

JUDAS' CASE A HOPELESS ONE.

WE have heretofore pointed out that during this present age (the Gospel age, the spirit dispensation) the world of mankind is not liable to the Second death. (1) Because this age is for the Church's trial and is not the period of the world's judgment or trial. (2) Because now the world has not that degree of enlightenment which would involve the full, extreme penalty of God's law, – the Second death. (3) Because the inspired Apostle declares that now Satan is exerting a blinding and deceiving influence upon *all except* true believers (2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:3), so that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." – 1 Cor. 2:14.

These conclusions from the Scriptures in general are abundantly confirmed by the statements of Heb. 6:4-8 and 10:26-31, in which the Apostle warns the Church that *wilful* sin or apostasy, on the part of those who have enjoyed the privileges of consecrated believers (*viz.*, those who "have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and who have been made partakers of the holy spirit"), leaves the case of such hopeless. It will be found impossible to renew such, because there remaineth no longer any part for them in the sacrifice for sin – they *have had* and have misused their share in the great "ransom for all."

We have called attention to the fact that the world in general, even in civilized lands, has had no opportunity to sin after the example of wilful apostasy, described by the Apostle. And it is well to note that this sin unto death on the part of believers is not at all the same as the missteps and stumblings which may occur in the path of any through weakness of the flesh (Gal. 2:11-14), and which are among the sins which may be repented of, reformed from, and forgiven. – 1 John 2:1; 1 John 5:16.

In view of the above, and in view of our further claim that the spirit dispensation *began* at Pentecost when our Lord was glorified (John 7:39), some have wondered that [R1962 : page 80] we teach that Judas' case is a hopeless one, since his sin and death were both before Pentecost. We are asked to explain this seeming inconsistency.

We answer: – The period of the Lord's presence at the first advent, – from his baptism to his ascension – differed from the period after Pentecost, throughout this age in which believers walk wholly by faith and not by sight, even as the Millennial age will differ from the Gospel age.

In the Millennium, knowledge and responsibility will no longer be confined to the spirit-begotten; for it is written, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea [knowledge ocean-deep]." "All shall know me [the Lord] from the least unto the greatest." (Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:34.) It will no longer be the rule that the consecrated must "walk by faith and not by sight;" for the consecrated of that time, while no doubt still having room for faith, will, to a very considerable degree, walk by sight. It will no longer be true that Satan, the god of this world, will blind and deceive all except believers, for Satan will be bound and can deceive the world no longer; and "*this* world" [age] shall then have given place to "the world [age] to come wherein dwelleth righteousness;" and all the blind eyes shall be opened. – Isa. 35:5.

When knowledge is thus *general*, the possibility of sinning wilfully against great light will become general. Whosoever will may accept the divine favor and use the divine aids, and attain to perfection and life everlasting; and whosoever will may intelligently reject God's favor in Christ, and die the second death, the everlasting death, the hopeless death.

Now let us return to the case of Judas, and consider the conditions which obtained in his time of trial and failure, in the period of the Lord's presence, in the Jewish harvest. The circumstances of that time differed

from those of the present age and also from those of the Millennial age in the conditions and hence the responsibilities differed also. Our Lord was present, and marvellous works were performed, *illustrative of* "the powers of the world [age] to come." The truth was presented to *the people* in such a manner that the Lord declared that its rejection would bring "stripes" and "woes" upon those who, after hearing, loved darkness rather than light. He declared that some of those, because of the rejection of the truth, would be counted worthy of "many stripes;" and that it would therefore be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for those. Our Lord's declaration was, If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin. – John 15:22,24.

And if *the people* had such a responsibility because of what they heard and saw, how much greater was the responsibility of the twelve chosen apostles? They had professed much, saying, "We have left all to follow thee." They were always with him; and not only beheld many of his mighty works, of which the multitudes in various places saw but few; but more: he communicated to them, severally, a measure of his spirit and power, and sent them out to proclaim him and his Kingdom, and to work miracles – to heal the sick and cast out devils in his name.

The apostles received also a special insight into the divine plan, an enlightenment not granted to the people; the equivalent to much that is now granted to the spirit-begotten ones of this age. The Lord addressed the multitudes in parables and dark sayings, but these he interpreted to the Apostles, saying, "Unto you it is given to *know* the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but to them that are without [outside the twelve and other special disciples], all these things are done in parables." Again he said to them: "Blessed are your eyes, *for they see*; and your ears, *for they hear*; for verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear have not heard them." – Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11.

If, then, the people who saw a few of our Lord's mighty works, and heard a few of his words of life under parabolic cover, were declared "worthy of *stripes*" for not receiving the light, what shall we say of the responsibility of the twelve, who not only saw much more, but by his power in them performed his miracles; who not only heard the parabolic words of life, but who had them expounded to them by the great Teacher? (Matt. 13:36-43; Mark 4:10-13.) And what punishment less than *death* – hopeless extinction – shall we suppose was merited by the one of these, who, after all this, according to his own confession, "betrayed innocent blood?" We judge that if Pilate and Herod and the Roman soldiers had some responsibility for Christ's death, the multitude which clamored, Crucify him! His blood be upon us and on our children! had much more responsibility; and that the better educated, envious Pharisees and Priests who incited the illiterate common people had yet a greater responsibility (Matt. 23:15-33); and that Judas, his betrayer, was the chief, the real crucifier, because of his knowledge and wilfulness. Upon him *alone*, of all who had to do with his death, our Lord placed the responsibility, the full guilt, when he said: "The Son of Man goeth [to death] as it is written of him [prophetically]; but woe unto *that man* by whom the Son of man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had not been born." (Matt. 26:24.) Should Judas be granted eternal life under any circumstances or after any experience, his birth could not be considered a disadvantage to himself. – See also Psa. 109:6-8; John 17:12; 6:70,71.

So, likewise, it is those, and those only, who (with good knowledge of God's grace in Christ) sin wilfully and count the precious blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified [set apart], a common thing, who "crucify Christ afresh and put him to an open shame." And, like Judas, they often accompany this denial of his ransom-sacrifice with the words, "Hail, Master!" and a deceitful **[R1962 : page 81]** kiss. All such should be an abhorrence to all who possess to any degree the true, noble, Christ-like spirit.

The question asked by some is, – Did not God predestinate that Judas should betray our Lord? Was he not thus forced to do his evil deed "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled?"

We answer, No; "God tempteth no man;" He forces no man to do evil. To so suppose would be to charge the Almighty with being the real sinner and using men as his tools. On the contrary, "All his work is perfect." "God is not the author of confusion." – See TOWER March 1, '95.

We cannot doubt that there are other men who would have performed Judas' part, as well as others who would, under similar conditions, have done as others of the Apostles did. God's foreknowledge of Judas' course and his Scriptural forestatement of it no more *caused it to be so* than the forestatement of the changes of the moon's phases by Almanac makers causes those changes.
