

Wells Without Water

*“My people have
committed two
evils; they have
forsaken me the
fountain of living
waters, and hewed
them out cisterns,
broken cisterns,
that can hold
no water.”*

—*Jeremiah 2:13*

IT HAS BEEN SATAN’S

purpose since his fall to thwart God’s design for the reconciliation of mankind. Before the Flood, he was successful in contaminating the human race with all forms of wickedness and evil, except for a few faithful individuals such as Enoch and, finally,

Noah and his family—the eight souls that God saved from the Flood. (Gen. 5:22-24; I Pet. 3:20) Since the Flood, God has continued to permit Satan to operate in the earth, apart from the fact that he has been restrained when the ultimate divine purpose might be threatened. (Ps. 76:10) God has allowed this in order to demonstrate to his human and spiritual creation the awful results of sin.—Rom. 7:13

When God began dealing with the nation of Israel, he gave them his law with the promise that he would bless them in “basket and . . . store” if they would simply be humble and make an honest effort to be

obedient. (Deut. 28:1-14) Moreover, he said that if any individual was able to keep his law perfectly he would gain life. (Lev. 18:4,5) As a nation, if faithful, Israel was promised, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: . . . And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Exod. 19:5,6) These were precious promises and should have been a strong motivation for obedience. However, the history of the Jews under the Law is a long, sad story of disobedience and subsequent chastisement.

By the time God began dealing with Israel as a nation, Satan was well established in the governments and peoples who were their neighbors. These nations were idol worshipers and practiced every kind of immorality. The Israelites had been exposed to this kind of life while they were slaves in Egypt. Later, after being established as a nation in their own land, they found the excesses of their neighbors to be a great temptation to turn back to the former things they had witnessed in Egypt. They evidently felt that the restrictions imposed on them by the Law were oppressive and therefore began to circumvent or ignore them. They seemed to forget or hold in low esteem the promises of blessing and favor offered by God if they would strive to keep his commandments to the best of their ability.

ISRAEL'S FALSE PROPHETS

One of the most effective tools Satan used to seduce Israel was false prophets. By flattering and deceitful words, they obtained a harmful ascendancy over the minds of the people and the rulers of Israel. In Jeremiah 23:1-40 is an account of the Lord's

displeasure with these false prophets and his lament over the children of Israel who had been led astray by them. The text in part reads, “Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; . . . For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house I have found their wickedness, saith the LORD. . . . I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.” (vss. 9-11,14) In another place God, through the prophet, states, “A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so.”—Jer. 5:30,31

The Prophet Jeremiah was sorrowful concerning the disobedience of Israel because the whole land was filled with adulterers, and profane and wicked persons. However, the people still proceeded in their evil course, and did wrong with violence and with all their power, loving “to have it so.” In this unrighteousness, their false prophets and evil priests were ringleaders—even choosing the Temple as the scene of their crimes against the Lord.

FORESHADOWING THE FUTURE

The Apostle Peter tells us that what happened to Israel with their false prophets was a foreshadowing of what was to occur to the true church down

through the Gospel Age. The apostle states, “Israel had false prophets as well as true; and you likewise will have false teachers among you. They will impart disastrous heresies, disowning the very Master who bought them. . . . They will gain many adherents to their dissolute practices, through whom the true way will be brought into disrepute. In their greed for money they will trade on your credulity with sheer fabrications.”—II Pet. 2:1-3, *New English Bible*

Among the leading sects that troubled the Early Church were the Gnostics. These enthusiastic and self-sufficient philosophers boasted of being able to restore mankind to the knowledge of the true and supreme being, which they felt had been lost in the world. Several of these false prophets are mentioned by the apostles, as they attempted to forge changes in the true doctrines and worship of God and his Son Christ Jesus, and set up a new religion drawn from their own imaginations. The Apostle Paul, in his counsel to Timothy, stated, “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”—I Tim. 1:18-20

A FALSE CHURCH SYSTEM

One of the errors that began creeping into the church in the apostles' day was the teaching that Christ had come the second time and that it was therefore time for the gathering of the church to

the Lord. The Apostle Paul warned the church, saying, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day”—the day of Christ’s Second Advent—“shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” (II Thess. 2:3) Then the apostle proceeds to describe that this “man of sin” will exalt himself above God, and establish himself in God’s temple. Paul warns that this “mystery of iniquity” was already working—the seeds of that great error having already been sown. He continues, saying that in due time “shall that Wicked [one] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming [Greek: *parousia*—presence].”—vss. 4-8

We know from history the seeds sown at that early date did bring forth a great false church system. It is the greatest of false prophets, because Satan has propounded it as a counterfeit of the true Christ and the true kingdom. From *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 2, page 272, we quote: “This Man of Sin is a system, and not a single individual, as many seem to infer; that as the Christ consists of the true Lord and the true Church, so Antichrist is a counterfeit system consisting of a false lord and an apostate church, which for a time is permitted to misrepresent the truth, to practice deceit and to counterfeit the authority and future reign of the true Lord and his Church, and to intoxicate the nations with false claims and assumptions.”

From this great system there were later born many “daughters,” each proclaiming its own message that perverted or diluted “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) The Apostle

Peter said of all these systems: “These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”—II Pet. 2:17-19

FALSE SYSTEMS TO BE EXPOSED

The Apostle Paul stated that at the proper time these evil systems and their errors would be exposed by the truth of God’s Word, and finally be destroyed as part of the events associated with the Lord’s Second Advent, or presence. (II Thess. 2:8) Then the apostle identifies the one who is the real enemy and supporter of these systems. He says they are “the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned [*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*: judged] who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”—vss. 9-12

The prophecy states that this entire evil system is the work of Satan, and he will manifest great power, signs, and miracles through it. As we review in our minds the history of these systems, we see how by deep subtlety and the power of Satan, with all kinds of signs and wonders, they claim to have

copied the miracles of Christ and his apostles, just as the Egyptian magicians “Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses.” (II Tim. 3:8; Exod. 7:11,22) Such artful deceivers as these down through the ages have made great displays, accompanied with all kinds of forgery and fraud, with which people of all nations have had their senses and understanding deluded. Thus it has been with the false church system during the Gospel Age. Much of the world has been deceived into an admiration, a blind reverence, and an implicit submission to the arrogant claims and multiplied errors and sins of this “strong delusion.”

We will not here consider in detail the period of the Reformation, beginning around A.D. 1400, or the time of Napoleon’s success in thwarting some of the power of the “man of sin” system at the end of the 18th century. In spite of the loss of substantial civil power, this great false system still retained much of its influence over the minds of the people, and there was little or no evidence of its disintegration. However, with the Second Advent of our Lord, which signaled the beginning of the Harvest of the Gospel Age, would come the time that “lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west.” (Matt. 24:27) The thought is that the light of truth, brought about by the Lord’s presence, was to now penetrate every subject, revealing truth and exposing error. This would result, according to the prophecy, in a great struggle in which the “powers of the heavens” would be shaken. (vs. 29) This shaking would then encompass all other aspects of society and develop into a great “time of trouble,” expressed in other places as the day of God’s wrath. (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; Zeph. 1:18) It is to be at

the close of this “time of trouble” that all systems of this “present evil world” are to be destroyed and Satan bound. (Gal. 1:4; Rev. 20:1,2) One of these is the apostate church system—one of the chief instruments of Satan.

EXPLOSION OF KNOWLEDGE

The “brightness” mentioned by Paul in II Thesalonians 2:8, and “lightning” Jesus prophesied of in Matthew 24:27, are both symbolic of increased knowledge, as also foretold by Daniel when speaking of the “time of the end.” (Dan. 12:4) Beginning in the late 1800’s, we began to see a great explosion of knowledge along all lines—both religious as well as in all other fields of endeavor. Note the list below, which is only a sampling of inventions resulting from this increase in knowledge.

1876	Telephone, four-stroke engine
1877	Phonograph
1879	Electric light bulb
1886	Dry-cell battery, gasoline-powered automobile
1893	Diesel engine
1900	Radio transmission
1903	Airplane
1907	Synthetic plastic
1909	Television transmission
1928	Penicillin
1931	Electron microscope
1938	Programmable computer, nuclear fission
1947	Transistor
1951	Nuclear power to produce electricity
1960	Laser
1970	Pocket calculator

1971	Microprocessor, electronic mail
1984	Cell phone
1990	World-wide web
1995	Optical disc storage [DVD]

We may be prone to forget that the increase of knowledge in today's world is something that has developed suddenly, in comparison with the thousands of years of the past during which there was relatively little increase in knowledge. Both with respect to the general education of the people and in the matter of scientific achievement, accumulated knowledge has advanced at an exponential rate in the last century and a half when compared to the previous six thousand years. Here in 2016, it is estimated that accumulated knowledge is doubling every twelve months—an astounding rate of increase indeed.

JESUS' FOOTSTEP FOLLOWERS SERVED

The first, however, to be blessed by the bright-shining of our Lord's presence are his own people, his footstep followers. The knowledge of the Truth pertaining to God's plan for man's salvation is symbolized as meat. Jesus said that when he returned he would "gird himself," and have his servants who were faithfully watching "sit down to meat," and he would "come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37) This promise has been, and still is, being wonderfully fulfilled.

The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus, at his First Advent, came to die for Adam and his entire race, that they might have an opportunity to be restored to life on the earth, and if faithful to the laws of the kingdom, gain everlasting life. The Apostle Paul

stated the matter this way, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (I Cor. 15:22) The period in which man will be restored to life on the earth is described by the Apostle Peter as “times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:21) This great hope for the world is now seen by the faithful watchers in Zion, being one of the rays of bright-shining light, and a satisfying portion of “meat” which they have been served. This knowledge has gladdened the hearts of those who have seen, by the eye of faith, the brightness of the Master’s presence.

GOD’S WRATH—THEN HIS KINGDOM

The blessings of the knowledge of truth served during this Harvest period have only been appreciated by a relatively small number—those who have been “watching” for the unfolding of God’s plan. However, through increases in general education as well as communication, general enlightenment has reached the masses of mankind, including the underprivileged peoples of earth. This has resulted in a loud cry for justice and equality, and a clamoring for rights, both real and imagined. This struggle has led mankind into two world wars and innumerable smaller wars, conflicts, and battles—both on the field as well as clashes of words and ideologies. To this there appears to be no end in sight, from the human vantage point.

The matters considered in the foregoing paragraphs, as well as many other evidences, point to our day as the time of Christ’s invisible presence and the day of God’s wrath. Acting as the “arm” of God’s power, our returned Lord is destroying the

present evil systems of earth, including, in due time, Satan, the “god” of this present evil world. (II Cor. 4:4) The Lord is doing this, as previously noted, “with the spirit of his mouth.” (II Thess. 2:8) The spirit of the Lord’s mouth is the Word of God, and it was the development of the rapid means of printing which flooded the world with Bibles in preparation for the Harvest of the Gospel Age, and the bright shining of our Lord’s presence, which has resulted.

We know from the prophecy in Matthew 24:22 that “the elect”—the completed church with Christ as its head—will have the privilege of bringing to a close Satan’s rule on earth. The details of the struggle that will spell Satan’s demise are prophesied using symbolic language in Revelation 19:11-21. The Old Testament also speaks of this time: “Let the saints be joyful in glory: . . . Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints.” (Ps. 149:5-9) In Revelation 20:1-3, we read the result of this climactic phase of the Time of Trouble: “I saw an angel [the Christ] come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more.”

When Satan and his multitude of false prophets are no longer permitted to “deceive the nations,”

the kingdom of God, under the rulership of Christ, will be established in the earth. There are many wonderful prophecies telling of this time. One of these is in Isaiah 25:6-9, which reads in part: "He will destroy in this mountain [kingdom] the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations." The present "covering" over all people and "vail" over all nations are the shrouds of ignorance, superstition, and doubt that Satan has generated and fostered as a means of deceiving mankind. However, the prophet states that the Lord is going to remove these coverings of deceit and error.

God, speaking through the Prophet Jeremiah, explains how mankind will be educated in his kingdom: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD."—Jer. 31:33,34

Truly, in that great and glorious day there will be one well of water. It will be a "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst . . . of it, and on either side of the river," will be the "tree of life, . . . and the leaves of the tree" will be for the "healing of the nations." All of mankind will be invited to drink of this pure water: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."—Rev. 22:1,2,17

