The Seventh Creative Day

"The LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken."
—Genesis 3:22,23

THE SEVENTH DAY RE-ferred to in the Genesis account of Creation is usually thought of as the one on which God rested, and properly so, for as we are informed "he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." (chap. 2:2) On the other hand, the beginning of this same verse states "on the seventh day God ended his work." The *Marginal Translation* of verse three explains that God rested from all his work that he "created to make." This implies that there was a further making, or finishing, of the creative work that was to be accomplished on the seventh day in which the Creator himself would not be directly active.

"He that is entered into his [God's] rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." (Heb. 4:10) The 'rest' of believers is in the finished work of Christ, not an entering into a state of inactivity. It is a trust in Christ for that which one cannot do for himself—that is, justify himself before God by his own works of righteousness. Now, as Paul indicates, this rest from one's own works that they may be accomplished by another is the way in which God ceased from his own works at the close of the sixth creative day. The literal meaning of the Hebrew word translated 'rested' in Genesis 2:2, is repose—by implication, to desist from exertion. The thought simply is that the carrying out of the great design of the Creator from the close of the sixth day forward was to be entrusted to another, even to his own beloved Son, the *Logos*, who had worked so faithfully with his Father up to this point.

The Creator did not rest from his work because he was tired. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" (Isa. 40:28) It is clear, then, that the Creator did not rest from his work because he was weary. It is equally clear that his originally designed objective in the creation of the earth had not been obtained by the close of the sixth creative day. This purpose was that the earth be filled with a perfect and happy human family in harmony with the Creator's laws, and enjoying the blessings of a worldwide earthly paradise.

It was the Creator's will that his human creatures, made in his image, should be given freedom

of choice with respect to his laws. God did not want the earth filled with mechanical beings that, like the inanimate objects of Creation, obey Divine law by compulsion. God knew in advance that, lacking experience, our first parents would disobey his law and bring upon themselves the sentence of death. With his infinite wisdom and ability God could know this without, in any measure, causing his human creatures to sin. He permitted sin to enter into the world because he knew that the eternal happiness of his human creation would be enhanced by having experienced the result of disobedience, turning therefrom, and understandingly dedicating themselves to him and his laws of righteousness.

Certainly man could never be secure against the temptation to disobey the Creator without a knowledge of what the result would be. There are four principal ways of obtaining knowledge. One is by intuition. God alone possesses intuitive knowledge. Another way is by being informed, and God did inform our first parents that transgression of his law would result in death. One can also learn by observation. But, if God's human creatures were to observe the result of sin and thereby learn of its terrible results in terms of suffering, it would have to be experienced by others, somewhere. God knew what some of his human creatures have since learned—that experience is the best teacher—so he permitted man to sin, knowing thereby he would experience for himself the terrible results of disobedience.

In our text God says, 'The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.' The pronoun us in the expression 'one of us,' refers to God and Jesus.

By intuition, God knew both good and evil. Jesus, his son, having implicit confidence in his father, consequently believing his every word and possessing a superhuman intelligence, with powers of perception far beyond anything we can imagine, would also know both good and evil. Besides, Jesus would, by now, have already seen the beginning of human suffering resulting from the sin of our first parents, for fear had already taken hold upon them.

God said that man had become like one of us, to know good and evil. This does not imply that Adam and Eve had already learned all there was to know about good and evil but, having partaken of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they now were to know and learn both by observation and by experience. And not only they, but all their progeny were also to experience the terrible results of disobeying Divine law. For a brief period in Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed God's blessing, and thus for a limited time experienced good; but this would not be true of their progeny, every one of whom would now be born in sin and "shapen in iniquity."—Ps. 51:5

RESTORATION

The only way in which the human race as a whole could ever have an experience with good, under conditions favorable to learning the advantages of righteousness in contrast with the baneful results of unrighteousness, would be to awaken them from the sleep of death in an environment suitable for this purpose. But how could this be done since the Creator had justly imposed the sentence of death upon Adam, and, through heredity, upon all his children?

Motivated by love, and through the operation of Divine wisdom, a way was found by the Creator whereby fallen man might enjoy a future experience with good, and thus, having experienced both good and evil be able to decide intelligently whether to choose the good, and live forever, or to continue in his evil ways, and be cut off eternally in death. (Acts 3:23) That way was through God's son, the *Logos*; the Divine plan being for the *Logos* to be made flesh and die as man's Redeemer, and later return to restore to life those for whom he died. Thus the Creator could "be just," and at the same time "the justifier" of all who, when the opportunity is given, return to him through Christ.—Rom. 3:26

It is clear then, that having created man in his own image, and knowing that through lack of experience he would transgress Divine law and thereby plunge the whole race into death, God knew that if Adam and his offspring were to survive they would have to be restored to life by another; for in his righteousness he could no longer deal with man. This work of restoration was to be accomplished by his own beloved Son. Thus God rested from his work, while his Son has been carrying it forward to completion, the arrangement for this including the permission of evil, and man's instruction in the meaning of this experience. This has involved a long nighttime of sin and death, in which each generation has suffered and died. The Divine purpose in the creation of man being that the earth should be filled with his human creation. (Gen. 1:28) His plan in connection with the permission of evil embraces enough time for the birth of a sufficient number to

properly fill the earth. Meanwhile, during this same long period of time, the Divine arrangements for dealing with the people when awakened from the grave have progressed steadily.

WORLDS AND AGES

This seventh day, during which the creative design of God pertaining to the earth is being completed, is, the Scriptures indicate, divided into shorter periods of time called worlds and ages. The period prior to the Flood is described by the Apostle Peter as the "world that then was." (II Pet. 3:6) Paul speaks of the period from the Deluge to the establishment of Christ's kingdom in the earth as "this present evil world." (Gal. 1:4) In Hebrews 2:5 we read of "the world to come."

In a broad sense we might speak of these three worlds as the past, present, and future, and to understand the Divine plan it is essential to realize that what the Bible may say concerning one of these worlds might not necessarily be true of the others. Failing to recognize this, many have concluded that the Bible contradicts itself. Just as an architect's specifications for each floor of a three-story building would differ according to the manner in which each floor was to be used, so the scriptural references to each of these three worlds differ, because the arrangements of the LORD, as they progress from period to period, are not always the same.

One basic fact, however, is true throughout both the first and second worlds mentioned in the Bible. It is that in both of them evil predominates. Malachi 3:15 reads, "Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they

that tempt God are even delivered." This was even true in the world before the Flood. It has been true throughout this 'present evil world.' There have at all times, of course, been varying degrees of wickedness. The remnants of the image of God with which man was endowed at Creation have, throughout the ages, prompted many noble efforts of reform. There have been noble individuals who would rather die doing good than in any way injure another. But evil has predominated.

On the other hand, the Bible speaks of a time when the "righteous shall flourish." The Prophet David explains that this will be in "his days," that is, the days when Christ is King. (Ps. 72:7; 92:12) Texts of scripture like this cannot be harmonized with human experience at the present time, nor do they harmonize with texts which describe the reign of sin and death with which mankind has been plagued since the transgression in Eden. Their harmony and beauty are seen only when we realize that they are descriptive of conditions in a future period of the Divine plan.

That will be a time when the world will have a new Ruler, even Christ. Jesus spoke of Satan as the "prince of this world." (John 16:11) Paul describes Satan as the "god of this world." (II Cor. 4:4) This explains why the present evil world is so evil. It is because the archenemy of God and of righteousness is its ruler. By contrast, the fact that the 'world to come' will be ruled by Christ, of whom it is written that he loves righteousness and hates iniquity, means that then the forces of evil shall be destroyed and that truth and righteousness will prevail.

The fact that thus far evil has predominated in the experience of the human race does not mean that the Divine plan for the recovery of man from sin and death has not steadily progressed. It has, and through periods outlined in the Bible that we shall call ages. During the 'world that was' before the Flood there was little progress in the Divine plan, except the testing of the faithfulness of a few individuals such as Abel, Enoch, and Noah, to prove them worthy of being among the "princes in all the earth" during the age to come. (Ps. 45:16) It was after the Flood that the plan of God began more particularly to unfold, and to progress.

For more than six hundred years after the Flood Divine favor was shown and promises made to certain individuals whom we may refer to as the patriarchs, or fathers, of what later became the Jewish nation. The promise to Abraham was that through his seed "all the families of the earth [would] be blessed." This promise was reiterated to Isaac and to Jacob. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) No effort was made at that time to evangelize the world. While these wonderful promises were made to the patriarchs, they were not instructed to proclaim the message to others. This was an age, in other words, when God's dealings were exclusively with these individual patriarchs. So we designate it the Patriarchal Age.

THE JEWISH AGE

With the death of Jacob a change occurred. The twelve sons of Jacob became the nucleus of a nation, the nation of Israel, and the period of more than eighteen hundred years, during which the Divine dealings were with this nation, we call the

Jewish Age. As a people, under the leadership of Moses, they were delivered from slavery in Egypt. The Divine Law was given to them, epitomized in the Ten Commandments. They were, through the priesthood, called upon to offer sacrifices to the LORD, which pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ.

Throughout the Jewish Age we are presented with a national picture. The whole nation was blessed or cursed together, largely according to the measure of obedience to the Law on the part of the leaders. The promised reward for keeping the Law was a blessed one, "which if a man do, he shall live in them." (Lev. 18:5; Neh. 9:29; Ezek. 20:11; Rom. 10:5) In other words, this one little nation was given an opportunity of gaining everlasting life by keeping the Divine Law; but they failed.

God, in the exercise of his foreknowledge, knew that no member of the fallen and dying race was capable of keeping his perfect Law inviolate. But the Jewish people did not know it; nor would any of the human race have known it unless it was demonstrated. Paul refers to the Law as a "schoolmaster" which teaches the necessity of Christ as the Redeemer in the Divine plan. (Gal. 3:24,25) One of the lessons to be learned by the Divine permission of evil was that there was no way of escaping the penalty of death except through Christ, the Redeemer from death, and the ultimate Restorer to life.

Had the Jewish people been faithful to their calling they, as the natural descendants of Abraham, would have inherited the promise made to him that through his 'seed' all the families of the earth

would be blessed. But they failed. The final test came upon them when Jesus presented himself to the nation as the promised Messiah.

But in the Divine economy their persecution of Jesus unto death resulted in the redemption of the world.

Not all of the Jewish nation failed in the final test. John informs us that while "his own received him not," as many as did receive him he gave power—or the right or privilege—to become the sons of God. (John 1:11,12) Among those of the Jewish nation who accepted Christ were his apostles. Paul speaks of "above five hundred brethren" who saw Jesus after his resurrection. (I Cor. 15:6) At Pentecost three thousand accepted under the preaching of Peter. Doubtless these had been somewhat prepared prior to this through their contacts with Jesus.

THE GOSPEL AGE

The foreordained number to be with Jesus as the promised seed of Abraham was one hundred and forty-four thousand. (Rev. 7:4; 14:1,3) The number of Jewish people who accepted Jesus was far short of this, so the Gentiles were then given an opportunity. But this involved the work of another age in the Divine plan, which we will speak of as the Gospel Age. It is properly called the Gospel Age because during this age the work of the LORD is accomplished through the preaching and drawing power of the Gospel.

During the Jewish Age, a whole nation was given the opportunity to qualify as the Messianic nation. But this arrangement ceased with the coming of Messiah. With the failure of the nation to qualify

for this high position in the Divine plan, the invitation was extended to individuals—for a short time, exclusively to individuals of the Jewish nation. Then it was extended to any of the Gentiles who, as individuals, responded to the drawing power of the Gospel of Christ, and dedicated themselves to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to suffer and die with him. Nationalities count for nothing in this arrangement of the Gospel Age. Paul wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. 3:28,29

So this work of the Gospel Age has continued throughout the centuries. Millions have become nominal followers of Christ, but only a few in each generation have actually qualified through faithfulness to live and reign with Christ. Indeed, the vast majority were more pleased to ally themselves with the church-state systems of the old world which claimed to be the kingdom of Christ, no longer desiring to wait for his return and the establishment of his real kingdom.

WHEAT AND TARES

In his parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus gave a preview of what would happen throughout the Gospel Age. The parable relates that in the beginning of the age good seed was sown in a field. Then an enemy came and sowed tares—imitation, or counterfeit wheat. But the householder would not permit the tares to be uprooted, saying that both should be permitted to grow together until

the harvest. Then the tares were to be bound in bundles and burned, and the wheat gathered into the barn.—Matt. 13:24-30

Jesus explained that the wheat were the children of the kingdom; those, that is, begotten of the glorious gospel of the kingdom, and inspired by it—inspired to suffer and die with Jesus that they might prove worthy to live and reign with him in his kingdom. The tares, Jesus continued, are the children of the wicked one. These are not the immoral and degenerate of the world. They are the offspring, so to speak, of the false and Satan-inspired teachings that man, by his own efforts, can establish the kingdom of Christ, and bring in everlasting peace and righteousness. The church-state systems of Europe, together styled Christendom, were Satan's counterfeit of Christ's true kingdom. Those systems, as such, are passing out of existence, but the viewpoint of a kingdom of righteousness without Christ still prevails. Few indeed today are looking to Christ to establish his long-promised kingdom. The vast majority of his professed followers believe that whatever the Lord does for the world will be done through them and their imposing systems.

Jesus explained that in the harvest at the end of the age there would be a separation of the wheat from the tares, that the tares would be destroyed, and that the wheat would then "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. 13:37-43) He speaks of a furnace of fire in which the tares would be destroyed. There are many prophecies which reveal that the Gospel Age comes to an end in a "time of trouble such as never was since there

was a nation." (Dan. 12:1) The furnace of fire in the parable of the wheat and tares is symbolic of this same destructive trouble. In it are destroyed the great counterfeits of Christ's kingdom, while the frustration and disappointment of their adherents is symbolized in the parable by the wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Developments in the world today clearly indicate that we are in that period of dissolution. The age-old systems that constituted the bulwarks of Christendom are crumbling. Churchianity is on the defensive everywhere. Fear of destruction, by nuclear armaments and various types of weapons of mass destruction, is producing a fervor of religious excitement, leading in many instances to increased attendance at church; but the newcomers, as well as the old, have little or no conception of the true teachings of the Bible. Churches today teach high moral and ethical principals, but they are not always practiced. The people are not being taught to expect the establishment of Christ's kingdom.

EXPERIENCE ENLARGED

Thus the preparatory features of the Divine plan for human salvation from sin and death have continued to progress throughout the various ages. Meanwhile, as the world in general have come into contact with the LORD's people whom he has been preparing to be the personnel in Christ's kingdom, they have profited. Some have been encouraged to live better lives. Some, however, unwittingly, have lent themselves to be cohorts of Satan in the persecution of the righteous, and have sunk deeper into

the mire of degradation and sin, thus having an opportunity to learn even more clearly the terrible results of disobedience to God's law.

In the Divine economy, the permission of evil has served to test the fidelity of those whom the LORD will use in high positions in the Messianic kingdom. It offered a further opportunity for the *Logos*, the beloved Son of God who participated in all the works of Creation, to prove his zeal for his Father's plan for him to redeem fallen man from death by his own death, and later restore to life those for whom he died. Satan said, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." (Isa. 14:13,14) By Satan's attempt to accomplish this ambitious scheme, the world has been filled with sorrow and death; but Satan himself will eventually be destroyed. (Heb. 2:14) Jesus, on the contrary, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. God has highly exalted him, and through him the suffering and dying world will be restored to life.

Christ must reign, Paul tells us, until all enemies are put under his feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death. (I Cor. 15:25,26) It will be during the thousand years of Christ's reign that mankind will have their first experience with good. The earth will then be filled with a knowledge of God and of his glory. (Isa. 11:9; 40:5) Of that time Isaiah wrote, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isa. 33:24) They will then learn that the love of the Creator provided redemption and forgiveness for

them through Christ Jesus, and because of this, there will then be no need for them to suffer.

God's original plan for the earth to be subdued and made like the Garden of Eden will be accomplished, under the righteous administration of the Messianic kingdom laws. Then they will build houses and inhabit them, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. Verse twenty-two states, it will be then that the LORD's elect will make all mankind "long enjoy the work of their hands." (Isa. 65:20-25) The elect referred to in this prophecy includes all those who, through the various ages of the seventh creative day, have been tested, and prepared to administer the laws of the kingdom—both the spiritual and the earthly phases of that kingdom. Primarily, the reference is to Christ and his followers, who, as the seed of Abraham, will be the channel of blessing to "all the families of the earth."—Gal. 3:8,16,27-29

EVENING AND MORNING

Man thinks of the day as beginning in the morning, but those long periods of time referred to by the Bible as the days of creation, began in the evening. The eve of any event is its beginning. How appropriate this is when considering the creative days. While the evening is properly, and scripturally, the beginning of the day, it is also a time of darkness and obscurity, and so was the beginning of each of the seven days of creation. They began in obscurity, and not until the morning of the closing of the day, was its full purpose recognized.

This is particularly true of the seventh day. With the fall of man into sin and death a pall of darkness

settled down over God's human creation. Man was to learn both good and evil by experience but how could he now thus learn good? The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head, but what did this mean, and how was it to be brought about? God's design for the seventh day is to be carried forward to completion by Christ, and the earth filled with a perfect and happy human family, re-joicing in their knowledge of good through actual experience, as they also will have known evil through their contact with it throughout the time when darkness covered the earth. Then the Cre-ator's purpose in the creation of man will be fully realized by all. Then, as the obedient and restored world, freed from sin, sickness, pain and death, stand at the threshold of an eternity of joy and life, in a global-wide paradise in which there is every tree pleasant to the eye and good for food, a post-script to the Genesis account of Creation can be written, reading, "The evening and the morning were the seventh day." ■