

THREE WORLDS.

The past, present and future of the family of man are all included in the "Three Worlds." The world that was before the flood, the world that now is, and the world to come. The history of mankind and the history of the Gospel of Christ are inseparable; hence, the plan of salvation spans these three worlds.

The Greek word "Kosmos," translated world, as above, relates to the order or state of things, and does not refer to the literal earth, as some suppose. The same word is often used when the people are meant, as, "God so loved the world;" "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" "The field is the world" (Christ does not sow the good seed in the ground – mankind is his field of operation); "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." Kosmos is thus used for the general "order" of things, or for the people, but we have yet to learn that the word is ever translated earth, or has that meaning. The nearest to it, perhaps, is when Peter speaks of these three conditions as three distinct "heavens and earth." 2 Peter 3. The first "perished" (came to an end), the second is "reserved unto fire," and will end also, but the third, or "new heavens and new earth," is the "world without end."

These three exist in the order of succession as above, no two at the same time, and the same planet, Earth, is the basis of all three.

The change at the flood was not so much physical as dispensational. The administration of God was changed, but the earth, with its "mountains" and consequent valleys, still remained. "The waters prevailed and all the high hills were covered." Gen. 7:19. The ark rose above the mountains, carried on the face of the waters, and when the waters abated "the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat." Gen. 8:4. The waters rose and fell, but there was apparently no change

in the form of the earth itself. The trees seem to have remained in place, for had they been floating, the dove might have found a place "for the sole of her foot" (ver. 9), and "an olive leaf plucked off" would have been no evidence that the waters were abating (ver. 11).

A few of these simple things well noted, might help to dispel some of the exaggerated expectations of many as to physical changes in the "new heavens and earth" promised. "New" does not necessarily mean absolute perfection.

The first "order" is called "the old world," 2 Peter 2:5. Then "This present evil world" must have been new at first. As the second "waxes old" and passes away, another new one comes on, "Wherein dwelleth righteousness." It has been thought by some that it must therefore be absolutely free from sin from the very first. This is an evil world, but there is some good in it, and when Satan is bound – limited – chained – it will be reversed. Righteousness will be the rule and sin the exception. "The sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed." Isa. 65:20. Sin and death go hand in hand, and neither shall be destroyed until the end of the thousand years: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." 1 Cor. 15:26.

These three worlds are the basis of the Bible plan of salvation, and may therefore serve as a means of explaining the word in reference to the plan. If a statement of the word belongs to any one of these worlds, it will be a perversion to apply it to another, or to what lies outside of them altogether.

To get the true import of anything revealed by the Spirit of God must be important, in order that the designed effect may be realized. Without an outline of the plan, it is not surprising that men have failed to "rightly divide the word of truth." If it be remembered that the "world to come" is not the "spirit world," or state of the departed in any sense, but a future state that does not begin until the second, or "present evil world," ends, many Scriptures will be plain. "Ye shall be recompensed

at the resurrection of the just." The resurrection is at the last trump (1 Cor. 15) during which time Christ comes, and the reward is given to "prophets, saints, and them that fear God's name, small and great." Rev. 11:15-18. The reward is "eternal life" to them who seek for it "by a patient continuance in well-doing" (Rom. 2:7), and Jesus says, "in the world to come eternal life." This division of the word, by the plan of the ages gives an intensity of interest in the coming of our Lord, for whatever man's state in death may be, it is clear that our reward is not due till he comes at the beginning of the world to come. Man does not go to it, but it comes to us. Those who died in the world before the flood did not thus reach the present world, which was then future, so neither can men reach the world to come by dying. Living or dead, we must wait for that period to come before we can be in it, as we wait from one day to another, and when the new period or day has come, those who have not died will be in the world to come as well as those who are raised from the dead, just a Noah passed from the old world into the new, having escaped death. It does not militate against this idea, that the saints are to enter upon a higher state than the nations, being raised in the "spiritual body," and made equal to the angels at the beginning of that world. The heavenly state of the saints, as the "Bride, the Lamb's Wife," and the earthly state of the nations, as the "blessed of the Lord," are facts of the world to come and in harmony with each other. If the saints are to rule the nations as promised, the nations must be there to be ruled. There are high and low, heavens and earth, in the future as well as in the past. In this present evil world, the angels – unseen, yet real persons – have a great deal of power, as "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. 1:14. "But unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak, but...what is man that thou art mindful of him." This world is subject to the angels, but the future world is made subject to glorified man, Jesus being the head of the glorified body. The above proves that angels are not glorified men, and also that man

will supersede the angels in administration of God's benefits to man in the flesh. The "Church of the Firstborn," exalted to the throne, will sing a song the angels cannot learn.

An understanding of much of God's Word is made easier by first having a "bird's-eye view" of the plan as shown by the "Three Worlds."
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