' through the seed of Abraham is, in reality, their restoration, their deliverance from death in the 'times of restitution of all things.'

JACOB'S PROPHECY

The promise that God made to Abraham was reiterated to his son, Isaac, and his grandson, Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons, and toward the end of his life he gathered them around him and pronounced individual blessings upon them, this parental blessing taking the form of prophecies. To his son, Judah, he said, "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."—Gen. 49:9,10

This prophecy was uttered by Jacob while he was living in Egypt, and the reference to the 'couched' lion reflects this. In Egypt at that time the claimed royal right of the pharaohs to rule was symbolized by a couched lion. Thus, by employing this symbol Jacob was saying in his prophecy that the 'sceptre,' the right to rule, so far as the promises of God are concerned, belonged to his son, Judah,

and his descendants, the tribe of Judah. In this prophecy Jacob undoubtedly had in mind the promise to his grandfather, Abraham, concerning his seed, and this seed he explains would be 'Shiloh'; and that unto him 'shall the gathering of the people be.'

The name Shiloh means tranquil, or peaceful. It is one of the Old Testament titles assigned to the seed of Abraham, and suggests that this promised Deliverer would be a peacemaker, not only among the people who would be gathered to him, but a peacemaker also between God and men, restoring the harmony that existed before man transgressed Divine law. Another title assigned to this promised Deliverer is "The Prince of Peace."—Isa. 9:6

In this same prophecy of Isaiah we are informed concerning 'The Prince of Peace' that "the government shall be upon his shoulder." This is the government over which Shiloh holds the scepter, or the right to rule. It is the Messianic kingdom, and in Micah 4:1-4 it is presented under the symbol of a mountain, "the mountain of the LORD." We are assured that in this mountain, or kingdom, the people will learn the LORD's ways, and as a result will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks," and will "learn war" no more.

THE DESTRUCTION OF DEATH

In Isaiah 25:6-9, the LORD presents us with another promise descriptive of the blessings that will reach the people in his 'mountain,' the Messianic kingdom. One of these blessings will be the destruction of death. The LORD will "swallow up death in victory," the promise reads, and will "wipe

away tears from off all faces.” Another blessing to reach the people through the administration of this government is described as the destroying of the “face of the covering cast over all people.” This is a ‘covering,’ or veil, of superstition and misunderstanding pertaining to God and to his loving purpose in the creation of man, and his plan for restoring him to life.

Included in this covering, which hides God’s Truth from the people, are all the God-dishonoring theories arising out of Satan’s lie, “Ye shall not surely die.” (Gen. 3:4) The majority have been pleased to believe that “there is no death.” But we can thank God that this beclouding lie, together with all the other false notions which Satan has weaved into a covering and thrown over the eyes of the people, will be removed. And, since in this same kingdom death is to be ‘swallowed up in victory,’ it will become true for the first time since the transgression in Eden that there is no death. In Revelation 21:4, we read that “there shall be no more death.” If there is no death now, and never has been, as ‘that old serpent’ has induced nearly all mankind to believe, how could it be said that ‘then shall be no more death’?

THE SOUR GRAPE OF SIN

Another very interesting and reassuring promise of deliverance from the result of original sin is found in Jeremiah 31:29,30, and reads, “In those days [the days of Messiah’s rule] they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that

eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.” The lesson here is obvious. It was father Adam who ate the original ‘sour grape’ of sin. The result has passed on to the entire human race; all have suffered from his act of disobedience, all have died or are dying.

But this is to change, the LORD assures us. ‘In those days’ when the promised seed of Abraham is ruling as The Prince of Peace, he will also be dispensing blessings of health and life. This will be possible because Jesus took the sinner’s place in death, and during his reign will offer to every individual of the human race an opportunity to obey and live. No longer will the people die because of Adam’s sin. If they die at all, it will be because they have individually eaten the sour grape of sin. This will be during the times of restitution of all things, and Peter says that then it will be only those who disobey who will be “destroyed from among the people.”—Acts 3:23

A DELIVERER IS BORN

The birth of Jesus attested the truthfulness of the prophetic testimony concerning a coming Deliverer, and deliverance for the sin-cursed race. The angel, in announcing Jesus’ birth, said, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”—Luke 2:10,11,13,14

The words, ‘unto you is born this day,’ mark the essential difference between this angelic announcement and the promises and prophecies that the Creator had previously given through his holy prophets. At that time, these promises and prophecies began to be fulfilled. One of the prophecies identified the city in which the promised ruler would be born. It was to be in “Bethlehem,” the ancient ‘city of David.’ (Micah 5:2) So, when the angel announced his birth he called special attention to this—‘unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’

All of God’s promises, beginning with his statement in Eden that the serpent’s head would be bruised by a seed, implied a coming deliverance from death. And now the angel confirmed this. The one who was born in Bethlehem was to be a savior, and this Savior was Christ, the Messiah of promise.

It was a dramatic moment for these shepherds on the Judean hills to whom the angel announced the birth of the Savior, the Messiah. ‘Suddenly,’ we are told, ‘there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ This heavenly host of angels had served God faithfully during all the many centuries when he was making his promises of a coming seed who would bless the people. They did not understand all the implications of those promises, but they would know they were expressions of God’s good will toward his fallen human creatures. Knowing this, how enthusiastically they must have proclaimed the birth of Jesus to be a manifestation

of this foretold good will, the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promises.

JESUS BEGINS HIS MINISTRY

Jesus entered upon his ministry at the age of thirty, a ministry that fully harmonized with the prophetic testimony concerning him. We read that "he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." (Luke 8:1) These 'glad tidings,' the angel said, were to be 'unto all people,' the good news that the Creator had sent a Savior, and had made provision for the establishment of a kingdom through which the blessings of salvation from sin, sickness, and death would reach the people.

It did not at once become apparent to the followers of Jesus that his kingdom would not be immediately established. They did not realize until later that it was first of all necessary for the Savior to die for those he had come to save, before they could be permanently released from sickness and death. True, he announced to them that he would give his "flesh . . . for the life of the world" (John 6:51), but they did not grasp the real import of what he said.

The Twelve were with him as he preached and showed the glad tidings of the kingdom. They witnessed his miracles of healing the sick, of cleansing lepers, of casting out devils, and of raising the dead. They cannot be blamed for supposing that this was the actual beginning of the foretold work of deliverance, and that his kingdom would soon be established and its blessings of health and life extended to all the families of the earth as God promised would be done through the seed.

They did not at the time realize that the marvelous miracles performed by Jesus were intended merely as illustrations—illustrations of the worldwide program of miracles which they thought was then beginning; but actually must wait for other aspects of the Divine plan of deliverance to be accomplished. It is gloriously true that in God's due time all the blind eyes will be opened; all the deaf ears unstopped; all the halt and the lame made sound of limb; when the people will not say, "I am sick." (Isa. 33:24) And in that due time those who "sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." (Dan. 12:2) The sentence, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,' having been paid by the Savior, will no longer hold the billions who have died in the great prison-house of death, for Jesus will use the "keys of hell and of death" to set the captives free.—Rev. 1:18; 20:13

WITNESSES OF JESUS

After Jesus' death and resurrection, and just before returning to his Father in heaven, he commissioned his disciples to be his "witnesses" unto the uttermost parts of the earth. (Acts 1:8) It was not the due time for his kingdom to be established and its blessings to flow out to the people, but his followers were to continue telling the world about him as the Savior and coming Deliverer. They were to continue preaching this Gospel of the kingdom. And those first disciples were faithful to this commission.

How stirring is the sermon preached by Peter, and recorded in Acts 3:12-26! This sermon is in explanation of a miracle in which Peter was

instrumental in healing a man who had been lame from his birth. It is in this sermon that he speaks of the times of restitution of all things—the restoration to health of this one man, being but an illustration of what would be accomplished for the whole world of mankind when Jesus came the second time. Not only was the restitution to be a boon to the sick, but it would mean also the resurrection of the dead.—Acts 4:1,2

THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

In the last chapter of the Bible—Revelation 22—we have the hope of deliverance through Jesus and his kingdom presented to us in meaningful symbolic language. First we see a throne—“the throne of God and of the Lamb.” (vs. 1) The throne symbolizes the kingdom. It was the glad tidings concerning the establishment of this kingdom that Jesus and his disciples so faithfully preached. It is the throne of God ‘and of the Lamb.’ The Lamb is symbolic of Jesus and his sacrifice on behalf of mankind. Combined with the throne symbolism, the full thought presented is that the promised blessings of health and life will reach the people through the agencies of a Divine government, these blessings being made available through the death of the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

And these promised blessings are pictured by “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal” which flows from the ‘throne of God and of the Lamb.’ “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bear twelve manner of fruits, . . . and the leaves of the

tree were for the healing of the nations.”(vs. 2) This language again takes our minds back to Eden, when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden to prevent them from partaking of the trees of life and living forever.

Verse three declares, “There shall be no more curse.” A terrible ‘curse’ has rested upon humanity—the curse of sin and death. It has blighted the happiness and peace of all mankind. No one has been free from it. All “in Adam” die. (I Cor. 15:22) But God loved the race of lost and dying sinners and provided a Savior, the seed of promise, who as his ‘Lamb’ gave his life in sacrifice as the price of redemption. In this last chapter of the Bible, we are assured that from the throne of God and of the Lamb ‘water of life, clear as crystal,’ will flow out to mankind, and ‘there shall be no more curse.’ The Apostle Paul assures us that then will be fulfilled the promise, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”—I Cor. 15:55 ■