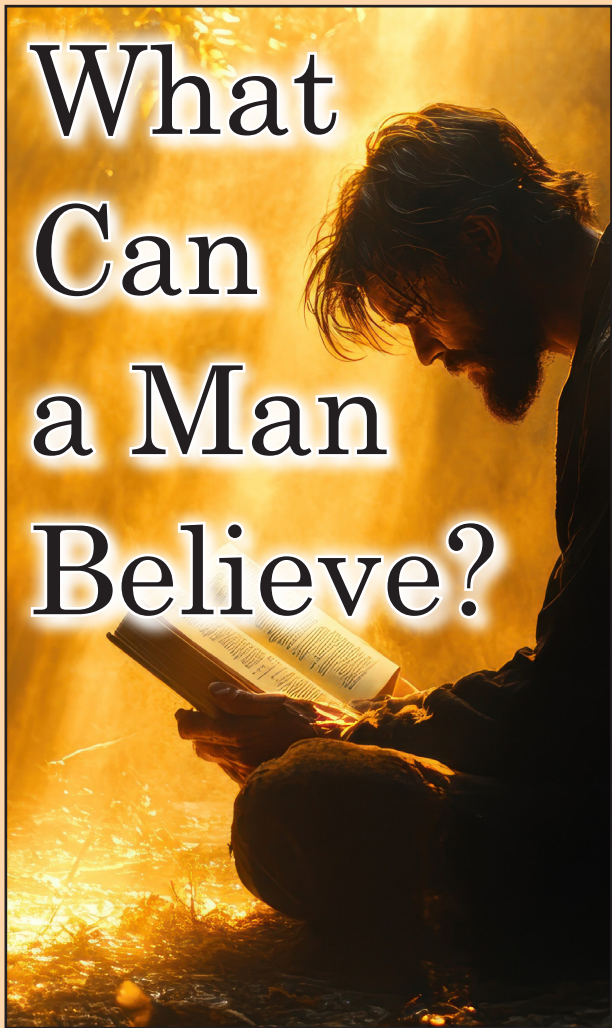


What
Can
a Man
Believe?



What Can a Man Believe?

“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.... Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth?” —John 18:37,38

WHAT can a man believe? What is truth? So far as the record indicates, Jesus made no direct reply to Pilate's question. However, the night before, when Jesus was praying in the upper room, he said to his Heavenly Father on behalf of his disciples, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth.” — John 17:17

Thy Word is truth! The Word here referred to is undoubtedly the Old Testament Scriptures—the

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only written Word of God then in existence. Now, the New Testament must be included as part of that Word which is the truth.

To make a careful search of all the promises of the Old Testament with a view to discovering in them some central theme which we might properly speak of as the truth would be a difficult task. And besides, no one could be sure that he had made a correct analysis of the main thought which they contain. This is proved by the many theories of the divine purpose which have already been set forth, all claiming to be based upon the Bible. But here is where the New Testament serves as a guiding star in our search for truth. In Acts 3:21 the Apostle Peter mentions a subject in which he says "God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

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This is certainly a definite clue as to the principal theme which God had caused all his prophets to set forth. And what was this great theme song of God, so important to him that he caused all his prophets to write about it? Peter describes it as "times of restitution of all things." The Greek word here rendered restitution is one which would be more accurately translated 'restoration'. Clearly, then, it is the divine purpose that all things shall be restored; but what are these all things, and when and how are they to be restored?

In verse nineteen of this same narrative, Peter uses the word therefore, saying, "Repent ye therefore," etc. This indicates that the great lesson which he sets forth, culminating with his reference to the times of restitution, is based upon something which had occurred or

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had been said previously. Checking back through the chapter, we find that the apostle had invoked divine power to restore a man who had been lame from the time of his birth. (Acts 3:2-9) The people greatly marveled at this, evidently wondering by what power so great a miracle had been wrought.

Then Peter explained the matter to them, saying that it had been accomplished through faith in Jesus, the Prince of life, whom they had killed. He explained, nevertheless, that the death of Jesus was not a miscarriage of the divine plan, but that God before had stated by the mouth of all his prophets that Christ should suffer. However, the people had committed a national sin and would need to repent ere the blessings provided by God through Christ could be theirs. Then the apostle continued, "Repent ye

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therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the LORD." — vs. 19

The literal meaning of the Greek word translated "refreshing" in this scripture is 'revival', as in the case of a person who has been out of breath, or ready to faint. Peter is evidently alluding to the case of the man to whom he had just restored to health, and, using this miracle as an illustration of future blessings provided by God for all mankind, he says that times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the LORD. The promise is made even more beautiful when we realize that the expression, presence of the LORD, in the Greek text, literally means, 'out from the face of Jehovah'.

The thought of these words

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is similar to that contained in the blessing which the LORD commanded Moses to pronounce upon Israel, which reads: "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." (Num. 6:24-26) Figuratively speaking, the LORD turned his back upon his human creation when our first parents transgressed the divine law. They were driven out of their perfect home, in Eden, into the unfinished earth to die.

But Peter tells us that a time is coming when the Creator will again turn his face toward the people, when he will, as it were, lift up his countenance upon them, with the result that there will be times of refreshing, times of revival, as illustrated by the healing of the man

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who had been lame from birth.

“He Shall Send Jesus Christ”

But how, and when, and under what circumstances will the times of refreshing come to the people? Peter answers these questions by explaining that it was God’s purpose to “send Jesus Christ” — a reference to Jesus’ second advent “whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” — Acts 3:20,21

Now we have some of the most important facts of divine revelation brought into focus for us, not by human deduction or philosophy, but by the inspired teaching of one of Jesus’ own apostles. He has told us what it was that God caused all his prophets to write about, and

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he places the fulfillment of all that they promised pertaining thereto as following the second coming of Christ; indeed, he makes it plain that it is for the accomplishment of this divine purpose that the plan of God calls for the second advent of Christ.

And Peter cites some examples of what the prophets actually said on the subject. The first one he mentions is a prophecy by Moses, "A Prophet shall the LORD your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." — Acts 3: 22,23; Deut. 18:15-19

In Moses' original promise concerning a Prophet which the LORD would raise up unto the

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people, he indicates that this great one would grant the favor of life which was so much desired when the original Law Covenant was given to Israel at Mount Sinai. Indeed, that Law Covenant promised life to those who would, or could, keep it inviolate. But none gained life under the Law because its perfect standard of righteousness was beyond the measure of an imperfect man's ability.

But life, everlasting life, will be given to the people when the Prophet like unto Moses is raised up; that is, lasting and perfect human life to all who obey that Prophet, while only those who disobey him will die. (Acts 3:23) Surely no one, simply by reading that wonderful promise made by Moses, could ever reach the conclusion that it applies to Christ during his second presence. It is only because the

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inspired Apostle Peter tells us that this is how it will be fulfilled that we can appreciate it as one of the melody notes in God's great theme song of restitution blessings for the dying world during the Millennium.

After citing this prophecy of Moses and applying it to the future times of restitution, Peter dips still further back into the prophetic record of the Old Testament, even to the promise which was made to faithful Abraham— "In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." (Acts 3:25; Gen. 12:1-3) We are glad that Peter thus gives us this further example of restitution promises, for it serves to assure us that these future blessings of life have been provided for Gentiles as well as for Jews; that they will be made available to all the families [or nations] of the earth.

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There are, as it were, two parts in that promise made to Abraham. One is that all the families of the earth are to be blessed, and the other is that the blessing would come through the seed of Abraham. In Galatians 3:16 the Apostle Paul identifies Jesus as primarily that seed. However, in verses twenty-seven through twenty-nine of the same chapter, he explains that the true followers of Jesus also by faith become a part of that seed, "and heirs according to the promise."

The opportunity of participating thus with Jesus in the future work of blessing was first offered to the Jews. (Acts 3:26) But when a sufficient number of them did not accept the opportunity, God "did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14) It has required the entire age, from Jesus' first advent until now, to se-

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lect from among Jews and Gentiles those who will participate with Jesus as the promised seed in the future blessing of the people with restoration to life on the earth, while the work of restitution will be accomplished during the thousand years of Christ's kingdom.

"The priests, and the captain of the temple," were grieved that Peter taught the people so plainly, and "preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." (Acts 4:1,2) In his wonderful discourse Peter had not used the word resurrection, but the people clearly understood that the great future work of restitution, which he declared had been spoken by God through the mouth of all his holy prophets, certainly implied a resurrection of the dead; and they were correct. The word resurrection is merely another term which the Scriptures employ

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in presenting to us the prospect of this glorious blessing of health and joy and life soon to be offered to a suffering and dying world.

By All the Prophets

It is possible to find a text of scripture, or even several texts, to prove almost any theory we may wish; especially by taking scriptures out of their intended setting and distorting their meaning. This is one reason there are so many conflicting opinions in the world. But this is not the method by which we arrive at the great truth concerning the times of restitution, for here is something, Peter explains, which had been declared by all God's holy prophets.

And as we look through the writings of the prophets, we find that they do indeed point forward to the times of restitution, each one

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using different language and employing different illustrations to enable us to grasp their meaning more readily. Isaiah was one of the holy prophets, and in many places in his wonderful book he touches upon the glorious theme of restitution, not by using this word, but by describing the blessings to be showered upon the people during the thousand years when Christ shall be king of earth. Note the following from his pen:

“And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to naught, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: that make a man an

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offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of naught. Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. -Isa. 29:18-24

Several important and encouraging facts are brought to our attention in this promise of restitution. The blind eyes and deaf ears are to be healed. (See also Isaiah 35:5.) This undoubtedly refers to both mental and physical blindness

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and deafness. The terrible one is brought to naught, a probable reference to the binding and ultimate destruction of Satan. (Rev. 20:1-3) The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. Certainly this denotes a wonderfully changed world from the present, when the meek and the poor are so often downtrodden and oppressed.

Jacob shall be there, and shall see his children. This dates the promise as applying to the time of the resurrection. Then they that erred I spirit shall come to understanding. This is another assurance that the blinding and deceptive influences of Satan will then be removed. Then it will not be necessary for anyone to ask, What is truth? for all will know the answer.

In Isaiah 35:6,8,10 other fea-

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tures of the times of restitution are brought to our attention. Here the prophet tells us that the "lame man shall leap as an hart". Isaiah also says that "an highway shall be there", and that "it shall be called The Way of

Holiness". From the time of Adam's fall into sin and death, mankind has been traveling over what Jesus described as a broad road which leads to destruction. The promised highway is the return road from death. It will be over this highway that the "ransomed of the Lord shall return ... with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." — vs. 10

Paul explains that Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (I Tim. 2:6) **All**, therefore, are included in the statement, the ransomed of the LORD, and it will be when they return from death that the great

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truth concerning the atoning blood of Christ will be testified, or made known, to them. Only those who then fail to accept this provision of divine grace and who fail to “hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” (Acts 3:23) All the others will continue to live **everlastingly**.

“The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” (Isa. 52:10) Again, “They shall build houses, and in-habit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. . . . And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” — Isa. 65:21,24

“From the Land of the Enemy”

Jeremiah was another of the holy prophets who foretold the

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times of restitution. In giving comfort to mothers who lost their children in death, he wrote, "Thus saith the LORD [Peter said, 'which God hath spoken']; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border." —Jer. 31:15-17

Paul identifies death as a great enemy which is to be destroyed during the reign of Christ. (I Cor. 15:25,26) The land of the enemy is therefore the condition of death, and the promise that Chil-

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dren shall come again from this land surely means that they shall be raised from the dead. Returning to their own border simply means that they will be restored to life on the earth. What a glorious prospect!

The Gentiles Also

That the promises of God pertaining to restitution are not limited to the Jewish people is indicated clearly by the Prophet Ezekiel. He wrote concerning the restoration of the Sodomites and the other wicked people of the past, as follows: "When thy sister Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, . . . then thou [the Israelites] and thy daughters shall return to your former estate."
— Ezek. 16:55

The former estate of the Sodomites was here on the earth as human beings. This was true also of

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the Israelites. And this prophecy reveals that they are all to return. Thus, again, is the hope of restoration, or restitution, brought clearly to our attention.

And it is evident that Jesus was well acquainted with this prophecy, and understood what it meant, for, in speaking of the future thousand-year judgment day, he said that it would then be “more tolerable” for Sodom and Gomorrah than for the Jews who in his day rejected his message. (Matt. 10:15) This certainly assures us that even the ignorantly wicked people of the past are to be awakened from the sleep of death and given an opportunity to accept Christ and live, for the Scriptures clearly teach that the judgment day is in reality a day of trial, a day of testing, and that those who then hear and obey shall live. — John 5:25

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Redemption Promised

In one of the Old Testament promises of a coming Redeemer, the LORD said, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; . . . O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave [sheol, the Old Testament hell], I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." (Hos. 13:14) How glad we are for the LORD'S assurance that he will not repent, or change his mind, concerning his purpose to deliver the people from death and to destroy the grave, the death condition!

The Prophet Habakkuk wrote: "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. 2:14) Through the Prophet Zephaniah the LORD declared, "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may

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all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. 3: 9) Haggai testified on behalf of the LORD, saying, "The desire of all nations shall come." (Hag. 2:7) Zechariah wrote, "The LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one LORD and his name one." — Zech. 14:9

"The Sun of Righteousness"

One of the most meaningful and colorful prophecies concerning the times of restitution is found in the last book of the Old Testament, and reads, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." (Mal. 4:2) Here the kingdom reign of Christ is likened to the warming and healing rays of the sun. This is an illustration which we can all understand and appreciate.

Throughout the many long

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centuries of the past, the world has been shrouded by the dark and chilling effects of sin. This has continuously resulted in sickness, pain, and death. But in the times of restitution Satan, the prince of darkness, will be bound, and Christ, the life and light of men will spread his warming and healing powers over the earth, resulting in what the Apostle Peter describes as times of restitution.

Jesus confirmed this prophetic viewpoint of his kingdom in his parable of the wheat and tares. He explained that the wheat are the children of the kingdom, and that they "shall . . . shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. 13:38, 43) This promise is fully in keeping with the point we have already noted; namely, that the footstep followers of the Master are to share with him in the glorious

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work of blessing the people during the thousand years of his kingdom.

The Work of the Kingdom

In considering the many promises of God pertaining to the coming times of restitution, it becomes clear that the restoration of man to his lost edenic home, and the establishment of universal and lasting peace in the earth, will be accomplished through the administration of Christ's kingdom and by divine power exercised through the agencies of that kingdom. Jesus will not become The Prince of Peace by vote of the people, nor by the humanitarian efforts of the millions of his admirers. Nor will his promised rule of righteousness be inaugurated by the power of armament, either for offensive or defensive purposes. This is another definite and fundamental truth which is set

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forth clearly in the Word of God.

When Jesus stood before Pilate, accused of being a king, and therefore a traitor to the Roman Empire, he said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." (John 18:36) This was quite beyond Pilate's ability to understand; nor have many of the professed followers of Jesus since then grasped its real meaning. Hoping that Jesus would clarify the point, Pilate asked, "Art thou a king then?" In other words, Pilate wanted to know whether this statement by Jesus that his kingdom was not of this world confirmed or denied the charge his enemies had entered against him.

Jesus replied again, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came

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I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Then Pilate asked, "What is truth?" (John 18:37,38) Had he only known it, Jesus had already given an important answer to this question by his statement that his kingdom was not of this world. Only those who, by faith, are able to grasp the real significance of this, are prepared to understand the whole truth of the Word of God and to rejoice therein.

The kingdom of Christ will not be set up in the earth by human efforts but by divine authority and power. It will in no way associate itself with the governments of this world, much less depend upon their military might for support. His kingdom is not of this world, therefore, as Jesus explained, does not and will not depend upon the methods of authority employed by

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man.

In a forecast relating to present world events, the Prophet Daniel wrote: "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (Dan. 2:44) Yes, it is the God of heaven who sets up the kingdom of promise—not zealous but misinformed individuals.

In this prophecy the LORD'S kingdom is pictured as a great mountain that fills the whole earth. To begin with, this mountain was merely a stone, but a stone, nevertheless, which was cut and shaped without hands. (Dan. 2:34) Thus again the fact is emphasized that the LORD'S kingdom is not of human making, that it is uncontaminated by selfish

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intrigue and corrupt power politics. It is “not of this world.”

Gentile Dominion

Daniel's mention of the stone which is cut out without hands and later becomes a great mountain which fills the whole earth is associated with his prophecy of Gentile dominion, beginning with Babylon, followed by Medo-Persia and Greece, and ending with the Roman Empire, particularly the divided condition of that empire as represented in the states of Europe just prior to the First World War. These four world powers are pictured in the prophecy by the gold, silver, brass, and iron forming a human-like image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream. — Dan. 2:31-35

Nebuchadnezzar was the head of the Babylonian Empire and,

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as explained by Daniel, was represented in the image by its head of gold. These Gentile governments existed by God's permission. To Nebuchadnezzar Daniel said, "Where-soever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all." — Dan. 2:38

But note the contrast between this arrangement, and the kingdom of God which succeeds Gentile rulership. Babylon and the powers which followed her were given dominion, but they were not commissioned to establish God's kingdom for him. When the time comes for his kingdom, the stone that is cut out without hands overthrows Gentile rulership, and the God of heaven sets up a kingdom—a government, therefore, which is in no way associated with the kingdoms

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of this world.

Here, then, is the answer to Pilate's question as to what is truth pertaining to the kingdom of Christ. It is the reassuring fact that divine power intervenes in the affairs of men and sets up a kingdom, or government, of righteousness which will function independently of human authority and without the need of human assistance. In Isaiah's prophecy of the birth of Jesus and the government which was to rest on his shoulder, the prophet emphasizes this truth, saying that "the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." — Isa. 9:6,7

His Mighty Power

We may wonder just how divine power is exercised for the setting up of Christ's kingdom, but let us note what the Scriptures say about it, for this will help us to re-

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alize more fully than ever that his kingdom is not of this world. After Jesus testified before Pilate that he was born to be a king, his enemies nailed him to a cross and killed him. An inscription was mounted on the head of his cross stating that he was a king. But he died, and with him, from the human standpoint, died also the possibility of his ever being a reigning king.

But from the divine standpoint the outlook was different. In the first place, in God's plan, it was essential that Jesus give his flesh for the life of the world. (John 6:51) As the world's Redeemer, he died "the Just for the unjust." (I Pet. 3:18) While he hung on the cross dying, his enemies cried out, "He saved others; himself he cannot save." (Matt. 27:42) How little did that hate-inspired mob realize that by Jesus' refusal to save himself he

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was providing salvation for them, and for all mankind.

Yes, the one who was born to be a king died; but on the third day divine power raised him from the dead, proving that the opposition of selfish men cannot hinder the divine plan to establish a kingdom of peace and righteousness. It proves, in fact, that there is no power that can prevent the fulfillment of God's promises to set up a kingdom in which Jesus will be king — not even the power of death. In this mighty miracle we see the zeal of the LORD of hosts performing his good pleasure in preparing for his kingdom of promise.

But Jesus did not remain with his disciples very long after his resurrection, and they saw him on only a few brief occasions. He returned to his Heavenly Father. But after he had gone, an angel appeared to his

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disciples and assured them that he would return. This was in harmony with the parable in which Jesus likened himself to a nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom and then returned. (Luke 19:12; Acts 1: 11) There had been no miscarriage of the divine plan. It was merely that God's due time had not yet come for his kingdom of promise to be established. There was something else to be done first.

That further work of preparation for the kingdom has been the calling out from the world, through the power of the Gospel, a little flock to be associated with Jesus as co-rulers. In a promise to these he said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) The condition upon which these may hope to reign with Jesus is willingness to suffer and die with him.

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Concerning them, Paul wrote: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." — Rom. 8:16,17

Another condition of worthiness to reign with Christ is to maintain a position of separation from the world and its selfish aims and schemes. Jesus said to these, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) To those who, through divine strength, overcome the world as Jesus did, he makes the promise, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." — Rev. 3:21

Jesus makes it clear in an-

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other prophecy that being on the throne with him is not a matter of spending a life of idleness in heaven, but has to do with actual rulership over the peoples of earth. "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father." — Rev. 2:26, 27

Even as I received of my Father! Jesus received this same promise from his Father. It is recorded in Psalm 2:8, 9. In this wonderful prophecy, conditions of our day are foretold, and it is explained that those who think they can oppose the outworking of the divine plan in the earth are imagining a vain thing. The reason given is that God has set his King on his holy hill of Zion and that he is given the

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nations as an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession; also, that he shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, and break them to pieces like a potter's vessel.

In a prophetic word of advice to the present rulers of the earth this prophecy states, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." (Ps. 2: 10-12) How better could the prophet have emphasized the fact that the rulership of Christ is to be a literal control over the nations of the earth, and that those who have in the past been rulers will

*The expression in verse five, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished," is spurious, not being found in the older Greek manuscripts.

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then have to bow the knee to earth's new king?

And, just as Jesus promised, he will share this authority with those who suffer and die with him. But how will these actually be in the kingdom with him, since they all die? Here again is brought into focus the great truth that the God of heaven sets up a kingdom, for his power raises these from the dead at the close of this age, even as that same power raised Jesus from the dead at its beginning. We are assured of this in Revelation 20:4-6, where those who overcome the world and its spirit are said to live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

"This is the first resurrection," declares the Revelator.* If we believe that God raised Jesus from the dead in order that he might be the King of kings, should it be diffi-

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cult to believe that he will also raise his true followers from the dead that they might reign as kings with him? It should not be! And once we accept the fact that he has promised to do so and will certainly fulfill his promise, we will have no difficulty in recognizing that the kingdom of Christ is not set up by the will and efforts of man, but by the decree and power of God, a power that is not thwarted even by death.

Man has used his wisdom to develop instruments of death. He believes that if he can build up sufficient war potential he can establish peace and righteousness. But the LORD'S ways are higher than those of man. The divine power, which guarantees the victorious establishment and rulership of his kingdom, will be utilized to give life, and the rulers of his kingdom will be provided by raising them

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from the dead.

No wonder Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." In Revelation 20:11, this kingdom is pictured as "a great white throne," a throne being a symbol of governmental authority. Its being white indicates that it will be a government of purity, of righteousness. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God," the Revelator continues. (vs. 12) Approximately six thousand years ago the human race lost its standing of favor before God. But, as we learned from Acts 3:19, he will again cause his face to shine upon the people—they will stand before him.

In this verse (Rev. 20:11), we are told that the "earth and the heaven" fled away from before the

*See "The Truth about Hell," a Dawn publication. 25 cents. Dawn Publications, East Rutherford, NJ 07073

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face of the one who sits upon the throne. And, so it is, that the favor of the LORD, which will bring peace, and joy, and life to the dying world of mankind will first of all be manifested in the destruction of this present evil world; symbolized as the earth and the heaven—the material and spiritual aspects of Satan's world.

The Revelator also tell us in verse twelve that “books” were opened and also a “book of life.” (See Isaiah 29:18.) The books are a symbol of divine revelation. Their opening signifies that then all the confusion and misunderstanding concerning God and his plan for the people will be cleared away. No longer will it be necessary to inquire, “What can a man believe?”, for all will have the answer. (Jer. 31:34) Isaiah tells us that the way will then be made so plain that “the

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wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” — Isa. 35:8

The text explains that the people will be judged out of those things written in the books. This is a simple way of stating that the will of God, as revealed by the opened books, shall be the standard for the people, and that they will be judged upon the basis of their obedience or disobedience to the revealed divine laws. Those who obey will have their names written in the book of life which will then be opened for such entries, meaning that they will be given everlasting life.

Those who do not then obey will be, as Peter explained, “destroyed from among the people.” (Acts 3:23) The Revelator gives us the same information, explaining that those who are not found written in the book of life are to be cast into “the lake of fire.” This lake of

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fire is said to be “the second death.” It is not a place of torment, but a condition of destruction.* —Rev. 20:14, 15

In verse thirteen John tells us that “death and hell” are to give up “the dead which were in them.” Hell is the death condition, and this cryptic language, used by the apostle, simply sets forth the great biblical hope of the resurrection of the dead. The true followers of the Master are first raised and exalted to the divine realm, to participate with Jesus in the spiritual phase of the kingdom. Then all the dead are awakened and given an opportunity to conform their lives to the things written in the books.

With this work completed, and the righteous rewarded with life everlasting on the earth, even death itself will be destroyed, for the Revelator states that “death and

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hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." The first death, which was pronounced upon Adam and Eve, and, through them, upon all mankind, will then be destroyed—destroyed in the second death which is the destruction of all things out of harmony with the will and law of God.

While the present heaven and earth- or social order- is to pass away, Revelation 21:1 tells us that there is to be "a new heaven and a new earth." This will be the kingdom of Christ, and the Revelator also assures us that in that kingdom God will show his favor to the people, he shall "dwell with them." The result of this will be, as John explains, "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." —Rev. 21:1-4