

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

BELIEVERS, AND THE BANKRUPTCY ACT.

Question: Would it be right or wrong for the footstep-followers of our Lord Jesus Christ to take advantage of the Bankruptcy Act for the relief of Insolvent Debtors?

Answer: It would be entirely proper for any person to take advantage of the law. The thought which lies back of this law is that in the vicissitudes of life some persons become hopelessly insolvent, and that it is the proper thing for their neighbors to relinquish their hold upon them and let them have a fresh start in life, provided they give up all that they have to their creditors. This humane law reminds us strikingly of the divine law given to Israel, and represented in their Jubilee system, under which, every fiftieth year, all debts of every kind were cancelled, and each family inheritance was restored; and that, we again remember, is but a type, or illustration of the heavenly Father's dealings with the world of mankind, who are all his debtors, and who, by application to the Mediator of the New Covenant, will be granted shortly immunity from every previous debt, and opportunity to retrieve their fortunes and to build new characters, without prejudice from original sin and condemnation.

While it would be lawful and proper enough for you to avail yourself of the privileges of this Bankruptcy Act, it may not be convenient for you to do so, because it would require some considerable attorney's fees to put the matter through, and unless you have some purpose or object respecting this in the future that would make it worth while to have the docket cleared and to permit you to go into some kind of business, you had, perhaps, better let the matter stand as it is.

The general principle is a correct one, that the world of mankind are, in a general sense, human brothers, and that they should not oppress one another, but be ready to forgive one another their debts, when the circumstances are such that the debtor is unable to meet the obligations, and when he will probably never be able to meet them without unjustly depriving his family of life's necessities. In harmony with this thought is the general law of civilized lands, that debts are not perpetual, but that at the expiration of five years they become void and legally dead, unless specially stated to the contrary by the recording of them as judgments. However, on the other hand, should anyone living in debt come into possession of wealth, so that he could pay his obligations, it should be his pleasure to pay them, whether he had taken advantage of the Bankruptcy Act or not.

THE GARMENT SPOTTED WITH THE FLESH.

Question: What is meant by the Apostle in the statement, "Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23)?

Answer: The garment to be worn by Christians is the robe of Christ's righteousness, the spotless robe which is given to those who come unto the Father. All who have love for the Lord and for righteousness will desire to maintain as far as possible this absolute perfection of righteousness imputed to them through faith. To do this they will seek to walk after the spirit, and not after the flesh. But notwithstanding their good desires they may not infrequently come short of the glory of God, and fail to live up to all even of their opportunities. All such shortcomings of every kind are reckoned as stains or spots on the imputed garment of Christ's righteousness – spots, marks of **[R2962 : page 63]** fleshly weakness. Those who have the right attitude of heart will hate sin, and hence will hate all fleshly spots or weaknesses of every kind, and will make haste to take the matter to the Lord in prayer, and, so far as possible, to make good any wrong they may have committed, even though unwilfully done; and thus under the New Covenant the blood of Christ cleanses such from all

sins, and in this manner they are able to keep themselves unspotted from the world. By and by this faithful class will experience the resurrection change, and being possessed of new bodies in full accord with their new minds they will thenceforth be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

From this it will be plain that none need have spots upon his garment except he be careless respecting the matter; and such as are thus careless are to that extent lacking of the Master's spirit – they are not overcomers of the world, but to some extent sympathize with sin. This is the class which, for this reason, will fail to be accounted overcomers and will fail to obtain the great prize of joint-heirship in the kingdom. This is the class which will be obliged to go through the great tribulation with which this age will close, to the intent that in that tribulation they may learn lessons which will be valuable to them to all eternity, and this learning of lessons is scripturally called "washing their robes, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb." – Rev. 7:14.

WITH SUCH AN ONE NO, NOT TO EAT.

Question: What about I Cor. 5:11? "With such an one no, not to eat."

Answer: We understand the Apostle to refer to Church relationships, and that the Lord's people are in duty bound to maintain a very high standard of purity of morals; so much so that they would not even fellowship in the Church or at the common meal or love-feast with any who were known positively to be of disreputable character. This would not mean one against whom merely an evil thought had been encouraged; or one against whom the shaft of slander had been hurled; for other Scriptures show us distinctly that the Lord's people are not to be evil surmisers in their carefulness to maintain a high standard of Christian living. Verse 10 seems to indicate that in our social and business affairs we should to a reasonable degree avoid fellowships and dealings with the disreputable.

IS GOD THE FATHER OF ALL MEN?

Question: The Apostle, in Acts 17:29, seems to speak of the natural man as the offspring of God. How should we understand this?

Answer: God represents himself as the Life-giver, or Father of every living thing, since all life proceeds from him; but, specially, he is the Father, or Life-giver of all created in his likeness. The natural man was thus created, represented in Adam; [R2962 : page 64] and although much of that original likeness has since been lost through sin and depravity, it is, nevertheless, still proper to speak of the man from the standpoint of his original creation. It is to be remembered, however, that according to the Scriptures all in the transgression lost the standing of sonship. All are God's offspring, that is, all spring from, or derive their life from the Almighty; but he recognizes as sons only those who are in harmony, in fellowship with him, and this now includes only those who are reconciled through the precious blood.

GOD COMMANDETH ALL MEN EVERYWHERE TO REPENT.

Question: In the 30th and 31st verses of the same chapter we seem to have a contradiction. Verse 30 declares that God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent," and verse 31 declares that the appointed day for the world's judgment is future. If the judgment of the world has not yet begun, in what sense and with what justice does God command all everywhere to repent now?

Answer: While the command to repent is to "all men everywhere," nevertheless it reaches only those who have an ear to hear. The vast majority of mankind have not yet been commanded to repent, because God's voice through his messengers has not yet reached every creature. The assurance, however, is that the message shall reach all in due time. And whoever hears the message will receive with it a full knowledge of the gracious opportunity for complying with its conditions and arrangements. In the present age the arrangement is that they will be

judged according to their faith, while those who hear in the next age will be informed of a justification by works – that they "shall be judged every man according to his works."

Thus viewed, it will be seen that God's arrangement for judging the world in the next age is complete, and it is in view of this feature of future judgment, or future trial, or opportunity which will be granted to all mankind for attaining to everlasting life, that God commands that every one should repent of sins and make effort to come back into harmony with him and to receive the boon of eternal life. Had God made no arrangement through the ransom for the giving of eternal life to the world, it would have been useless to have commanded repentance; for why should men seek by repentance and striving against sin to attain a life eternal if it were unattainable – if no arrangement had been made through the redemption by which God might be just and yet the justifier of those who believe in Jesus and who seek to follow his directions and to attain the gift of life in him? **page 64**

THE ANNUAL MEMORIAL SUPPER.

Question: If, as you claim, the Scriptures teach that the annual celebration of the Memorial Supper is the only proper one, please say when and why a change has been made to a more frequent observance?

Answer: (1st) You know, and all know that the Roman Catholic, the Greek Catholic and the Syriac Churches, as well as the Church of England, celebrate Good Friday as the memorial of our Lord's death, and the histories of all these churches show its observance as far back as church history goes, – any of them, all of them.

(2nd) You know, and all know, that the so-called Protestant Churches (Methodist, Presbyterian, Disciples, Congregational) ignore Good Friday. Really they protest in part against it, but ignorantly, without good reason, because of having lost sight of the original

significance and importance of the day from a Scriptural standpoint. Those called "Protestants" recognize no particular day, but keep the feast weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, tri-monthly, etc., according to their fancy or convenience.

The above facts are known to all; but the reason for this change on the part of Protestants is known to but few of those even who practice the change, and is not to be found recorded in histories of any kind. The reason for this we will explain, and it will be manifest to all, although we cannot refer you to any other writings than our own on the subject. It is: –

(3rd) The Protestant reformation against Roman Catholicism was very properly specially against what Papists denominate "the sacrifice of the mass." And it was because Papists celebrated Good Friday as the most particular mass day, that Protestants were so particular to ignore that day.

(4th) The original deflection in Papacy, by which the sacrifice of the mass took the place of the original sacrifice made at Calvary, was gradual, and covered a long period of time, and is not to be found in the particular edict by the Pope or others. This, like many other false theories, grew gradually and spread itself gradually and unobservedly over the nominal Church of that time; and the records of the true Church of that time are not to be had, for it was so insignificant, in the eyes of the nominal system, that its views were ignored, but later on its writings, protests, etc., were destroyed as heretical.

The custom of performing the mass any and every day, and at any and every hour of the day and night, as might suit the convenience of its observers, having gained a thorough foothold, the original day (Good Friday) and its commemoration of the original sacrifice, was gradually merged by Papists into a great mass day. Nevertheless, even in this respect it has held a predominant position above all other dates with the devotees of the system, and every Roman Catholic who makes the slightest claim to faithfulness to his Church, is expected to be

present and participate in the service of Good Friday, whether he attends mass at any other time of the year or not. This is a matter of fact that can be readily demonstrated by application to any Catholic.

(5th) Church history, as represented, not only in denominational literature, but also in the cyclopedias, records the fact that the method of computing the time for Good Friday was early changed from the Jewish method of counting the Passover, to a very slightly modified counting which always brings the anniversary on Friday and the anniversary of Easter on a Sunday. The Jewish method of reckoning made the days fall irregularly on any or various days of the week from year to year. Hence the change to the present method of counting was considered to be justified. So universal is this custom that the principal almanacs give not only the day of the Passover according to the Jewish reckoning, but also its date according to this modified counting of Christendom – "the Church calendar."

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