

The Permission of Evil—Its Results

*“Weeping may
endure for a night,
but joy cometh in
the morning.”
—Psalm 30:5*

IN PART ONE OF OUR CON-sideration of this important subject, which appeared in last month's issue of *The Dawn*, we considered the reason for the permission of evil by God. We saw, through the example of Job, that man learns best from experience, and that a knowledge of both good and evil will be necessary in order that each member of the human race might choose with full understanding whether to serve righteousness or unrighteousness. Although Job did not at first understand these things, God ultimately revealed his divine purposes in the permission of the evil which had befallen him. Job maintained his loyalty to God, and was greatly blessed as a result.

In Part 2 of our reflection on this key Bible topic, we will consider the eventual grand and glorious result of man's experience with sin, suffering and death. In doing so, we will see that mankind's current experience, so much of which is beset with the results of sin and evil, is soon to be replaced by a

blessed experience with good. In this, man will learn an eternal lesson, and be given the opportunity to be restored to perfection of mind, body and character, to live on a perfected earth in peace, security and happiness forever.

DEATH PLAGUES ALL

God's design in the creation of our first parents was that they should be the progenitors of an entire race. God also knew that in order for Adam's children to really know him and have a true appreciation of his standards of right and wrong, they, even as Adam, would need to learn by experience the terrible results of disobedience. Later, by contrast, they would learn of the blessings which would be showered upon them by his love. Thus the Creator, by permission, designed that all of Adam's offspring should be carried into death with him. Paul wrote, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."—Rom. 5:12, *English Standard Version*

Since the fall of Adam, the human race, having come under condemnation to death because of sin, has been exposed to evil, and by experience has been learning the terrible results of disobedience. The seeds of death have manifested their presence in the human race regardless of nationality, social status or financial wealth, by myriads of infirmities and diseases of both mind and body. Neither the young nor the old have escaped the plague of death—infants and young children often falling before this enemy at a tender age with little or no understanding of what is taking place in and around them. Perchance, some live to what is termed a "ripe old

age,” but they too finally succumb to the ravages of death which prey upon all.

Not only by disease are the people brought down to the grave, but upheavals of nature contribute to the process, as do accidents, and men’s own cruelties to one another in war, in crime, and in many other types of human conflict. Even religious institutions, Christian and non-Christian alike, have contributed throughout the centuries to the great plague of death through many misguided teachings and traditions.

Throughout all the ages God has not interfered with the great enemy Death. Paul informs us concerning mankind as a whole, that “God gave them up to minds that He did not approve, to practices that were improper.” (Rom. 1:28, *Williams New Testament*) This implies that he has not restrained the human race from taking its own course, selfish and sinful though that course has mostly been, nor has he interfered with the carrying out of the death sentence in the sense of protecting some and not protecting others.

Thankfully, God’s great design does not end with the human race prostrate in death, for through Jesus, the Redeemer, the Creator has made a provision for all to be awakened from death and to be restored to perfection of life. Paul wrote, “Just as all men die by virtue of their descent from Adam, so all such as are in union with Christ will be made to live again.” (I Cor. 15:22, *Williams*) This provision of life through Christ is based on Jesus’ own death and resurrection. He said, “My flesh ... I will give for the life of the world,” and it was for this very purpose that Jesus was born into the world as a human.—John 6:51; Heb. 2:9,14

In describing the arrangement by which Jesus became the Redeemer of the world through his death, the Bible uses the word “ransom,” which, according to the Greek word from which it is translated, means “corresponding price.” Jesus was a perfect man, even as Adam was a perfect man before he sinned. Thus in death Jesus became a corresponding price for the forfeited life of Adam. As all mankind lost life through Adam, so all mankind is redeemed from death through Christ.—I Tim. 2:5,6

JUST AND UNJUST

In God’s due time, all will be awakened from the sleep of death. Paul informs us that there is to be “a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” (Acts 24:15) Indeed, throughout the ages, while sin and selfishness have predominated, there have been noble men and women who, by virtue of their faith and obedience to God’s laws of righteousness, are spoken of by Paul as “just.” However, these also have been allowed to suffer, even as Job did. This was not to punish them, but to test and prepare them further for exalted positions which the Creator has designed for them in his arrangements for the future.

There have also been many noble, unselfish people throughout the ages who have given up faith in God. One reason for this has been their observation that the innocent suffer as well as the guilty. They have not been able to understand why an infant is allowed to die. They have not been able to reconcile the idea of a loving, powerful God with the fact that so many, through no willful fault of their own, have suffered for years on beds of sickness, and others

have been afflicted with disease, mental illness, and every other conceivable malady. Had these unbelieving, yet noble people, comprehended the full plan of God they would have understood these situations.

Additionally, throughout the ages, the true God of the Bible has been flagrantly misrepresented. Many otherwise religious people, who bemoan the suffering they see taking place around them, try to believe that all who die in unbelief will suffer eternally in a literal place of torment. This unscriptural teaching has helped to create many unbelievers, for a properly reasoning mind cannot believe that a God of love would act toward his creatures in this manner. Such cruelty is even contrary to the laws of civilized men.

MANKIND TO PROFIT

Only a relative few in all the ages have as yet profited by their experience with evil. Indeed many, as noted, have been turned to unbelief by it. This is understandable, and if we were to base our conclusions on man's limited abilities and his restricted viewpoint, there would be no satisfactory answer as to why God permits evil. In this limited viewpoint of many, death is the end of existence. To others it is the end of all opportunity to learn and to profit from past experiences. These viewpoints, however, are not supported in the Bible.

As we have seen, according to the Bible, those who are asleep in death will be awakened from that sleep and given an opportunity to profit from the experiences of the present life. Just as often happens now, the difficulties and distresses of a certain day are understood and appreciated only at a later

time. So it will be on a grander scale, as those who are now sleeping in death are awakened and they enter another term, as it were, in their school of experience.

“JOY IN THE MORNING” WILL COME

In Job’s case, while he could not understand at the time why God allowed him to suffer, yet, when the experience was over, he could say, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.” (Job 42:5) Thus it will be with the world of mankind. When their experiences of sin and suffering are over and they are awakened from death, their faulty vision or understanding of God will be corrected. They will rejoice to learn of the gracious and loving provision the Creator has made for them through Christ, the Redeemer, to “ransom them from the power of the grave,” and to “redeem them from death.” (Hos. 13:14) They will be restored to perfection of life, in the light of this true knowledge of God, if they obey him by conforming their lives to his standards of right and wrong.

The psalmist wrote, in the words of our opening text, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” (Ps. 30:5) This “night” of sin, sorrow, and death began with the disobedience of our first parents, and it has indeed been a night of weeping. The sorrow that has borne down upon the human race has been bitter, and many in their distresses have wondered whether or not God has any pity, or even exists at all.

However, there is to be a morning of joy for the human race! That time of joy will be ushered in by what the Scriptures refer to as the rising of “the

Sun of righteousness,” who will have “healing in his wings.” (Mal. 4:2) Jesus is this glorious Sun of righteousness. The new day of blessing will be brought about through the establishment of God’s kingdom, with Jesus as its ruler, and the government of righteousness foretold by all God’s “holy prophets since the world began.”—Acts 3:20,21

Associated with Jesus as rulers in his Father’s kingdom will be his faithful followers—those who have suffered and died with him. Jesus died the just for the unjust. Likewise, his footstep followers voluntarily suffer and die with him, and will be exalted to the highest of all spiritual realms of life, to be associated with Jesus in the rulership of his kingdom. Jesus said to his disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:2,3) The Scriptures also declare that these will live and reign with Christ a thousand years, being brought forth from death in “the first resurrection.”—Rev. 20:4,6

Christ and his followers, a “little flock,” will be the invisible heavenly rulers of the world during the thousand years of his kingdom. (Luke 12:32) They will be represented here on earth by another group of God’s faithful servants, each one of whom proved loyal to God under adversity during the ages preceding the First Advent of Jesus. These, as the Bible tells us, will be made “princes in all the earth.” (Ps. 45:16) This group will consist of the faithful and worthy servants of God of past ages, beginning with righteous Abel, and will include other outstanding figures as Abraham, Moses, David,

Elijah, Daniel, and all God's holy prophets.—Heb. 11:1-39

These “princes in all the earth” will be awakened from death in the resurrection as perfect human beings, and will be the earthly representatives of the divine Christ among men. (Heb. 11:40) What a wonderful governmental arrangement this will be! Among many other long-sought desires, it will establish universal and lasting peace, which man in his selfishness has been unable to do. The divine head of this government, who is Christ, is referred to in prophecy as “The Prince of Peace,” and we are assured that “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”—Isa. 9:6,7

THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

In Micah 4:1-4, the kingdom of Christ is referred to symbolically as God's ruling “house.” This ruling house consists of Jesus and those who, through faithfulness in following in his footsteps, are also exalted to heavenly glory as children of God. This prophecy reads, “In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not

lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”

The ancient nation of Israel, to whom this prophecy was first addressed, was governed from a mountain. It was literal Mount Zion in Jerusalem. God uses this background in presenting his prophecy of Messiah’s kingdom, and his promises of the blessings that it will assure to the people. The “mountain of the Lord” is the kingdom of God, centered in the Christ, and represented by the symbolic “Zion” of Micah’s prophecy.

Notice that under the rulership of this kingdom the people learn God’s “ways” and “his paths.” The entire period of Christ’s kingdom will be one of learning, and of education. In this prophecy, one of the results of this education is that the people will learn war no more. It will be then that the angels’ message of “peace ... on earth” will be translated into reality. The Prince of Peace will then reign supreme.—Luke 2:13,14

UNDER VINE AND FIG TREE

In addition, there will be economic security. This is symbolized in the prophecy by the assurance that every man will dwell under his own “vine” and “fig tree.” Much of the suffering in the world throughout the ages has been due to lack of food, clothing, and shelter. Even today millions of the human race exist on insufficient supplies of food, have little clothing, and live with the most meager of shelter over their heads. However, this

will be corrected through the agencies of Christ's kingdom.

Peace and economic security will not be the only blessings guaranteed to the people under the rulership of "the mountain of the house of the Lord." Isaiah wrote, "In this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it."—Isa. 25:6-8

In addition to the "feast of fat things" which this prophecy assures us will be spread for mankind in Messiah's coming kingdom, we are also informed that the "covering" and "vail" now cast over the faces of the people will be removed. This clearly refers to a symbolic curtain which hinders the people from seeing and knowing God in his true light. Another prophecy says that then "the eyes of the blind shall be opened." (Isa. 35:5) Those literally blind will then have their sight restored, and those spiritually blind will acquire a true vision of God and his glorious character.

ALL EVIL TO BE DESTROYED

Of this same time of Christ's kingdom, we read, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9)

Then there will be no more suffering and death as a result of Adam's transgression. It will be the time when Adam's children are being "made alive" through Christ. Killing, as well as all other kinds of calamities, will no longer be permitted. The peaceful and prosperous conditions which men and women today would like to see throughout the earth will then exist, because the knowledge of God will fill the entire earth.

God assures us further, as quoted above, that he "will swallow up death in victory," and that he will wipe away tears "from off all faces." What blessed assurances these are! Paul wrote that Christ will reign until all enemies are put under his feet, and that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (I Cor. 15:25,26) The result of this glorious arrangement is described in Revelation 21:4, which reads, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH GOOD

It will be during the reign of Christ that Adam and his children in general will receive their first real experience with "good." It is this which will complete their education with respect to the validity and importance of the standards of right and wrong established by God. Though perfect when created, Adam did not then have sufficient knowledge from experience to prevent his transgression. Job maintained his integrity before God under an extreme test, yet he also needed to experience evil and to be delivered from it in order to "see" God. Adam and

his race will likewise “see” and understand God as a result of their experiences.

The God that mankind will then see and know will be the one they have longed to understand and to serve. They will recognize the value of the experiences through which they have passed. Understanding this, they will realize that the few short years of hardship through which they passed while under condemnation to death were as nothing compared with the eternity of joy then stretching out before them under the glorious array of divine love. No wonder they will then say, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, ... we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”—Isa. 25:9

At the conclusion of the harrowing experiences through which Job passed, he was restored to health, and his family was also restored to him. This partially illustrates the great blessing which lies ahead for all mankind during the reign of Christ. Peter speaks of this period as “times of restitution of all things,” which, he declares, have been spoken by all of God’s holy prophets since the world began.—Acts 3:20,21

Peter’s declaration concerning the restoration of the human race to health and life was based on the miracle he had just performed of healing a man who had been lame from the time of his birth. During “the times of restitution,” all the lame will be restored to soundness of limb, and all other human maladies will be cured by the Sun of righteousness, who will then rise “with healing in his wings.”—Isa. 35:6; Mal. 4:2

As we have seen, this loving provision for the human race includes those who have fallen asleep

in death. This is, in reality, a vital key to an understanding of why God permits evil, for it means that his viewpoint of human experience is not dependent upon man's present short span of life. God is viewing man's present experience with sin and death, rather, as a lesson which, in the resurrection, can be compared with all the "good" which will then be showered upon the people, that "feast of fat things" which he will then spread before all nations.

A TIME OF LEARNING

This future period of blessing is also described in the Bible as one of judgment, or trial. Isaiah wrote that when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isa. 26:9) All the inequalities of the present will then be righted. Those who now willfully oppose God and his laws, and unjustly treat their fellows, will then receive appropriate discipline and instruction designed to correct their wrongdoings.

Those who have died in infancy will likewise be awakened, mature to adulthood, and have an opportunity to enjoy God's blessings. In a comforting promise to mothers who lose their children in death, we read, "Thus saith the LORD; 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 [they were dead]. 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 [they shall return to life on earth].”—Jer. 31:15-17

Having had a full experience with both good and evil, each individual will be able to decide intelligently whether or not he wishes to choose the good and live forever, or choose evil and again go into death. During the present nighttime of sin and death, all die—believers and unbelievers, the innocent and the guilty, those striving to live right and others who practice wickedness. However, as a result of the reign of Christ, only those few who willfully disobey the laws of God after receiving a full knowledge of his righteous and loving ways will die. All others, the vast majority we believe, will mature toward full mental and moral perfection, and will enter as perfect human beings into the everlasting future ages of happiness and life. They will return to God’s favor “with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:10 ■