

"NO VARIABLENESS, NEITHER SHADOW OF TURNING."

"Do not err, my beloved brethren: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." – Jas. 5:16-18.

Only those who have been brought to a clear knowledge of the plan of God, can really rejoice in those assurances which the Scriptures give of the unchangeableness of his character, and the certainty that all his purposes shall be accomplished. To the great majority of Christians this assurance only awakens fearful apprehensions. For centuries the church has been taught that God's plan is to consign all but a few of his creatures to eternal and hopeless misery; and as they look at his perfect law and realize their own shortcomings when measured by it, and much more the utter failure of all the world to find justification through it, the assurances of God's unchangeableness sounds like the knell of an eternal and merciless doom for the great majority of the human race.

But with what different feelings we read the blessed words, "With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" – we who have been so wonderfully enlightened through the Scriptures concerning God's plan: as to how it was wisely designed before the creation began; how it has been developing in the ages past; what is its present status and mode of development; and what and when will be the glorious outcome. As we take in the grand scope of the wondrous plan and perceive the blessings in store through it for all creation, both spiritual and human, our hearts are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory as we read, "With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "I am the Lord, I change not." "My word that goeth forth out of my mouth shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." – Mal. 3:6; Isa. 55:11.

Do not err, beloved brethren: every *good* and *perfect* gift comes from God. God's plans for mankind are all good and perfect, and when fully realized in his appointed time will amply demonstrate his glorious and benevolent character. Every purpose of God is for the ultimate good of his creatures. His severest chastisements are for the reformation of the wayward and their final establishment in righteousness and everlasting happiness; and only when they absolutely refuse to be rightly exercised by the discipline of the Lord will he administer the final punishment which forever blots them out of existence, because unworthy of life. And this he declares will be the last resort; for "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death [second death] of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. – Ezek. 33:11.

God is not the vindictive tyrant which so-called orthodoxy represents him to be, delighting in the eternal misery and torture and hopeless despair of millions of his creatures; and those who have been taught to so regard him should reflect upon his words through the prophet Isaiah (29:13) – "Their fear toward me, is taught by the precept of men."

God's eternal purpose is briefly epitomized in two great covenants carefully recorded by the prophets – the Abrahamic Covenant, and the New Covenant. The former, addressed to Abraham, reads thus: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:3; 22:18.) The latter, addressed to the typical people Israel who represented the whole world [see Tabernacle Types] is recorded thus: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days [when the days are accomplished for the overthrow of the kingdoms of this world and the setting up of the kingdom of God] saith the Lord, I

will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one [who dies then – the second death] shall die for his own iniquity [his own wilful sin, and not because of *inherited* weaknesses and tendencies to sin]. Every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." – Jer. 31:31-34,29,30.

Of these two covenants it will be seen, that the latter, or new covenant guarantees to all mankind, represented by Israel, a restitution. This is the prophet Jeremiah's testimony concerning the restitution of all things which Peter says, God has spoken by the mouth of *all* his holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:21). A restitution, as all must know, signifies a restoration of that which was lost – the restoration of mankind to the perfection and blessedness lost in Eden. Read it again, and see how emphatically and clearly the Lord here states his purpose; and notice further that it is unconditional – an affirmation of Jehovah not subject to any contingencies which might hinder its going into effect. And then remember his words: "I am the Lord, I change not," and the words of the Apostle James, "With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"; and the words of the Apostle Peter, which show that the times of refreshing, the times of restitution, are due to begin with the return of our Lord Jesus Christ whom the heavens receive *until* that time. – Acts 3:19-21. [R905 : page 5]

In view of this glorious purpose of God for all mankind, is there not cause for great rejoicing in the unchangeableness of God's purpose, and also in looking for the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ clothed with divine power for the accomplishment of that purpose?

The former or Abrahamic covenant, it will be observed, is not applicable to the whole world, except in the sense that the whole world shall be blessed through it. It guarantees that a class called the "seed," whom God shall elect, shall be clothed with authority and power as Jehovah's agents for the accomplishment of his purposed blessing of all, as indicated in the new covenant. This promised Seed of Abraham is the Great Prophet of whom Moses wrote (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22,23), and whom the Apostle Paul explains to be the Christ – Jesus the head, and the overcoming church the members of his body. – Gal. 3:16,29.

As the new covenant which guarantees restitution for all, belongs specially to the Millennial Age, so the Abrahamic covenant, which guarantees the selection and exaltation to power of the Great Prophet who shall restore all things, is confined exclusively to the Gospel Age. This covenant must be fulfilled, before the New Covenant can go fully into operation. And of course when it is fulfilled, the special favors now offered through it will no longer be offered to or attainable by any. The favors of the Abrahamic Covenant do not go beyond this age, in which the selection of the little flock to receive the kingdom will be fully accomplished.

It is in this covenant that those who are Christ's faithful followers now, may read their title clear to joint heirship with him in his kingdom. – "Now to Abraham and his seed...which is Christ, were the promises made. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." – Gal. 3:29.

Abraham was the father of this seed only in a typical sense – "like unto him whom he believed, even God." (Rom. 4:16,17, see margin.) Like as Abraham was the father of the natural Isaac (type of Christ – Gal. 4:28; Rom. 9:8), so God is the father of the spiritual seed, the spiritual Isaac, which is Christ, head and body." (Gal. 3:16.) And yet a special blessing will come to the natural seed of Abraham in fulfilment of this covenant as he understood it. The covenant has two phases and

will be fulfilled in each. (See "Millennial Dawn," Chap. XIV.) As James explains, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." Not only was Jesus thus begotten of God, but every member of the anointed body is thus begotten." (1 Pet. 1:3; John 20:17.) Of this spiritual body or class Jesus was the first fruits, and they all as a class are a first fruits of all classes or orders which shall be brought back to harmony with God through their ministry of sacrifice.

To be begotten is to receive the first impulse of life. As a race we were all dead, having lost life and all right and claim upon it through Adam's transgression. And not until begotten again, through faith in and acceptance of his promises, are any alive in the sight of God. The whole *world* yet lieth in condemnation [condemned to death], and consequently the steady tread of the whole race is downward toward the tomb. The time for their begetting again, or regeneration, has not yet come, but will have come when the great Restorer has fully taken unto himself his great power, and begun his reign. Then the fact of their redemption and consequent **[R905 : page 6]** right to life through faith in the Redeemer, and grateful acceptance of the unmerited favor, will be clearly testified to all (1 Tim. 2:6), and the hope begotten of this truth will be the first impulse of that life which when fully developed will be eternal. Those thus *begotten* of the truth, and who go on unto perfection, will be fully *born* into life when actually and fully delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God – when the great work of restitution is complete.

But there is a class who are now begotten of the truth, as the apostle James here asserts, before the time appointed for the begetting or regeneration of the world in general. By faith they now accept the promised redemption, and though their restitution to perfection does not follow their acceptance of the ransom in this age, they are *reckoned* of God as restored and are told to so reckon themselves. They are thus not only begotten again, but are *reckoned* of God as born again, made perfect, fully restored, just as all mankind will be when the

great work of restitution is complete in the end of the millennial age. Thus by faith they become partakers of the blessings of the New Covenant before its time for coming into force fully or for all. The blessings of restitution are *reckonedly* theirs, and God can now treat them as sons, "holy and acceptable" unto him.

The apostle explains why it is that some are thus begotten now. It is that they may be "a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." When this class is fully developed, born, in the resurrection, they will be the first ripe, perfected fruit of his plan. "Blessed and holy are all they that have part in the first resurrection." These are justified, begotten, in this age, in order that they may lay hold by faith upon another and still greater favor of God offered in this age, that they may be eligible to a yet higher calling, even to the divine nature. (2 Pet. 1:4.) The *conditions* of this high calling are *works and sacrifices* added to faith; and since only perfect works and unblemished sacrifices are acceptable with God, it was needful that all of the sin-defiled ones called to such service should first be *justified* or reckoned pure and perfect, that they might present themselves living *sacrifices, holy and acceptable* to God. Those begotten of the truth, who hear and obey *this call* to become joint-sacrificers with Christ Jesus (Rom. 12:1) thus become heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant, joint-heirs with Christ, members of the "seed," the "Great Prophet," the "anointed," which is to bless and restore all nations; which is to apply the blessings of the New Covenant actually to all mankind.

As members of the condemned race we never could have become heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant had we not first had the favors of the New Covenant applied to us; for only that which is holy, without spot or blemish or any such thing, is acceptable as a sacrifice (Lev. 22:20; Deut. 15:21; 17:1; 1 Pet. 1:19,16-19; Eph. 5:27), and we are so reckoned through Christ, our Redeemer.

We notice further the expression of the apostle – "*a kind* of first fruits." While this class will be the very first fruit of God's creatures, it

is only *one kind* of fruit, and there will be other *kinds* to follow, both human and angelic. But the *divine kind* will be first of all – first, both in point of time and also of rank. And through the divine kind shall all the other kinds be blessed; for they are to be exalted far above angels and principalities and powers, with Christ, even at the right hand of God [chief place of divine favor]. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit." (1 Cor. 2:10.) Surely our light afflictions, our little crosses of the present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, if we prove faithful unto death and are counted worthy of the crown of life.

Language seems too weak to paint the glories of our high calling, and the blessedness vouchsafed to the heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant. Only those who are diligently delving into the depths of God's revealed truth are able to grasp these promises and to realize their value. And we might add, that only those who are faithful also in spreading the knowledge of the truth are able to fully appreciate it themselves. As we tell it to others, its blessed inspiration fills our own hearts to overflowing, and we are enabled to run more swiftly and more patiently the heavenly race. Let those who are faithfully running the race remember that "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (1 Thes. 5:24.) Let not your faith stagger at the promises of God; for what he has promised he is able also to perform (Rom. 4:21), and "with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

