



Volume 82 No.1 MELBOURNE, JANUARY/MARCH 1999 HOPE FOR A TROUBLED WORLD

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:19-21)

Both the Old and New Testaments predict that a better time is coming: a time when justice and righteousness will be established on the earth, and peace abound everywhere. The apostle in Rom. 8:22,19, speaks of the whole creation groaning and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Hag. 2:6-7 also speaks of the desire of all nations coming, but indicates a great shaking time preceding that event. "Yet once more I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come."

Peter, in his second epistle, chapter 3, speaks also of a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and also describes the great time of trouble preceding the establishment of same. He speaks of the "Heavens being on fire, and being dissolved. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

It is clear that the apostle is speaking in figurative language, for if the earth and the heavens were literally to be so destroyed, there would be no people left to enjoy the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," which he assures us is to follow the burning-up time, just as the prophet declares that after the great shaking "the desire of all nations shall come."

Peter simply refers to the destruction of the present order of things in a fiery time of trouble, just as the first heavens and earth, which were before the flood, had passed away. The "earth" refers to the social arrangements or order among men. The "heavens" refers to the spiritual or religious portion of humanity. These elements have both got out of accord with God and righteousness. The whole earth is ungodly and selfish, and the religious elements have become confused in teachings and have lost the spirit of Christ. The apostle Paul (Heb. 12:26-27), quoting Haggai, says, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven, and this word yet once more signifieth the removal of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain."

Thus the apostle and the prophet refer to the woes of earth and the great remedy that God has provided, and which is soon to be applied. The declaration of the prophet that God will eventually establish a reign of righteousness in the earth, which, when realised, will indeed be the desire of all nations, is borne out by the testimony of every prophet and apostle (Act 3: 19-21), and cannot therefore, be disputed by any who acknowledge the inspiration of the Bible.

The cause of all creation's groaning and pain is sin; for all the moral and physical degradation which directly or indirectly causes the pain and groaning of humanity is part of the wages of sin. Humanity is thus under a blight, and suffers both individually and as a whole. Its own imperfect and often unjust governments, as well as its aches and pains of body and mind, are the natural consequences of its imperfect, fallen condition; and although men can do something toward general improvement, their efforts are at best but feeble and spasmodic - they are utterly incapable of releasing themselves from their difficulties.

Truly, all mankind are groaning; and yet, as the apostle indicates, they are not hopeless; they are waiting for something, they know not exactly what - a panacea for sickness, pain, sorrow and death - a just and righteous government, which will lift up the poorest and meanest from the mire of ignorance and squalor, to comfort and happiness.

What all mankind have longed and vaguely hoped for, God, through His prophets, has clearly and definitely foretold; and, further, He has shown exactly how it will be achieved, namely, through the agency of the Lord

Jesus Christ, who redeemed mankind by giving His life as a ransom-price for the life of the world, and who will shortly set up His kingdom and establish His authority over the redeemed race.

The only hope for the world is in this Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is God's long-promised remedy. Man's extremity will be God's opportunity; "The desire of all nations shall come," at a juncture when human ingenuity and skill will have exhausted themselves in seeking relief without avail. The present world-wide disorders are all factors in the "time of trouble," the "day of vengeance," with which this age is closing. Not only will it be a just recompense for misused privileges, but it will tend to humble the arrogance of men, making them "poor in spirit," and ready for the great blessings God is about to pour upon all flesh (Joel 2:28)

THE RIGHTFUL RULER

God's Kingdom will be established in due time, when He "whose right it is," will "take the Kingdom." He, who bought it with His own precious blood, will "take unto Himself His great power and reign." Force will be used - "He shall rule them (the nations) with a rod of iron - as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers" (Rev. 2:27). He will gather the nations, assemble the kingdoms, and pour upon them His fierce anger, and the whole earth shall be devoured with the fire of His jealousy; then, when they are humbled and ready to hear and heed his counsel, He will turn unto them a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent (Zeph. 3:8-9).

Not only will the Kingdom be established with force, and be a power that men cannot resist, but it will so continue throughout the 1000 years of Christ's reign, which is for the specific purpose of vanquishing the enemies of righteousness. "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet," "The soul that will not hear (obey) that prophet (the glorious Christ-antitype of Moses) shall be destroyed from among the people" (in the Second Death). 1 Cor. 15:25; Acts 3:23.

Satan will be bound; his every deceptive and misleading influence will be restrained, so that evil shall no longer appear to men to be good, nor good appear undesirable and evil; truth shall no longer appear to men untrue, nor falsehoods be caused to appear true (Rev. 20:2).

The reign of Christ, however, will not be one of force only, but side by side with the rod of iron will be the olive branch of mercy and peace for all the inhabitants of the world; who, when the judgements of the Lord are abroad in the earth, wit, learn righteousness (Isa. 26:9). The sin-blinded eyes shall be opened, that the world may see right and wrong, justice and injustice, in a light quite different from now - in "seven-fold" light (Isa. 30:26; 29:18-20). The outward temptations of the present will be suppressed, evils will neither be licensed nor permitted, but a penalty sure and swift will fall upon transgressors, meted out with unerring justice by the glorified and competent judges of that time, who, nevertheless, will have compassion upon the weak: - 1 Cor. 6:2; Psa. 96:13; Acts 17:31; Mal. 3:5.

SUPPOSED DIFFICULTIES

All this would seem reasonable to thinking people but for two things. One is, the unscriptural view which for centuries has predominated that Christ is now reigning over and ruling the world. And yet, if versed in the world's history, all candid minds must admit that up to the present time there has not been a rule of righteousness such as the prophets predicted of the reign of Christ (Isa. 32:1). On the contrary, it is manifest that the kingdoms of this world are all under the power and subject to the invisible "prince of this world," Satan, who takes advantage of the darkness of human ignorance, superstition, and depravity.

Poor, frail humanity has indeed made some noble efforts at self-government, but the unseen and unrecognised powers of darkness have been too much for their efforts, and have succeeded in keeping in power a majority who were not lovers of righteousness. Nor can we hope for better than present results while selfishness remains the rule of action.

The second thing is the long delay before the establishment of Christ's Kingdom. People naturally wonder that God has not long since exerted His great power to suppress sin, and to lift mankind out of its present state of depravity, disease and death; and since some six thousand years have passed without such an interposition, many reason that God's future dealings should be judged by the past. Hence they conclude we cannot expect such a rule or Kingdom in the future, believing that all things must continue as they are now, and have been from the foundation of the world.

We answer, it can be shown that the Scriptures teach that not only has God promised such a Kingdom for the purpose of blessing the world, but He has also foretold the long period intervening in which evil has been permitted, good and sufficient reasons being given in the Bible for the nearly six thousand years that have elapsed. Yet, in examining these reasons for the apparent delay in the

establishment of the reign of righteousness, let us not forget that it is only measured by the shortness of the present life that six thousand years seem very long; with God, "a thousand years are but as yesterday" (Psa. 90:4). When clearly seen, this should remove every obstacle to belief in the promised Kingdom of blessing.

WHY THE LONG DELAY?

The long delay and its purposes are clearly marked in the Scriptures. Over four thousand years after the

first promise of deliverance, given in Eden (Gen. 3:15), the redemption was accomplished on Calvary. Nearly two thousand years more fill the measure of the Gospel Age (the period between Christ's first and second advents), during which time God is selecting and developing the Church - the Bride of Christ. Furthermore, this long period of six thousand years was designed to give the race a necessary experience with the dreadful effects of sin, its exceeding sinfulness, and the firmness of that justice which will by no means clear the guilty violators of God's just and holy law. Such an experience will be of inestimable value to all for all eternity and by contrast it will lead to so great an appreciation of righteousness, during Christ's reign, as to make it, when realised, what the prophet predicted - "The desire of all nations."

The delay, from the time of redemption to the Kingdom Age, while fulfilling this purpose to the world, serves particularly the further purpose - the development of the Church, a "little flock" of believers in and followers of Christ, sharers of His reproach in the present time, and therefore chosen and counted worthy to share His spiritual Kingdom, His glory, and His work - to reign with Him as joint-heirs of the long-promised Kingdom of God for the blessing of all the families of the earth.-Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:16, 29.

During the Messianic Age, Christ's power will be exercised to prevent deceptions, clear away ignorance, strengthen the weak, and restore to sight those now blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). A thousand enticements to sin, which now make special appeal to the depraved appetites of the fallen race, will not be permitted when the new, heavenly rule is established; but the Gospel Church is called and tested during this age, while evil is permitted to hold sway, in order that their proving may be like that of gold tried in the fire. This company will be complete when the Gospel Age ends, and then the control of earth will be entrusted to them, under and in co-operation with the Lord Jesus, the King of Kings.-1 Cor. 6:2; Rom. 8:17.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

When Christ's Kingdom has come, it will be just what all men need. At first it will rule with a rod of iron, dashing the now tottering kingdoms of this world in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:9); breaking up civil, social and religious systems of tyranny and oppression; putting down all opposing authority and power; humbling the proud and high-minded; and finally teaching all the world to be still and to know that the Lord's Anointed has taken the dominion (Psa. 46:10). Then the blessing of its peaceful reign will begin to be experienced. Truth and equity will be established on a sure and permanent footing; justice will be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet (Isa. 28:17); and the great restitution work will progress grandly to its glorious consummation.

There will be sweeping moral reforms; great educational and philanthropic enterprises; and wonderful cures for every disease and deformity, mental and physical. There will be awakenings from death, and a grand reorganisation of society under the new order of the Kingdom of God. All the world's bitter experiences during the six thousand years past will then prove valuable lessons on the exceeding sinfulness of sin; helping them to appreciate the new rule of righteousness, to live in everlasting conformity to the perfect will of God, and thus to accept God's gift of everlasting life, designed for all who will receive it on His conditions of love and loyal obedience to His commands. Then, it will be true: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

No creature of the redeemed race will be too low for Divine grace to reach, through the all-powerful and blessed agency of the kingdom. No degradation of sin will be too deep for the hand of mercy to fathom, to rescue the blood-bought soul; no darkness of ignorance or superstition will be so dense in any heart but that the light of Divine truth and love will penetrate its gloom and bring it to a knowledge of the joy and gladness of the new day, and an opportunity to share the same by obedience. No disease that can attack and pollute the physical system will be beyond the prompt control of the great Physician. And no deformity or mental defect will be able to resist His healing touch.

The grand work of restitution, thus begun on the living nations, will presently extend to all the sleeping families of the earth; for the hour is coming, yea, is not far distant, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth; when death and hell (hades, the grave) shall give up the dead which are in them; and the sea shall give up its dead (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:13). What a glorious prospect the new dispensation will present when fully inaugurated! The changes from one dispensation to another in the past have been marked and prominent, but this change will be the most eventful of all.

"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, 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 realise the resurrection work complete.-Rev. 21:4."

No wonder that the thought of such a spectacle -of a whole race returning to God with songs of praise and everlasting joy upon their heads - should seem almost too good to believe; but He who has promised is able also to perform all His good pleasure. Though sorrow and sighing seem almost inseparable from our being, yet "sorrow and sighing shall flee away"; though weeping in sackcloth and ashes has endured throughout the long night of the dominion of sin and death, yet joy awaits the morning; all tears shall be wiped from all faces; beauty shall be given for ashes; the oil of joy shall replace the spirit of heaviness, and the whole earth shall be at rest. -Isa. 14:7.

THE CHURCH'S HOPE

A clearer knowledge of the world's hope should, and does, increase the church's appreciation of God's loving arrangement for His creatures. It adds new lustre to the church's hope when we realise that the glorious object of the call and discipline of the church in this Gospel age is for the development of characters, which being proved loyal to God, to righteousness and truth, will be associated with Christ in the great and grand work of uplifting whosoever will of men out of ignorance, sin and degradation, into God's likeness, and favour, and love. The apostle declares "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John 3:3). It is a hope that helps onward to God and holiness. (P.P. 7/31)

After Death the Judgement

(Heb. 9:27,28)

This biblical teaching of a future opportunity for salvation has often been misrepresented as the doctrine of a "second chance". Of course, this is not the case. The "ransom for all" which Jesus our Saviour gave, guarantees for Adam and all his posterity one full opportunity for salvation, and all who in this life have not had that opportunity must (If God and His Word are true - and they are) have the opportunity after their resurrection from death, during the coming reign of Christ Jesus, our Saviour.

Rather than the words "after death the judgement" signifying a final and irrevocable doom, as is contended by so many well-meaning Christians, a careful consideration of these words in their context, leads us to exactly the opposite conclusion and magnifies the purpose of our gracious heavenly Father.

First of all, it must be emphasised that verses 27 and 28 of Hebrews, chapter 9, should be considered together and this is made evident by verse 27 beginning with "As" and the next verse commencing with "So". In other words, verse 28 is both complementary to and in parallel with verse 27. The verses read (A.V.): "As it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgement: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation". Now let us place against the first part of verse 27, the first part of verse 28, thus:

"As it is appointed unto men once to die" "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" and do the same with the second part of both verses, thus: "But after this the judgement" "And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." From these arrangements, we clearly see that firstly the death of man and that of our Lord are set in parallel and secondly that judgement and salvation are set in parallel as well.

Death, as far as mankind was concerned, was inevitable after our first parent had sinned against his Creator. Death was, of course, unnatural, for man, subject to certain conditions, was created to live. But sin "entered" and death resulted "by sin" (Rom. 5:12). Although the intervention of death was in the nature of calamity, the writer to the Hebrews in our text intends to strike a hopeful chord. There is to be after death, not a further calamity but "judgement" which, as we have seen, is linked with salvation.

It was because death reigned over mankind that Jesus came to die. As verse 28 reads, "So Christ was once offered". He was offered to bear the sins, not of the few but of the "many" as signifying all mankind: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous".

References in Scripture to the day of judgement indicate that it will be associated with manifestations of divine justice, punishment and reckoning and this is because accountability is woven in with man's very being. And where there is accountability, there must be adjudication. The Scriptural conception of a judge is not simply that of a jurist on a bench but that of a ruler or king, reigning in righteousness, guiding and blessing his subjects and avenging them of their enemies. Thus "God has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." (Acts 17:31). That Judge will deal with and order the affairs of mankind. He will administer the government of God, as shown in the words used by Israel of old, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). That administration and ordering of human affairs are the main characteristics of the day of judgement, is evidenced by Jesus having promised solemnly that more toleration will be shown in that day to the peoples of Sodom and Gomorrah and of Tyre and Sidon that to the people of the cities of Israel who rejected Him. (Matt. 10:14, 15; 11:21 to 24).

All this is in fact expressed in our text. When Jesus appears the second time, it will be without sin unto

salvation. "Them that look for him" must be an allusion to Israel waiting for the High Priest to emerge from the inner sanctuary towards the end of the Day of Atonement, after he had made an atonement for their sins. The whole nation, so to speak, awaited the signal that atonement had been accomplished for another year. Paul tells us that "the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" - in other words, the creation waits for Christ to appear the second time for it is then that His people, the sons of God, will be with Him.

At His first advent Jesus gave Himself a Ransom. He will come again to put into universal effect the opportunity for salvation which his death and resurrection secured.

Judgement after death, then, is primarily and fundamentally a blessing. Seeing that after "once to die" the weighty clause is added "but after this the judgement", we discern therein the radiant light of full redemption. Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

The Way of the Righteous

(A Study in Psalm 1)

The First Psalm is in the nature of an introduction to the Book of Psalms. Its subject makes it peculiarly fitted to herald the sublime thoughts of later psalms, for it speaks of righteousness and evil and Divine Law. Around these three themes is built the whole fabric of revealed truth, and a clear understanding of them is an indispensable preliminary to the intelligent consideration and reception of the "deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2. 10).

The purpose of this Psalm is the declaring of the fundamental principle upon which God has designed His creation, viz., that those things which are right, just, in harmony with His own character, shall endure for ever, and that which is evil, unjust, out of harmony with the character of God, although it may subsist for a time, must and will inevitably pass away and out of existence. Divine creation is so ordained that nothing which is inherently evil can subsist indefinitely. It contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction and must eventually come to its end. Hence we have the law propounded by Paul in Rom. 6.23 "The wages of sin is death" -death being the antithesis of life, the opposite to conscious existence.

The Psalm eulogises the happy state of the righteous man, both now and hereafter, and accredits the maintenance of his righteous state to his observance of Divine Law. Against this it places in contrast the unhappy position of the sinful, and, declares in no uncertain terms that the end of that way is desolation, oblivion, non-existence. The fact that God's whole plan of development for man is based upon law is stressed, and rightly stressed here. It is when this fact is realised that we find ready to our hands a yardstick by means of which we can measure the relative values of differing interpretations of Scripture.

VERSE 1

"*Blessed is the man*" says verse 1 "*who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*" This word "blessed" is capable of deeper shades of meaning than the A.V. suggests. "*How happy the man . . .*" is Rotherham's rendering, and Young is even more emphatic with "*O the happiness of that one who . . .*" It is significant that "happiness" is the first quality to be mentioned in the Psalms; and characteristic of God ! His eternal purpose in creation is to the promotion of happiness amongst His creatures, and that happiness is only to be achieved by complete harmony with God.

Religion is not a thing to be kept apart from daily life and practised solely on Sundays; every affair and activity of every day can be woven into the fabric of one's personal communion with God and sanctified thereby. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3. 17). "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8.28). "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8.10). This is the normal condition of human life, from which men have fallen away, and only as they come back to this standing of absolute dedication of life and its activities to God can they find true happiness.

VERSE 2

"*But his delight is in the law of the Lord. and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*" (vs. 2). Here is the great principle; we must be students of the ways of God and learn to understand the principles upon which He has founded creation. The term "law" here does not confine itself merely to a set of commandments with their negative prohibitions- "Thou shalt not . . ."-but extends to those basic principles of Divine creation which lie at the root of every code of laws.

We must learn *why* righteousness is desirable and sin to be abhorred and avoided; *why* God is dealing now only with the disciples of Christ, the "Church" and will turn to convert the whole world only when the next Age, the Millennial Age, has dawned; *why* there is one call to a spiritual salvation and destiny, and another to an earthly, and eventual lot, whether in heaven or upon earth. We shall not attain to complete knowledge of these things whilst in the flesh, but we can learn sufficient to make us the efficient servants and ambassadors of our king.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul” says the Psalmist in another place (Psalm 19.7). “O how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day.” “Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them” (Psa. 119. 97 and 165). In more measured cadence the Preacher says “The law of the wise is a fountain of life, that he might depart from the snares of death” (Prov. 13. 14).

“In the night” says the Psalmist (Psa. 42. 8). “his song shall be with me.” Who is there among us not familiar with the haunting pathos of Cant. 3. 1 “By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth”? Our faith is not for daytime only; it is a twenty-four hour a day and a seven day a week faith, and oft-times it is during the silence of the night that our deepest revelations come.

VERSE 3

Vs. 3 *“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.”* In the first Eden there were trees of life and a river that “watered the garden” and so gave it life (Gen. 2. 9-10). In the second Eden there are to be trees of life and a river of water of life (Rev. 22 1-2; Ezek. 47. 12) and the trees are to be for food and medicine-sustenance and healing. The Psalmist translates the symbol into reality. Those trees of life of the Millennial Age are none other] than the righteous of this Age who have measured up to the standards of the first two verses of this Psalm. *Because* they have thus entered into the Divine way of life they shall become “trees of life” to give both sustenance and healing to the redeemed multitudes who will come back from the grave “in that day”. True will it be of these whom Paul elsewhere calls “ministers of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5. 18) that “*whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*” (vs 3).

There is a peculiar fitness in the association of trees with rivers. In hot countries trees are planted on the banks of rivers and streams in order to screen the water from the solar heat and to check evaporation. The trees thrust down their roots into the moist soil and are themselves sustained by the same waters that they are conserving for use and benefit of men. “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High” (Psa. 46.4).

Every consecrated follower of the Lord Jesus during this Gospel Age is himself a “tree” nourished by that river which is the knowledge of God revealed through His Word, the holy Scriptures; and each such follower is by his Christian life and devotion helping to conserve that Word against the coming Millennial Day when its benefits will be made free to all mankind. “The Spirit and the Bride say ‘come’ . . . and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22. 17).

VERSE 4

Now we come to the other side of the picture. *“The ungodly are not so but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away,”* (vs. 4). This likening of the wilfully wicked man and the hopelessly evil thing to chaff which is doomed to be scattered and lost is definite in the Scriptures. “Let them be as the chaff before the wind” says the Psalmist in Psa. 35. 5 “and let the angel of the Lord destroy them”. “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa. 40. 8).

“How oft” says Job (21. 17-18) “is the candle of the wicked put out! How oft they are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away”. David continues in the same strain (Psa 37. 1-2). “Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb”, and again

(Psa.5:4,5). “Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish (properly ‘worthless’) shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity.”

And this, which is said of individuals, is equally true of every evil institution which cumbers the earth, this aspect being seen in vision when Daniel interpreted the king’s dream and described how all the might and power of those empires which stand in the way of Messiah’s Kingdom will be destroyed by the “stone cut out of the mountain without hands” and how every vestige of them is to be scattered like the “chaff of the summer threshing-floors” (Dan. 2. 35).

Herein is made plain the Divine intention with regard to wilful evildoers. After the full and fair opportunity for life which is to be offered to every man under the reign of Christ in the Millennial Age, the penalty for continued and wilful sin will fall inevitably upon the sinner; withdrawal of life, the Divine gift of which the individual concerned refuses to make proper use. As final and irrevocable as the dispersing of chaff from the threshing floor, carried by the wind and utterly lost, is this, the logical and inevitable result of wilful and incorrigible sin.

VERSES 5, 6

“*Therefore*” says the inspired writer with conviction *“the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation (assembly) of the righteous.”* (vs. 5). There is a direct link with the New Testament doctrine of the resurrection of mankind during the Millennial Age here, for the word rendered

“stand” is one that has the meaning of standing firm or being set up. The New Testament word for resurrection is “*anastasis*” which means a re-standing or standing up again. “There shall be a resurrection (*anastasis*) of the dead” said Paul (Acts 24, 15) “both of the just and unjust.

“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgement” said Jesus (Luke 11, 31-32) and again “All that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto resurrection to life (Greek) and they that have done evil, *unto the resurrection to judgement (eis anastasin kriseus)*. This verse in Psalm 1 is clearly a reference to the fact that, although “sinners” will in fact be restored to life in the Millennial Age; no sinner will “stand” in that judgement; he will either cease to be a sinner and so enter into life, or remaining a sinner, reap the logical consequence of that choice as expressed in the concluding words of the Psalm “*the way of the ungodly shall perish*” .

In no finer words could the Most High express His determination to root out and destroy every vestige of sin from the fair earth of his creating, and to usher all mankind- “whosoever will” -into the orderly and glorious life which is the rightful inheritance of all who shall eventually measure up willingly to their Creator’s wise and loving designs. “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (B. S. M).

The Sum of All Graces

“The greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13

Why is the quality of love made so important in the Word of God? Because it is the first thing, the most important thing, the principal thing. It is the fulfilling of God’s law; and indeed, the sacrificial love enjoined upon God’s saints of this age goes even beyond the requirements of the perfect law.

But why is love put first? It is because no other quality of character is so lovely, so beautiful, so productive of happiness and joy, so great a blessing to all upon whom it operates. It is the very essence of God’s character GOD IS LOVE!

This quality particularly represents his personality. While God is all-just, all-powerful, all-wise, we do not say that God is Justice, or that God is Power, or that God is Wisdom - but that God is Love.

He uses this great power only as love dictates and approves. He uses his justice only in the fullest harmony with his glorious attribute of love. Love is the mainspring of all his doings. Whoever, therefore, would be godlike must be loving, must have love as the dominating quality of his character and life.

Love and righteousness are inseparable. Love is to continue to all eternity, and only those who become the active embodiment of this gracious quality of character will live eternally. (Dawn)

THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY

“(God) has put all things under His feet and has made Him the head over all things for the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Eph. 1:22,23)

BODY OF THE ANOINTED

The apostle Paul tells us that there was one feature of God’s plan for human salvation which was not made known in the past; the fact that there was to be a Body of Christ - not one individual but a company. This figure is used when we speak of the body of an assembly of which the chairman is the head. So we speak of the body of Christ, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. God gave him to be the Head over the Church, which is His Body.

Through Paul, the Lord tells us that in this Body of Christ there would be both Jews and Gentiles, and that the two were to become one “New Man”, with Christ Jesus the Head and the Church the Body. (Eph 2:11-16, 4:11-16) The first members of this Body came from the Jews, to whom the call was first to be made, because they were the natural seed of Abraham. God had so promised Abraham and indeed many thousand Jews responded quickly to the Gospel message, showing a condition of consecration to God and His ways.

Then the door was thrown open to the Gentiles. There were not many of these ready for the call, and so it has taken nearly two thousand years to gather from amongst the Gentiles enough to complete the predestined number. These had not had the previous instruction of the Law to assist them or the prior favour of the Lord, and so it has taken a lengthy period to take out the proportionate number. Thus we were called out of the world to be followers of Jesus; invited to make the same kind of consecration to God which He made, and to receive and manifest the same Holy Spirit - the spirit of anointing.

During this Gospel Age the Father is calling only those who have the spirit of His Son, whose disposition

was one of faith and obedience. These cannot have the same degree of obedience because the flesh is imperfect, but they can have the same degree as far as the mind, the will, is concerned. God is looking at the will; He knows far better than we do that we cannot do the things that we would wish to do. The apostle said, "Yea, I judge not my own self.... He that judges me is the Lord." (1 Cor. 4:3,4) Paul did not know how much allowance to make even for himself, nor do we know how much allowance to make for ourselves, our brethren our friends, our neighbours. So the Lord instructs us not to judge one another, for by our standard of judgement we ourselves will be judged.

When we come into relationship with God by consecration, His love is specially directed to us. We have access into His presence through Christ, who assures us that "The Father Himself loveth you". This love which began when He begot us by His Holy Spirit, continues with us as long as we are loyal to Him and in proportion to the degree of that loyalty. Should we at anytime prove disloyal, the Holy Spirit would be taken from us. There is forgiveness for errors made through the weakness of the flesh, but disloyalty to the Lord, sin against the Holy Spirit, has no forgiveness. But while our trust is firmly placed in Him, He is able to keep us from falling.

What a wonderful honour is that to which God has called us! Those who have been begotten again by His Holy Spirit have been anointed thenceforth to be kings and priests unto God, and to reign with Christ a thousand years. There are tribulations identified with all their experiences; nevertheless, while they have these, they have also the peace of God which passes all human understanding. God's word declares that all things are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. He has promised grace sufficient for every trial - even the adversities of life work together for their good, because they love God and are called according to His purpose.

THE TRUE CHURCH

The church which our Lord Jesus Christ began to gather during His ministry and which was recognised by the Father at Pentecost, after the Ransom-price for all had been provided, was the little company of disciples who had consecrated earthly time, talents and life as a sacrifice to God. Theirs was a 'voluntary association' for mutual aid and was under the laws and commandment of Christ, the Head or recognised ruling authority. The bonds were those of love and common interest. Since all were enlisted under the captaincy of Jesus, the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows and aims of one were those of the others. Thus they had a far more perfect union of hearts than could possibly be had from a union on the basis of any man-made creed. Their only union was of the Spirit, their law was that of love, their government was the will of Him who said, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

There are two senses in which the true church of Christ may be considered - all who, like the early church, are fully consecrated to the doing of the Father's will, amenable only to Christ's will and government, recognising and obeying no other -these, the saints from the beginning of the Gospel Age down to its close, when all of this company shall have been "sealed", constitute **The Church of the First Born**, whose names are written in heaven. These are all one in aim, hope and suffering, and will be joint-heirs with Christ Jesus to the great "inheritance of the saints in light", joint-heirs with Him in the kingdom which God has promised to those who love Him.

The other sense in which this same company is recognised is by counting a part for the whole. Thus all the living ones of this company may be spoken of as the Church, or again, any part of this company of living followers who may meet together may properly be called the Church, for wherever two or three are assembled, the Lord has promised to be among them. Consequently, that would be a Church meeting, an assembly of 'the Church of the First-Born'. The "general assembly" will be when all the Church are made like their Head and are glorified with Him and see Him as He is. God's Church is not yet organised, rather the Gospel Age has been the time for calling out and testing the volunteers willing to sacrifice and suffer with their Lord now, and thus prove themselves worthy to be recognised as joint-heirs in His Kingdom at the close of that Age.

It is then that He shall establish and organise His kingdom in power and great glory, to bless and rule the world with 'Divine Authority'. Meantime, the called out ones who are seeking to make their calling and election sure that they may attain to a share in the kingdom are "a voluntary association of believers", drawn together for mutual assistance in seeking to know and do the Father's will, so that they may be accounted worthy of the honours and glory promised. In this association of the consecrated, there is no imperial authority of one over another and no lording over God's heritage should be permitted, for the one and only Lord has left the clear instruction, "Be not called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren."

There is abundant scripture proof that God's object in this selection, discipline and final exaltation of the

Church is for the ultimate purpose of blessing, through them, all His fallen, sin-stricken creation, by granting to all a full, perfect judgement or trial, under favourable conditions, of which perfect knowledge and sufficient help will be chief elements. Thus seen, the Church is being selected for the great work to be accomplished during the Millennial Age of restoring “whosoever will” of the fallen ones to the original state, leaving those still unwilling to embrace the Divine righteousness to go down into “second death” - final destruction.

Thus then is the Church of Christ defined. It is perfectly illustrated by the apostle Paul (Romans 12:4,5), when he compared the Church to a human body. In this figure the head represents our Lord, and all who are **His** constitute the Body, over which the Head rules. Jesus has been and always will be the Head over the Church as a whole; He is likewise the Head and Ruler of the entire living Church, and in every assembly where two or three (or more) meet in **His name** (where His word is sought and heeded), He is the Head, Ruler and Teacher. (Eph 1:20-23)

HOW TO JOIN THE TRUE CHURCH

All Christians should be joined to this association, or incipient organisation. In the light of what the scriptures say of this company constituting the Church, as we have seen, it is evident that all who have given up their will, talent, time, etc., are recognised as members of that Church of which he is the Head, and who know and are known by God. Thus, by consecration, we join the True Church and our names are recorded in heaven.

But some may still feel that surely there is a need to join some organisation on earth, assent to some creed, be enrolled somewhere. Let us always remember that in all things our Lord is our Pattern and Teacher, and in neither His words nor his acts do we find any authority for binding ourselves with creeds and traditions of men, all of which tend to make the Word of God of no effect, bringing us under bondage which will hinder growth in grace and knowledge. Paul warned against this, saying, “Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” (Gal 5:1)

But how shall we then know one another? In reply, we might ask, How can we help knowing one another when the Spirit of our Master is made manifest in word and act and manner and look? Yes, the living faith, the unfeigned love, the long-suffering meekness, the childlike simplicity, coupled with the constancy and zeal of maturity, make manifest the Children of God and we need no earthly record, for the names of all such are surely written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. (P.P. 11/19)

A Morning Prayer

O God, enlighten my mind with Truth;
Inflame my heart with love;
Inspire me with courage;
Enrich my life with service;
Pardon what I have been;
Sanctify what I am; Order what I shall be,
And Thine shall be the glory, and mine
the eternal salvation, through
Jesus Christ my Lord.
-Bishop Vincent, N.Y.

Faithfulness Unto Death

“Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10)

Faithfulness unto death means that we have I ‘pledged ourselves to someone to do some service, and that we intend to faithfully carry out that service, and fulfil it in our death.

Faithfulness, as viewed by the world, is much admired and praised; whereas unfaithfulness is looked upon with contempt. To illustrate:- Suppose a man were employed by a master to carry out some important work that required thoughtfulness, cautiousness and continuity for many years. If that man were faithfully doing all that was expected of him to the best of his ability, he would be appreciated, rewarded and praised by all concerned; but if, on the contrary he became thoughtless, careless and erratic, and seriously jeopardized the work given him to do, he would be cast off and punished because of his unfaithfulness. Now if faithfulness is appreciated by worldly people (whose standard of righteousness is low) how much more would Jehovah, the

Great God of righteousness, reward faithfulness in any service done for him?

Our text is addressed to those who have taken advantage of the favour of God in accepting the gift of righteousness through faith in the blood of Christ. We realise that by our faith we are made *holy* and *acceptable* to God. Hearing his invitation through the Apostle Paul (Rom. 12:1), we presented our bodies a living sacrifices (a reasonable service), and henceforth, not conforming ourselves to this world but being transformed by the renewing of our minds, we go on to prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. Having thus consecrated ourselves to God, he, as it were, gives back to us our life and all we possessed, to use them now in his service till all is consumed, even to death. This brings out a very great responsibility, one which we could never of ourselves have undertaken; but we have presented ourselves in sacrifice because we have believed God and are trusting in him to supply all our need. The question is, then, shall we be faithful unto death? If we are, we shall receive the *crown* of life, the highest kind of life, immortality.

GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS

Do we often think of the loving-kindness of God? Do we picture him as looking down upon us, his children, pitying and helping us in the various trials and experiences which are necessary to enable us, through the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the flesh, that we as New Creatures may live? When we get our reward, we shall realise that it was all of God's favour that we obtained the prize. All the trials and temptations he sends us crystallize our character, and prepare us for eternity.

Look back to the beginning of the way. How we appreciated God's goodness and love when we first heard his truth! How we realised that he is indeed a loving, pitying Father! How gently he led us from one trial to another! He would not allow us to be tried above what we were able to bear, but when we went to Him in prayer, he always provided the promised grace sufficient to give us strength to resist. When troubles come upon us, and we realise what a loving Heavenly Father we have, do we not also realize a nearness to the Lord and find sweet peace such as we never found before? So God gently leads us, allowing the fire of affliction to come upon us little by little, and gradually, as we continue faithful in these trying experiences, we become crystallized in character. Not hardened in heart, but hardened in character to the intent that we may be enabled to bear more pressure, more trial, more affliction even till death.

If all the difficulties which we have already come through had come upon us at the beginning of the way, we should have been overwhelmed. As it was, they loomed up like mountains; but we faced them with a stout heart. We went to God and said, I am not able to surmount this by myself, but I know I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. We proved God to see if he would give what he had promised, and we are very thankful to testify that we have never yet found him unfaithful. But we have had to look at ourselves more than once, however, and ask: "Am I faithful to God?" Can we say, "Father I have nothing but love in my heart toward thee, love so great that I love thee more than I love myself, more than I love life, more than I love all else?" Can we say we love the Lord Jesus Christ so intently that we are willing to suffer for his sake? Can we look into our hearts and say truthfully, "By God's grace and with the help which he will supply, I do really desire to be faithful, loving and kind, and am willing to endure all things even unto death?"

LIVING SACRIFICES

Are we willing to learn to lay down our lives for the brethren, striving day and night to give forth the Word of Truth? Are we endeavouring to work with our own hands that we may help those who are in need of help? Are we seeking at all times that wisdom which comes from above? For earthly wisdom is worse than useless in this life of sacrifice upon which we have entered. The wisdom from above not only teaches us to consider the object of our sacrifice, but also to look into the motive of everything which leads up to that object. It enables us to decide whether our doing this or that may help, or injure the brethren, - whether our first thoughts in connection with any work on their behalf are the best to act upon. But when we believe we have the leading of the Lord in any matter, let us be prompt to do it even at great sacrifice to ourselves.

How can we lay down our lives for the brethren? In this way: by being faithful to God, to Christ, and to each other. Can we look into our hearts and say: "There is not one individual in all the world whom I hate!" If we can say this, then we can add: "There is not one individual in all the world whom I do not love?" The Lord said: "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.... But love ye your enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest, for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." The world's standard is "Do unto others as they do unto you," but the Lord's standard is "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also likewise to them." (Luke 6:31-35).

How can we prove to ourselves that we love our enemies, that we love the brethren, that we love the Lord and that we love our Heavenly Father with supreme love? Paul wrote to the Romans that he would be willing to be accursed (to suffer punishment) for his brethren's sake, if only he could bring them to Christ. That was his position. What a spirit of love and self-sacrifice! It was the same spirit which our master had. He laid

down his life daily for his brethren, the Jews, using up his vitality and energy in healing and blessing them. In this way he fulfilled the sacrifice, the merit of which he has applied for us. We also are told to lay down our lives for the brethren, using our vitality and energy in blessing them and giving them the glad message of the glorious hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:2).

Our Lord during his ministry was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He was not tempted as a sinful human being, but as a New Creature. His temptation came from three directions-the world, the flesh, and the devil. He overcame them. Each one of us is tempted in the same way, and the Lord knows how to help us overcome. You remember what he says to us, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 14:27; 16:33).

As the trials and testings become more and more difficult, our characters gradually become harder and harder, more settled, rooted and grounded in the truth. We are being cut and polished as God's jewels. It is only by remaining faithful under all these trials and difficulties, and being rightly exercised by them that we can expect to receive the reward which God is offering to those only who are faithful unto death.

SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

We are spoken of as soldiers of Christ and enlisted, as it were, in our king's service. We pledged ourselves to fight for our country (not the earthly, but the heavenly country) against the world, the flesh and the devil. Now, when a soldier enlists, he is put under officers who give him instructions and put him through certain exercise and drill to fit him for the position he is to fill. So we, as soldiers Christ, are also placed under officers - Christ and those whom God hath set in authority in the Church. Their office is to give us our instructions, and the right kind of exercises. They tell us how to exercise our minds and how to make use of our opportunities so as to fit ourselves for service in God's kingdom.

A book of instructions also is given to the earthly soldier, that he may study the various forms of drill in order to become efficient. The Bible is our book of instructions, which enables us to decide whether the teaching we receive from our officers is according to the book of rules. Paul says, "Prove all things, and accept only that which is good." We require, therefore, to learn this book thoroughly, and to be conversant with all the rules contained in it, and so make progress, making ourselves perfect in every good work.

But it is not only necessary that we should be rightly exercised in all these matters, it is also necessary that we should put on the armour of God, and see that we have it *all* on, for our king has provided it. Above all, let us take the shield of faith wherewith we may quench every fiery dart of the Adversary. As we endeavour to be faithful to our Lord, to stand up for righteousness and truth, to show our love of the standard which God has raised for us, we shall find abundant use for our shield, because it is certain that we shall be attacked by the Adversary, the flesh, and the world.

How does the shield of faith quench the fiery darts of the Adversary? You have been striving for a long time to show your love for the brethren, and to do good to everybody as you have the opportunity especially to the household of faith. Have you, in your endeavours to do this, been evil spoken of? Has a different aspect been given to your words, and have you been accused of this and that? Have you felt very downcast, and find yourself beginning to wonder if there is anything in you at all? Have you ever felt your efforts do not appear to bring anyone into the Truth? If so, remember that even though your efforts seemingly do not bring anyone into the truth now, they will bear fruit some day. Remember also that it is a great privilege to have been used to speak the truth. We shall probably not know until we are glorified just how much the Lord has used us.

WALKING BY FAITH

Why do we believe that before long, the whole condition of things will be changed, that all the rule and authority now in existence will be laid low, and Christ reigning instead? How do we know this? We have accepted it by *faith*. How do we know we are consecrated to God, and how do we know he wants us? *By Faith*, based upon the Word of God. Unless we are full of faith, "faithful unto death," we will not receive the crown of life. Many of us do not naturally possess the necessary qualities. We like changes; we lack continuity. If we trust him, God will help us to develop that quality of perseverance and constancy to such an extent, that we will be able to remain faithful all the way through this life. Those qualities which we do not possess naturally, the grace of God working in our hearts will make up to us in some other way, so that we shall come off more than conquerors. We have not yet reached the end of all our experiences, the end does not come until death. Do not think it strange when still more trials come upon us the further we proceed into the evil day.

We require to know something about the character of our Heavenly Father, as well as his purposes concerning ourselves and his truth before we can develop his love. The love of God is unselfish. It loves because it loves to love. It does not love because of what it is going to get, but loves for love itself. God loved

us when we were enemies; when there was no reason why he should love us. He loved us because *He is Love*. We must be conformed to the image of his Son. We must endeavour to be holy as God is holy. We know that our earthly body will never acquire that state of perfection where it can be said to be holy in the actual sense; but we can be holy-minded; we can see to it that we have no desire to do wrong in any form.

May this be the spirit of each of us; may we endeavour to be faithful not only to God, but to the brethren, and even to our enemies. Yes, and may we be faithful even to our own selves- "To thine own self be true." How easy it is for us to deceive ourselves. Let us search our hearts daily. Let us watch as well as pray, lest we enter into temptation. Unless we watch and pray continually, unless we have circumcised our hearts, we are likely to be deceived. Let us lay our hearts bare before our Heavenly Father, and see whether we are carrying out that which we have promised to do. Let us see if we are faithful, if we are willing to continue faithful unto death. God grant we may all have sufficient grace to enable us to say in our hearts, "Thy will be done." Even though he may lead us through long dark ways, let us trust him where we cannot trace him. Has he not done all that he promised? *He* has been faithful, and he has told us to trust him, come what may; therefore, let *us* be faithful, even unto death, that by his grace we may receive the glorious Crown of Life. AMEN.

(JL:1909, abridged)

HE UNDERSTANDS

'Tis sweet to know
When we are tired, and when the hand of pain
Lies on our hearts, and when we look in vain
For human comfort, that the Great Divine
Still understands these cares of yours and mine,
No only understands, but day by day
Lives with us, while we tread the earthly way,
Bears with us all our weariness, and feels
The shadow of the faintest cloud that steals
Across our sunshine, even learns again
The depths and bitterness of human pain.
There is no sorrow that He will not share,
No cross, no burden for our hearts to bear
Without His help, no care of ours too small
To cast on Jesus, let us tell Him all,
Lay at His feet the story of our woes,
And in His sympathy find sweet repose.
He understands. (Anon.)