

BIBLE LIGHT ON PROBATION AFTER DEATH.

Brother Stowe is a contributing member of one of the branch Bible Societies. At one of their recent meetings the so-called "Andover question" of probation for infants and heathen in death, was taken up for discussion. Brother S., though not a public speaker, prepared and delivered the following paper, which shows the question from our standpoint in a good light. It made quite an impression on some of the D.D.'s who heard, and we doubt not they wondered that a Christian business-man could become so well versed in theology as to be able to teach them on this subject. It shows how the earnest ones who have the *will* can find some *way* to serve the truth. Each saint should seek to multiply his opportunities for service and thereby increase his talents. Willing hearts, hands and voices *are* finding and using hundreds of ways, great and small, and making openings.

– *Editor.*

Opinions, from other sources than the Bible, differ as to what the act of death is, but the agreement of the whole Bible seems to be that it is a total extinction of life, and, therefore, that the state of death is an entire suspension of being, mental as well as physical. This being so, man's probation or trial must occur, not *in* death, but before the state of death has begun or after it has ended – in resurrection.

"So man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. Oh, that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands."

– Job 14:12-15.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." – Eccles. 9:10. ("Grave" is here translated from "sheol.")

"For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave (sheol) who shall give thee thanks?" – Ps. 6:5.

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." – 1 Cor. 15:16-18.

A great multitude of texts convey the same meaning. This death is the Adamic death, from which Christ, by virtue of his sacrifice, giving a ransom or corresponding price, redeems all men. The first probation of the race was a representative one in Adam, whereby all became subject unto death. Were there not to be a recovery as wide as the condemnation the first probation would be properly regarded as a total failure, a sweeping victory for the adversary at the outset of creation. But "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15:18.) "For the Lord of Hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isa. 14:27.) We who believe in the infinite power, wisdom and benevolence of God cannot doubt that he has a definite and systematic plan for the development of the race, by which the largest possible proportion thereof shall be brought to ultimate and permanent good. This idea was hinted at when God told Adam that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Two thousand years later he told Abraham plainly that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. Gradually the features of the plan were delineated in the prophecies, but it was yet a mystery until its fulfillment began. Paul declares (Col. 1:27) that "this mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations,...now made manifest to his saints,... is *Christ in you the hope of glory.*"

Jesus is anointed to be the Head or Lord over the Church, which is his body, and unitedly they constitute the promised "seed" – the Great Deliverer. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's *seed and heirs*, according to the *promise*" (Gal. 3:29) – the promise of blessing to all the families of the earth.

There never was a publication to the Gentiles of the "only name" given whereby men must be saved until the world was 4000 years old, and the very gradual and intermittent progress of the "good tidings which shall be to all people" up to this day, indicates the purpose of God hitherto to have been other than [R903 : page 4] the application of the ransom to *the world* in this life. Who can doubt God's power to have enlightened all men had he so chosen? He has not done so. More than nine-tenths of the race have died without any knowledge of Christ. Only a "little flock" has been "called and chosen and sanctified," while mankind at large have only lived that they might learn the sad but needful lesson that sin brings misery and evil brings destruction. With this experience which Adam had not, they will be better prepared than he to accept the favor of God when it shall be extended to them. To them, indeed, "the law," whether written on tables of stone or in their hearts, has been a "schoolmaster," availing for their condemnation, but not for their salvation, since that must come through Christ alone.

The present mission of Christ to the Gentiles has been to take out of them "a people for his name." Convinced of this, many have supposed that all not so chosen were forever lost. In reality the few are chosen and severely disciplined now, that *through* their labors in the coming new day "all the families of the earth" shall be blessed.

There is to be a resurrection of all. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:20-22.) "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation [to death], even so by the righteousness of one,

the *free gift* came upon all men unto *justification* of *life*." (Rom. 5:18.) "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive *until* the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." All that was lost in Adam by the world of mankind will thus be restored through Christ. All the prophets had declared it, though it is improbable that they understood it. This resurrection, this "justification to life," then, is a part of the Savior's work of blessing all the "nations," "kindreds" and "families of the earth." How, then, shall we read his words – John 5:28-29 – "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which *all that are in the graves* shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." The new version renders the last word "judgment" instead of "damnation," and a glance at the original discloses the fact that the change is wisely made. The Greek word is "Krisis." Webster gives eight definitions to the word "judgment," which includes *trial* as well as *sentence*. Read now verses 24 to 27, the burden of which tends toward the giving of life, rather than its withdrawal.

"Judgment must begin at the house of God," says Peter. The church has its trial now; the world will have its trial hereafter. The "day of judgment" will be a period commensurate with the extent and grandeur of the work to be done in it.

"Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the straight gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able *when* once the master of the house has risen up and hath shut to the door." This refers to the present dispensation.

Now note a picture of the coming day: "Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong; fear not; behold your God will come with vengeance,

even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart and the tongue of the dumb sing, for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert....And a **highway** shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; the wayfaring men, though fools, **shall** not err therein." And the ransomed of the Lord shall return (from death) and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they **shall obtain** joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." – Isa. 35:3-10.

Every age is tributary to its successor in the revealed plan of God. In the present the rod of God smiteth the rocky heart of a man, and lo! it becomes a "well of water springing up into everlasting life;" but in the broader day, when the New Jerusalem "cometh down from God out of heaven," the water of life is not a little well here and there, but a mighty river, and **then** "whosoever will may partake" thereof freely. (Rev. 22:1,2,17.) The church is then complete; yet we are told that the leaves of the trees upon the margin of the river are for the healing of the nations, showing that there will then be nations not in health, but capable of being healed.

"The ransom given does not excuse sin in any; it does not propose to **count** sinners saints and usher them into everlasting bliss. It merely settles the first condemnation and its penalty, and **reckons** the sinner released from that condemnation and its results, direct and indirect, and places him again on trial for life, in which his own willful obedience or willful disobedience shall decide whether he may or not have everlasting life." – Millennial Dawn, "Vol. I., p. 148 [should be A152 - site Editor].

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness,

but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." – 2 Peter, 3:8-9.

"Who will have all men to be saved (from death) and come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, *to be testified in due time.*" – 1 Tim. 2:4-6.

In this last clause lies the key to the mystery. To the millions of the living to-day and to the far vaster myriads of the dead the *ransom* has not been testified, but that it will be we have many a "Thus saith the Lord." When even extinct and sinful Sodom shall be brought back to her "former estate" and made a daughter to Jerusalem, as we read in Ezek. 16:44 to end, we may well believe that "the mercy of the Lord endureth forever," and that "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession." The mysteries of human destiny that have pained our hearts and tested our faith are clearing up in the advancing light due to the household of faith, and as the Church beholds her work spreading out before her in the coming life, and sees the grandeur of her association with her head in ruling and blessing the nation's new-born from the grave, she is filled with gratitude and gladness and her heart is stirred with passionate zeal for present self-purification and to make known to all the good tidings which shall be to all people.

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