

THE PROBATION OF ANGELS.

The preceding article naturally suggests the inquiry, Will those "spirits in prison," "those angels which kept not their first estate," and who received such a powerful lesson from the ministry death and resurrection of Jesus, ever have any opportunity to profit by the lesson? will they ever have a chance to repent of their sin, to leave Satan's service, and return to loyalty to God?

If at first we thought that the Scriptures were silent on the subject, we have found that to be a mistake, and when God speaks we may reasonably conclude that there is something profitable for us to learn. Hence let us give ear that we may learn whatever our Father deems expedient to communicate.

Jude informs us that those angels (verse 6) which "committed fornication and went after strange flesh" "also" "in like manner" to the Sodomites (verse 7), God is keeping under restraint, their (penalty or punishment) "unto the judgment of the great day." The great day is the Millennial Day and mankind is also waiting for this judgment [krisis – trial]. Peter's testimony is in harmony 2 Pet. 2:4. And Paul settles the matter that these fallen and now imprisoned spiritual beings will have a trial as well as mankind, under the reign of Christ – the Church, the kingdom of God in exalted power. Speaking of the propriety of their deciding earthly difficulties, he says, "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?...Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" 1 Cor. 6:1-4. The Greek word here rendered judge, is krino of the same root as krisis rendered judgment in Jude 6 and signifies, to govern; to test; as to mete out to each individual blessings of stripes according to the merit of their course when brought fully into the light of truth, and under all the blessings of the reign of Christ. Hence it is thus

seen that it will be a part of the work of the Christ to rule over and direct both human and angelic sinners, "to judge angels" and "to judge the world" of mankind – fallen men restrained unconscious in death, from which they have been redeemed, and fallen spirits restrained alive until this judgment or trial of the Great Millennial Day, when the saints under the headship of Jesus shall try their cause, giving everlasting life and favor to those who shall then prove themselves worthy of it, and everlasting destruction to those unworthy.

Besides we find frequent references to a work Christ is to do in subjecting heavenly or spiritual as well as human powers, when the church which is his body has been selected and the work of judging and blessing commences. For instance we read, Eph. 1:10 "In the dispensation of the fullness of times, to re-establish [under God's dominion and law] all things in Christ [the disordered] things that are in heaven [spiritual] and on earth [human], in him." – Douay translation. Again, "In him it hath well pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace by the blood of his cross, both as to the things on earth and the things in heaven." (earthly and spiritual transgressors.) Col. 1:20 – Douay.

In Eph. 3:8-10, it is shown that the length and breath of God's redemptive plan has been hidden by God until the Gospel Age, when the Apostles were commissioned to declare to men, the conditions upon which they might become sharers with Jesus in the execution of Gods' loving plans, and that the intent is, ultimately to have all the heavenly or spiritual beings know, through the instrumentality of the Church, the boundless wealth that is in God's great gift – His Son – and the different methods and steps his wisdom marked out for all his creatures. We quote the passage from the Diaglott translation: –

"To me, the very lowest of the saints, was this favor given – To announce among the nations the glad tidings – the BOUNDLESS WEALTH of the anointed one: even to enlighten all as to what is the [method of] administration [or operation] of that secret [plan] which has been concealed from the ages, by that God who created all things; in order that now [henceforth] may be made known to the governments and the authorities in the heavenlies, through [the instrumentality of] the congregation [church] the much-diversified wisdom of God, according to a plan of the ages," "which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

It would appear then, that God's bountiful plan and diversified wisdom, contains something of interest to the angels, and if of interest to any, of a special interest to those confined or restrained, and waiting a trial in the judgment of the great day. They see the saints and seek to look into things revealed by the spirit and Word to these, but in no other way can they learn of their future, or of what provision has been made for them in the boundless wealth and diversified wisdom of God, because it is to be "made known," "through the church."

These condemned angels have been learning much since the first text and sermon, (The lesson of Jesus' obedience and exaltation 1 Pet. 3:18-20 and 1 Tim. 3:16) for we read that we are made a spectacle to the world – both to angels and to men." (1 Cor. 4:9 – Diaglott.) The spectacle and lesson is both to men and angels for the reason that both men and angels will shortly be judged by the church and blessed by it, if found obedient and worthy of life. When the testimony in due time is given, all things, both in heaven (the spiritual condition) and on earth (the human) shall bow to Jehovah's anointed and confess him their Lord and Ruler and those who refuse his righteous authority shall be cut off as unworthy of life. Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:11; Matt. 25; Acts 3:33. **[R697 : page 4]**

The angels that sinned in the days of Noah have had a bitter experience since; no doubt death would have been preferable in many respects. Cut off from association with good angels and placed in the companionship of each other and Satan without God and having no hope they must have had a terrible experience, with sin's demoralizing effects, while they have witnessed in man its ultimate penalty – death. Surely many of them will be prepared for a return to their former estate and its privileges and blessings, on whatever terms a just God may prescribe.

We cannot forget too their respectful conduct toward Jesus and the Apostles, and the message they delivered; far more respectful indeed than that of the strictest sect of the Jewish church. While the latter scoffed and said, "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph?" (John 6:42) The former exclaimed "Thou art the Son of God." Mark 3:11. While the former said thou hast a devil and art mad, the latter said, "I know thee who thou art, the HOLY ONE of God." Mark 1:24.

While they respected the true, they opposed the false saying to some who pretended to exercise power – "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the man in whom was the evil spirit was, leaped on them and overcame them." (Acts 19:15.)

The Jews and Gentiles beat and stoned the messengers of God when they came among them with the glad tidings of salvation, but some of these fallen angels seemed desirous of spreading the glad tidings. One followed the Apostles, saying: "These men are the servants of the most high God which show unto us the way of salvation." Acts 16:17.

THE BASIS OF THEIR HOPE.

But now comes an important question, Scripture shows us that our hope centres in the fact that a ransom price for our sins

was given by Jesus, but what is the basis of the hope for these fallen angels? On what ground can they have a trial and hope of future everlasting life? Did Jesus die for them?

We answer that Jesus did not die for the angels – the ransom-sacrifice was human, a ransom for men. "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels," etc. (Heb. 2:16.) Furthermore they were not under condemnation of death, hence have never lost their life in any measure and would need no ransom from death, when they were not in, nor condemned to it. It was because DEATH had passed upon all men and they never could obtain life without, that Jesus' ransom was necessary in order that we might regain life. Those angels which kept not their first estate, were condemned, not to death, but to restraint and confinement, until a day of trial, when God will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. (Acts 17:31.) They are therefore undergoing their penalty as truly as man is suffering his, though they be very different in kind – "according to the much diversified wisdom of God."

And yet they had a great interest in Jesus' work, for though they were not being redeemed or bought by the precious blood, as was man, yet it was this Jesus, the Redeemer of men, who on account of this work, would be accounted worthy of high exaltation to the divine nature, and given all power in heaven as well as in earth. In the exercise of which power in heaven (or among spiritual beings) they may hope for their day of trial to come, when they as well as men may be released from the dominion of Satan.

Again, if we have the correct view of the matter, that these angels cast down, had been tempted and seduced by evil in men, which had become very great (Gen. 6:5) then we see how the reconciliation accomplished by the blood of the cross would apply

to and cancel all guilt, both direct and indirect, which resulted from the one man's disobedience. So that now, in the words of the Apostle, "It pleased the Father...having made peace [propitiation-satisfaction] by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, whether things [out of harmony] in earth, or things in heaven." Col. 1:20.
