

STUDY XIV

THE NECESSITY FOR THE ATONEMENT--

THE CURSE

The "Curse" a Present and Not a Future Evil--Where and Why the Blight Came Upon All--When this "Wrath" of God Against Sin Will Cease--"Escape" Now and in the Future--Atonement Necessary, Because of the Plan Adopted by God--Man an Example for Angels and for Future Creations.

"And there shall be no more curse." Rev. 22:3

OUR text is in full accord with the general tenor of the Scriptures, that the time is coming when the work of Atonement shall be fully accomplished, and when, as a result, the curse will be completely lifted from man, and from the earth, his dominion. But this implies that the curse is not yet lifted, that it still rests upon the earth and upon mankind. Moreover, it implies that there was a certain time when this curse came upon all, when it was first inflicted upon mankind and the earth. Whoever will take the trouble to investigate the matter will find so wonderful a harmony in the Scriptures upon these three points as will probably astound him, and convince him that the Scriptures are not of human origination, but that although written by various persons, and at various periods, during two thousand years, they are a unit in their testimony; and upon no subject is their testimony more positive, consistent and conclusive than on this subject of the curse, its effects upon man, the redemption from it, and its ultimate removal.

The curse upon mankind, as it is generally understood and preached, is a future curse of eternal torment--not a

present curse. But according to the Scriptures it is a present curse, viz., death, which will be lifted in the future. Nor are we to think of this death-curse in the usual limited manner--

as affecting a dying moment or a few dying hours, or days, or a few moments, at the time we expire or breathe out or lose the breath of life. On the contrary, to realize what this death-curse is, we would require to have before the mind's eye the first perfect man, with all his powers of mind and body--the image of his Creator in his mental qualities, and physically, as well as mentally and morally, "very good"; so pronounced by the very highest authority on the subject. *Gen. 1:31*

The very brief scrap of history furnished us in Genesis, together with the fact that the flood completely obliterated all evidence of the genius and handiwork of the father of our race, and his earliest progeny, give us no basis of calculations respecting his mental and physical abilities. For information we are thrown upon the fact that all God's work is "perfect," his own declaration (*Deut. 32:4*); and his further declaration that man "sought out many inventions," and defiled himself (*Eccl. 7:29*); and the fact that even under the curse, and under the unfavorable conditions in which man lived after being thrust out of the Garden of Eden--despite all these unfavorable conditions, so grandly perfect was this human organism that the father of humanity was sustained for the long period of nine hundred and thirty years. *Gen. 5:5*

It is when we compare this physical vitality, unaided by large experience in the development of medicines and sanitary arrangements, with present conditions, and discern that with all of our advancement in science, under the light and experience of centuries, nevertheless today one-half the population die under ten years, and as a whole the average of life is about thirty-three years, that we may judge how much physical vitality we have lost since the fall--how much the "curse" has affected us physically. And since we know that mental and physical powers are largely co-ordinated

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in man, so that the sounder the physical organism, all things being equal, the stronger and the truer should be the mental power and faculties, we may from this gain quite a respectful view of the mental caliber of father Adam, whom the great Creator pronounced very good, and considered worthy to recognize as his son, his mental and moral likeness. *Luke 3:38*

And mental and physical perfection, under the conditions presented in the divine account of the creation, clearly and positively imply moral *perfection*; for we are to remember

that, according to the Scriptures, moral obliquity and consequent degradation had not set in. Nor is it supposable that man, without moral elements to his mental development, would be described in the Scriptures as a "very good" man, or as an image of his Creator. To have created Adam perfect physically and perfect mentally, except in moral qualities, would have been to make him a very bad man, on the principle that the greater the abilities the greater the villain, unless the abilities be under moral control.

The death sentence, or "curse," pronounced against Adam, viz., "Dying thou shalt die" (*Gen. 2:17*, margin), was not merely against his muscles and physical frame--it included the entire man, the mental as well as the physical; and this also included the moral qualities, because they are a part of the mental. It is in full confirmation of this that we see today that man is a fallen being in every sense of the word; physically he is degenerated, and his average of life has fallen, under most favorable conditions, to thirty-three years; mentally and morally we also see that he is very deficient, yet possessing organs capable of much higher development than his short life will permit. Speaking of man's moral abilities the Apostle declares, "There is none righteous, no, not one;...all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"; all are sharers of the original sin and its consequences. *Rom. 3:10,23*

Further, the Apostle points out that father Adam, when

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tried at the bar of God, was a wilful transgressor, and not a deceived one. (*1 Tim. 2:14*) He thus shows us that in moral quality he was capable of obedience to the divine requirements, for it would have been unjust on God's part to have tried and to have condemned for failure a being who, through defective creation, was incapable of standing the trial successfully, rendering obedience to his commands. The fact that Adam had a trial in which the issues were life and death everlasting, and the fact that his failure under that trial was wilful, and justly drew upon him the sentence of the great Judge to the full penalty of the law, must prove to every unbiased, logical mind that Adam was in every sense of the word perfect, and properly susceptible of trial.

And the fact that God, even after the ransom price has been paid, refuses to try mankind again before the same supreme and unimpeachable Court, and declares the reason

to be that in a fallen condition we are incapable of a trial at his bar of absolute justice, and that by our best deeds none could be justified before him--all this proves conclusively, not only that the race has grievously fallen, but also proves that God would not have tried Adam at all had he not been much better than we are, and thoroughly fit for trial--a perfect man. It is in full accord with this thought that God proposes the judgment of the Church during this Gospel age, for the prize of eternal spirit being; and the judgment of the world during the Millennial age, for the prize of everlasting human perfection. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."

John 5:22

Viewing man as a whole (mentally, morally and physically one) as the Scriptures do, we can see that the curse, the sentence of death, is in operation against every part and element of his being; and looking about us throughout the world, we find corroboration of this on every hand. As, in the decay of physical powers, the weakest point with some is

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the stomach, with others the muscles, with others the bones, so in viewing man as a whole, we find that in some the greatest loss, decay, depravity, has been mental, with others moral, with others physical, yet all are blemished in all respects; all were hopelessly "lost" under this curse. There can be no hope to any that he ever could recover himself out of these bonds of corruption in which we are born, as it is written, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (*Psa. 51:5*) This death-curse rests upon us from the moment of birth, and hence demonstrates the fact that it is not the result of our individual sins, but of inherited sins--a curse or blight which has reached us from father Adam by heredity.

It has been said that we are "born dying"; and how true this is all can testify; *dis-ease*, decay, aches and pains, weakness and sickness, are but the elementary processes of death working in us. Thus, if it were not for the blindness superinduced by Satan's deceptive misrepresentations of the divine plan, men would on every hand readily see clear manifestations of the fact of the curse, and the Apostle declares, "The wrath of God *is revealed* against all unrighteousness," for the least unrighteousness is sin. (*Rom. 1:18*) The Apostle does not say that in a future life and in flames of torment the wrath of God will be revealed, but he correctly states it as of the present life and of the present time, and to

be seen by all whose eyes are open to see the true facts of the case. The wrath of God is revealed by every physician's sign, which indicates disease and death working in the race. The wrath of God is revealed by every undertaker's sign, which calls our attention to the fact that mankind is dying, that the wrath, the curse of God, is resting upon the race. The wrath of God is revealed by every funeral procession, every hearse, every graveyard, every tombstone, and by every piece of crape and every badge of mourning. The wrath of God is not only revealed against the grossest of sinners, but against all unrighteousness, even the slightest. Hence

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there is no escape, for there is none righteous, no, not one; and hence the infants as well as the gray-haired are subject to this "wrath," this "curse."

The Prophet Job, in his distress under the curse, the wrath, cried out, "O that thou wouldest hide me in *sheol* [oblivion] until thy *wrath* be past [over; then] thou shalt call and I will answer thee, for thou wilt have respect unto the works of thy hands." (*Job 14:13,15*) This time of wrath which has now lasted for six thousand years is to be brought to a close by the great Day of Vengeance, in which Justice prescribes that there shall be additional trouble upon mankind, because of the rejection of greater opportunities and privileges, and a failure to obey the laws of righteousness, to the extent that these laws have been discerned by Christendom. Hence this Day of Vengeance and of special wrath, additional to that which has prevailed previously, it is declared, will be "A time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." The saints of God are assured that they shall be accounted worthy to escape all those things coming upon the world, and to stand before the Son of Man. They shall escape this special wrath, but they do not escape the general wrath which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness. They share this with the world, in many respects, and yet there is this finely drawn distinction, which the Scriptures clearly point out, viz.:

Those who accept Christ during this Gospel age, and who make full consecration of themselves to him, are reckoned as having passed from death unto life; as having escaped the wrath, the curse, "escaped the corruption that is in the world." (*2 Pet. 1:4; 2:18,20*) True, they are still in the world, still subject to death, and may still share with the world the sickness, pain, sorrow and trouble incidental to the curse, and from the worldly standpoint there is no difference; but from the divine standpoint, which is to be

the believer's standpoint, there is a wide difference. Such are not reckoned any longer as dying because of divine "curse" or "wrath," but in view of their justification and

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subsequent presentation as living sacrifices their death is reckoned as a part of Christ's sacrifice. As the Apostle expresses it, such are reckoned in death as dead with Christ, sharers in his sacrifice, and not as dying with Adam, like the remainder of the race. "If we be dead with Christ we believe that we shall also live with him." **Rom. 6:8**

Likewise, our share in physical troubles and pains is the result of physical weaknesses, heredity, etc. The Lord assures us that whatever of this kind shall be permitted in the case of such, should not be regarded as manifestations of his wrath; but that all evils permitted to come against these shall by divine wisdom and love and power be overruled for their good, as disciplines to develop in them more abundantly his Spirit, and thus ultimately, as his children, to fit and prepare them for glory, honor and immortality--by working out in them the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and thus preparing them for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (**Phil. 2:13; Rom. 2:7; Heb. 12:11; 2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Pet. 1:4-11**) Nevertheless, in all these respects these walk by faith, not by sight. So far as outward sight is concerned, they have nothing more than the world; indeed, God's people may sometimes appear to have more difficulties, more trials, more troubles, more pains, than the natural man, with whom God is not yet dealing, because not yet brought into a condition of reconciliation and at-one-ment with him. Even this increased requirement of faith is of itself a blessing, a discipline, a development of character, a good fruit of the Spirit.

But we are viewing our subject--the necessity for atonement--from the standpoint of the world in general, all mankind. The curse, sentence, or verdict of the divine law against all imperfection is destruction. God created all things very good, and that is the only condition in which anything will ever be wholly satisfactory to him. The fact that for the time being he permits imperfect things--imperfect beings, and imperfect conditions--is no proof of a change of plan on the divine part: this period of imperfection

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is permitted, because divine wisdom has foreseen the possibility of a glorious outcome, and to this end God is "working all things after the counsel of his own will." (*Eph. 1:11*) He could, for instance, have destroyed Satan, the moment he became a transgressor--likewise the angels that fell, and man; and thus the generation of an imperfect race would have been avoided. But the divine plan, on the contrary, has been to permit the imperfect and sinful for a time to take their own course in matters which shall not interfere with the grand outcome of the divine arrangement, that thus an illustration might be presented of the downward, degrading tendencies of sin, in Satan, the fallen angels and in mankind.

The fall of mankind under the just penalty of death, destruction, was indirectly the result of Eve's lack of knowledge and her consequent deception, and involves, through heredity, many who have not wilfully and intelligently violated the divine law. This fact left the opportunity open for the exercise of divine love and clemency, and incidentally gave an illustration of the operation and co-ordination of the divine attributes, which could not have been so thoroughly manifested and exemplified in any other manner of which we can conceive. It was, therefore, a part of the original design of the Creator to reveal himself, the attributes of his character, to his creatures--not only to mankind, but also to the angelic hosts. Unquestionably, when the great plan of salvation shall be fully consummated, the heavenly angels as well as the reconciled of the world shall know of the divine character--wisdom, justice, love and power--in a much larger degree than was ever before appreciated, or than could have been appreciated, without the great lessons now being taught through the permission of sin, and the redemption promised under the divine plan, through Christ. This is intimated by the Apostle Peter, who assures us that "the angels desired to look into" these things--are deeply interested in them. *1 Pet. 1:12*

As we have seen, the sentence upon mankind is an absolutely

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just one, and there would have been no room whatever for appeal from that sentence on the score of justice (it being admitted that Adam had a sufficiency of knowledge of his Creator to command his implicit obedience, and it being admitted also that it was but a just arrangement on

God's part, that the life which would not be used in harmony with his righteous and benevolent arrangements should be forfeited, taken away). Nevertheless, we can readily see that God could have devised a different penalty in man's case, and that too without the violation of any principle of justice. We have proof of this in his dealing with the fallen angels. They were not put under a sentence of death; the penalty imposed upon them, on the contrary, was that they were *restrained*, and are still restrained, waiting for a final trial. **Jude 6**

Similarly, God could have permitted man to live out these six thousand years, since his sin in Eden, without the impairment of his physical system, without putting him under sentence and power of death. Thus man, as well as the angels which kept not their first estate, might have been reserved alive unto the judgment of the great day, to have their cases finally disposed of. But God is not limited in his operations, and the same variety which we observe in nature, in that one flower differs from another flower in glory and beauty, and one creature differs from another creature, so, under what the Apostle designates "the much diversified wisdom of God" (*Eph. 3:10, Diaglott*), God chooses one method of dealing with the angels who sinned, and another method of dealing with men who had become sinners. Divine wrath is manifested against both: a wrath of love and justice, which hates all sin, all evil, and will destroy it; but which will do all that can be done for such of the evildoers as become loyal servants of righteousness, after having a large experience with sin and with righteousness, and their respective results.

In dealing with man God chose to exemplify the ultimate end of sin and sinners--destruction. This is testified in the

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various statements made to man, "The soul that sinneth it shall die"; "The wages of sin is death." That is to say, in these declarations made to man God is merely stating a general law, which ere long will be the absolute rule of all his dominion--all creation, viz., that whatever is not perfect shall be destroyed, and that only which is perfect, absolutely perfect, absolutely in harmony with the divine will and purpose, shall continue to exist forever, a blessing to itself, an honor to the Creator, and a benefit to all his creatures.

But while man has been the illustration of the operation of this principle, so that every member of the human family

has been cut off in death--"Death passed upon all"--nevertheless, it is not the divine purpose in thus making use of mankind as an illustration of the severity of divine justice, in the extirpation of evil, to permit humanity to suffer on account of being thus used as an illustration. On the contrary, it is the divine arrangement that mankind shall experience no less of divine mercy and favor and love than any other of God's creatures. Hence it is that in due time God provided redemption for all, fully adequate to the necessities of the case, that as by one man's (Adam's) disobedience the many became sinners, so by the obedience of one (Jesus) the many might become righteous. **Rom. 5:19**

This does not say, nor does it mean, that the many must become righteous during this Gospel age or not at all: on the contrary, the Scriptural declaration is that it will be but a "little flock" that will become righteous during the present evil time--those only who are specially drawn of the Father and called to the high calling of joint-heirship with his Son. The residue of mankind will not even be called or drawn, until the Christ (head and body) has been lifted up both in sufferings and in glory, according to our Lord's own statement, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all unto me." (**John 6:44; 12:32**) This universal drawing belongs to the coming Millennial age, not to the present nor to the past ages. It will not be the drawing of a few nor of a class, nor of a nation,

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as in the past, but the drawing of all mankind, redeemed with the precious blood.

Nevertheless, this drawing will not mean compulsion; for just as it is possible for the Father's drawing to be resisted in the present age, so that many are called but few will be chosen, so also it will be possible for the drawing of Christ to be resisted by the world of mankind in the next age. However, the Scriptures assure us that the way will be made so plain, and the conditions so reasonable, that only those who love sin, and deliberately choose it, after they have come to a knowledge of righteousness and of truth, will be amongst the resisters of that great Prophet, and be destroyed by him in the Second Death. **Acts 3:23**

Viewing the divine dealings with mankind from the standpoint of the close of the Millennial age, we see that so far from the divine course working any unkindness toward mankind, the execution of the extreme penalty of the divine law against us, accompanied as it has been with the operation of divine mercy, through Christ, in ransom and

restitution, has really been a great blessing. But this cannot be seen except from the one standpoint. From this standpoint we see not only the sorrow and trouble and pain, the dying and the crying of the present time, the just penalty of transgression, its natural result, indeed, but we see also the redemption of man from sin and its curse, purchased by the Redeemer at Calvary, and to be accomplished by the same Redeemer subsequently--the Church being selected during this Gospel age, according to the divine program, to be his Bride and joint-heir in the Kingdom.

Severe as death, the penalty for Adam's sin, has been (including all the pain and sorrow and trouble of this dying state for the past six thousand years), we believe that man's portion has been more favorable than that of the angels who kept not their first estate, and who were not sentenced to death, and who, therefore, did not lose their vital energies in death, nor experience sickness or pain, but who have merely been restrained of their liberties, and of the fellowship

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of the holy. Had man been treated similarly to these fallen angels, and left in possession of his liberties in respect to the earth, etc., we can imagine what a terrible condition of things would have prevailed by the present time--how evil would have multiplied itself without restraints, how keenness and cunning in wrongdoing would have increased the sorrows of earth. Even as it is, we can see that even the short lives of men suffice to develop a wonderful genius for selfishness, a wonderful wisdom for self-aggrandizement, and the oppression of fellow-creatures.

When we consider that many of the millionaires of our day were poor boys, and that their accumulations of a hundred or two hundred millions of dollars were made in less than fifty years, what could we expect of such genius, if it had centuries for the scope of its operation? Carried to its legitimate result, it undoubtedly would have resulted in the enslavement and utter degradation, to bestiality, of a large proportion of the human family in the interest of the few masterminds in cunning and avarice.

Viewing the matter from this standpoint, our hearts uplift in thankfulness to God that the form of the "curse" or sentence that came upon us was that which the Lord has permitted--dying thou shalt die. And if, in the meantime, our experiences, as a race, have been an object lesson, not only to ourselves, but to the holy angels and to the fallen angels, we may rejoice the more: and for aught we know it

may be God's intention to use this one great lesson of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and its unavoidable results, in other worlds of sentient beings not yet created. And who knows but that in the far distant future, instructors in righteousness for as yet uncreated billions will be drawn from among the worthy of earth's redeemed and restored race, who have had an actual experience with sin and who will be able to speak from experience, in guarding others against the least deflection from absolute obedience to the divine will.

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An illustration of this principle, of overruling a disadvantage into a blessing to those who are used as an illustration, we see in Israel. As a nation, Israel was called out from the other nations, and used as a typical people. Their Law Covenant, while apparently an advantage, strictly speaking constituted for them a second trial, failure in which brought them under a second condemnation--apparently leaving them, as a people, more thoroughly condemned than the remainder of the world, whom God had already proposed (in his covenant with Abraham), should be *justified by faith* since none could be justified by works of Law. Israel's Covenant called for perfect works, and being unable through inherited weakness of the flesh to render perfect works, Israel fell under the "curse" or death-sentence of their own Covenant. Thus that Covenant which was ordained to life (which purported to give *life* everlasting) was found to be unto *death*. (**Rom. 7:9-14**) But although God thus used Israel as a typical people and as an illustration of the fact that no imperfect man can keep the *perfect* law of God, he did not permit this use of them, which involved their condemnation, to work their everlasting ruin; and consequently, when redeeming the remainder of mankind, his plan was so arranged that the same sacrifice by which all the race of Adam was redeemed by Christ, affected also the one specially favored nation, which under the Law Covenant was also the one specially condemned nation. (**Rom. 2:11-13; 3:19-23**) It was to this end that our Lord was born under the Law Covenant, in order that he might redeem those who were condemned under that law, with the same sacrifice by which he redeemed all the world of mankind, condemned originally in Adam. **Gal. 4:4,5**

We see then that the necessity for reconciliation between God and man, the necessity for their at-one-ment, lies in the fact that God himself is the source of life, and that if everlasting

life be enjoyed by any of his creatures, it must be as his *gift*. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ

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our Lord." (**Rom. 6:23**) According to the principles of the divine government and law, God cannot look upon sin with any degree of allowance (**Hab. 1:13**); he cannot condone sin, nor admit its necessity in any degree. Perfect himself, his decree is that none imperfect shall be recognized as his sons, for whom everlasting existence is provided. And hence, since man, through the fall, had not only come under a sentence of death, but additionally, had defiled, degraded, depraved himself, and largely obliterated the divine likeness from his mind and conscience, therefore the only hope for everlasting life lies in some power or way or agency through which two things can be accomplished: (1) The release of mankind from the *death sentence* inflicted by Justice; (2) the lifting up of mankind out of the degradation of sin and depravity to the conditions of absolute holiness and perfection from which he fell. If these two things can be effected, then there is hope. If they cannot both be effected, man has not the slightest hope of everlasting life. In vain do we look for help in the fallen human family, for although some are less fallen than others, less depraved, all have sinned, all have come short of the glory of God. If there were one righteous one, he might, indeed, give a ransom for his brother (for Adam and all condemned in Adam's transgression), and thus, under divine arrangement, become the savior (deliverer) of his race from the sentence; but none such could be found. "There is none righteous; no, not one." **Psa. 49:7; Rom. 3:10,23**

God, in his wisdom, had foreseen all this, and had provided for it all, before he began the creation of mankind, and in due time he manifested his plan for man's recovery from his blight of condemnation and depravity. When there was no eye to pity, and no arm to save, then God's arm brought salvation. The arm (power) of the Lord revealed, stretched down from heaven for man's help out of the horrible pit of death, and out of the miry clay of sin and depravity, was our Lord Jesus. (**Psa. 40:2; Isa. 53:1**) Through him God's declared purpose is--

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(1) The ransom of mankind from the power of the grave, from the sentence of death, from the "curse," from the "wrath" that now rests upon the world. This ransom has been accomplished in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ: Divine Justice is fully met, and the whole world of mankind is reckonedly transferred to the Lord Jesus Christ, as his purchase, bought with the precious blood.

(2) He is now choosing out from the redeemed race the "little flock" of joint-heirs, who because of self-sacrificing devotion to him shall be *reckoned* as sharers in his sufferings and sacrifice, and be granted a share also in his heavenly glories and future work of blessing the world--the fruit of his sacrifice.

(3) The work of restitution is to be accomplished by this great Redeemer and his joint-heir, his Bride, the Church, during "the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (*Acts 3:19-21*) And when the wilfully wicked, rejectors of the divine grace and mercy, under the terms of the New Covenant, shall have been destroyed by this great Mediator, Christ, and the remainder of the redeemed race shall be turned over to the Heavenly Father, perfect and complete, fully restored to his own likeness, and with increased knowledge of him and of righteousness and of sin--gained through the experiences of the present reign of sin, as well as under the reign of righteousness during the times of restitution--then the great work of Atonement will be complete. All who see this matter clearly can readily discern the necessity for the Atonement: that there can be no blessing of mankind except by bringing them into absolute harmony with their Creator; and that such a reconciliation necessitates first of all a redemption of the sinner--a payment of his penalty. For God must be just in justifying the sinners, else he never will justify them. *Rom. 3:26*

In view of the foregoing we see clearly that the number atoned for by our Lord's sacrifice for sins--the general lifting of the "curse" legally--gives no criterion by which we

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may judge the number who will by obedience of faith get actually free from sin and its curse and return to at-one-ment with the Father, by availing themselves of the opportunities opened to all by our dear Redeemer. There is no proposition on God's part, nor any reasonable ground for supposition on man's part that divine favor and life everlasting

through Christ will ever be attained by any except those who shall come into the fullest heart-harmony with God, and with all his laws of righteousness. We rejoice, however, that the knowledge of God's grace and other opportunities far better than are now enjoyed by the world shall in God's "due time" be extended to every creature.

1 Tim. 2:6