

A SECOND CHANCE

A subscriber sends us the following extract from a paper, which attempts to demolish Peter's statement, that following our Lord's second advent there will be "times of RESTITUTION of all things, spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, (Acts 3:21). It says:

"Now the trouble about all this is found in the fact that such teachers as John the Baptist and our Lord appear to have known nothing about this "second chance." John's text was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He spoke of the ax being laid at the root of the tree. He referred to One coming with a fan in his hand, gathering the wheat into his garner, but burning the chaff. Jesus took the same text, and indorsed the doctrines of John most positively. In his parable about Dives and Lazarus nothing appears looking to a "second chance": and, in the sentence pronounced in the Judgment scene, nothing favors the theory in question. One of two things is very certain: either Jesus and John knew nothing of probation after death, or if they did, they trifled with their hearers; for nobody who heard them preach, had any other impression than that now was the accepted time, and to-day the day of salvation."

If a man should pick up an almanac and read throughout, its description of the weather to be expected from January to December, and should apply all its predictions of frost, hail, snow, rain, and thunderstorms to a single July day he would obtain but an imperfect idea of the kind of weather to be expected. Yet not more mixed than this seems the indiscriminate use of Scripture statements by the writer of the above and others. Truths concerning the next age are mixed with those of the past and

present, and the result is great confusion, and a selection of such parts from all as will best suit preconceived ideas. We cannot suppose that a man who had the first idea of what the symbols – ax, tree, garner, chaff, wheat, fan, etc., mean would apply them as they are used above, or blend them in any way with the parable of Dives and the Judgment scene of Matt. 25.

Let us pull straight the tangle before considering a "second chance."

Both our Lord and John were speaking of the Jewish polity, when they compared it to a tree at whose root lay an ax. The end of special favor to that nation had about come, and if in the little while of Jesus' ministry they should fail to bring forth good fruit, they would be cut off from the root of promise, and believers from the Gentiles would be grafted in instead, (Rom. 11:17). It was the harvest time; for their age had reached its full. Jesus was present to select with his "fan" of truth, the wheat from among the chaff and "garner" it in the Gospel age, while a time of "fire" or tribulation came upon the chaff remainder of the nation, and as a nation, burned them up.

Dives, a representative, in parable, of that people, so long peculiarly favored of God, faring sumptuously every day of God's special favors, has for some time been looking longingly for aid to the Gentile whom once he despised, but who now has been exalted to favor – Abraham's Bosom – and though once wild and ungoverned, has become the favored branch out of the Abrahamic olive root of promise.

The Judgment scene referred to (Matt. 25), is the only point which bears at all upon the question of "second chance." It applies to the Millennial age, and is clearly described as being after the Lord has come the second time and established his kingdom (church) in power and great glory. Then the nations shall be

judged or tried and rewarded, (Matt. 25:32.) When that scene has transpired, there will assuredly be no hope of further trial – no further chance.

Let us now hastily glance at the statement made in the above – "John the Baptist and our Lord appear to have known nothing about this 'second chance.'"

Our Lord certainly knew that because of one man's transgression, sin and death had passed upon all men (Rom. 5:16,18), consequently man's FIRST CHANCE in Eden had resulted in total loss. He failed and lost all in the first chance, being tried representatively in Adam. All were condemned. That Jesus knew this, and came into the world to redeem all men in order that all men might have a SECOND CHANCE, is clear, from his statement that he came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

As the expression, "which was lost," tells the tale of the first chance and its failure, so the words "seek and save" proclaim a second chance to all the lost.

Who can reasonably dispute that the opportunity which comes through Jesus is a second chance? You and I had nothing whatever to do in the first chance of life offered to the race; we have to do only with the second. If then, you and I, fellow-believers, got our present or second chance of life through the ransom that Jesus gave for our sins, redeeming us from the first loss, shall we say that he was a ransom only for the small minority of mankind who have thus far heard of it and believed? or shall we conclude that "He is the propitiation [satisfaction or covering] for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD"? (1 Jno. 2:2.)

Accepting this as the truth, is it not absolutely certain that the nine-tenths who have not yet heard, and hence not yet had the "second chance" Jesus' death was designed to provide, will surely have it in God's due time? Is not this fact clearly stated by the Apostle Paul when he says that Jesus "gave himself a RANSOM [equivalent price] for ALL, to be testified in due time"?

The gospel age now closing is not the world's due time; it is the time appointed for the selection or election of a little flock out from the world, who, with Jesus, shall soon take (the "purchased possession") the dominion of earth out of the hands of Satan, the present "Prince," and give judgment or trial to the world – its second trial – the great blessing so long promised. The great Prophet shall, in that Millennial day, speak to the people, and "they that hear shall live," becoming his sheep and coming to his right hand of favor; all others, as willful goats, being cut off, (Acts 3:22,23.) And none claim more strenuously than we, that now is the acceptable time. That the Gospel Age is a special season, during which the Christ – the world's deliverer shall be selected, proved and fitted for their great work as the Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29) to bless all the families of the earth. Now is the only time to secure this high calling. Now is the time of sacrifice, the only time when such sacrifices are acceptable to the Lord.
