

## **TRUTH "WOUNDED IN THE HOUSE OF ITS FRIENDS."**

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your plans my plans, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my plans higher than your plans, and my thoughts than your thoughts." – Isa. 55:8,9.

THOSE who claim that the second advent of Christ means the end of probation, the burning up of this world, and the death-knell of hope for poor, fallen humanity, are responsible in a very large degree for the intense prejudice which exists on this subject. Amongst those who thus hold, are some who are thoroughly conscientious and are, after a fashion at least, Bible students, but study not according to knowledge. They love the Lord, not because of his character, exemplified in his plans, but in spite of their misconception of his plans and, therefore, of his character. They have looked at certain passages of Scripture from the wrong standpoint, and have failed to discern which are its symbolical and which are its literal statements. We hope that this paper will come to the attention of many of this kind, and that it will come also to the attention of many of those who, because of these misrepresentations of the divine plan, are thoroughly out of sympathy with the promises of the second coming of the Lord, but desirous, rather, that he should not come at all, and especially that he should not come soon. We hope that all of this class who are earnest, honest, and spiritually minded, will, with the presentation we are about to make, be able to see the Lord's character and plan from a different standpoint, and thenceforth to long for it and to pray in the language of the Apostle, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" realizing the blessings that are due to come with that blessed presence – flooding the world with the light of the knowledge of the goodness of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, and bringing to mankind in general all the blessing which divine grace has prearranged, and which divine mercy and truth have declared for the consolation and encouragement of God's people.

## **"THE EARTH ABIDETH FOREVER."**

Notwithstanding the Scriptural statement that "The earth abideth forever" (Eccl. 1:4), all the creeds of Christendom take the same view of this subject that is entertained by our Second Adventist friends; except that the latter expect the burning of the world soon, while the majority of Christendom presume that it will be in the remote future. We do not charge intentional misrepresentation of the divine plan upon any of our Christian brethren. Rather, we say, in the language of our text, that their conceptions are not God's conceptions, and their plans are not the divine plans – they have misunderstood, unintentionally, to their own detriment, the testimony of God's Word on this subject. They have read of the burning of the world, and have remembered in the same connection the account in the Lord's parable, of the burning of the "tares," and have entirely overlooked the fact that these fires are figurative and symbolical, as are the fiery trials which now try us, as God's people, and the furnaces of affliction in which, by divine permission, we have sometimes been refined. (I Pet. 4:12. Isa. 48:10.) In the brief space at our command we cannot take up this subject thoroughly and discuss every text of Scripture bearing upon it, but we will briefly call attention to one, which will serve as a key to others.

We quote from the Prophet (Zeph. 3:8): "Wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for ***all the earth shall be devoured with the fire*** of my jealousy." This is certainly as graphic a picture of the burning day as could be asked for, even by the most zealous advocates of that theory; and they consider that it is quite sufficient to overbalance the other statements of Scripture, to the effect that the "earth abideth forever." They assume, of course, that this burning day will incinerate not only the earth itself, but all of its inhabitants. But a careful reading of the Prophet's succeeding words will make clear to us that this is not the case; but that after the burning day has passed a population will still remain in the earth, and that for a

blessing. We read (verse 9): "Then will I turn to the people [not consumed, but alive and capable] a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." Who could question, in the light of this further statement by the Prophet, that the fire and devastation previously mentioned are figurative – not, however, unreal, but real in another sense, in a figurative sense, instead of in a literal sense.

This burning day, so frequently referred to in the Scriptures, will, to our understanding, be more than a twenty-four-hour day – the day of wrath will be a period of several years' duration, so far as the intensity of its burning is concerned; – a period whose burning will not entirely cease until the close of the Millennial age, by which time it shall have destroyed, root and branch, everything that is evil – everything contrary to righteousness, truth and goodness. This fire of God's jealousy or zeal for righteousness will, we understand, burn in a very natural manner as regards humanity and its affairs. In **[R2971 : page 84]** the present time God is letting the light of truth shine in the world marvelously; not that light only which is shining upon the path of the just, leading God's people onward to the perfect day, but a light is also being reflected now upon the path of the world, opening its eyes to human rights and prerogatives, liberties and privileges, to which formerly it was blinded through ignorance and superstition. As the light now comes in, the result is unrest; and thus the Lord seems to purpose, that the very blessings of this time, the end of this Gospel age, the very condition of things which, rightly received, should be bringing men happiness, is bringing more and more of discontent, and thus leading them step by step into the great period of anarchy which the Scriptures distinctly show will be the fire of trouble in the end of this age, which will consume church and state, religious, political and financial institutions, and reduce the whole world to a general level – "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation." – Dan. 12:1.

This trouble is coming as the direct result of the blessings of our day, the increased enlightenment which we enjoy, and which

selfishness does not permit to take its proper course and to bring proportional blessing for the world as a whole; but, rather, attempts to corral and to apportion merely to the great, the wise, the efficient, allowing the burdens of life to fall with disproportionate weight upon the masses, until the groaning creation shall not only cry out in despair, but will also arise in despair, bringing in the anarchy and disarrangement foretold, – the fire of God's jealousy, which shall consume the whole earth (society in general, in its every department). After this symbolical fire shall have consumed present institutions, on their ruins shall arise the triumphant Kingdom of God, so long foretold – the same for which the Master himself taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." The Prophet, as we have seen, declares that *then* the Lord will turn unto the people "a pure language" – literally, a pure word. In the past and at present the people as a whole have been unable to discern the pure Word of God. They have heard various creeds and theories, more or less reasonable, and the effect of so many "voices" has been to them as a Babel in which they were unable to discern the voice of God. But when the promised day shall have come, and present institutions, religious as well as secular, shall have succumbed to the fierce burning wrath of the people, with all of its attendant miseries and injustices, the mists and fogs of prejudice and superstition will clear away, and the bright orb of truth will shine forth to give mankind a clearer and a better comprehension, not only of the divine character and the divine plan, but of the rights of men, and of the proper course of action and dealing one with another. The results will be blessed, however awful will be the cup of divine wrath which the world will have drunk to its dregs previously; figuratively called "the fire of God's jealousy."

Altho, as thus seen, the fire of God's jealousy will burn itself out quickly in the close of this age, other Scriptures give us to understand that it will not entirely cease until the close of the Millennial age – that it will burn against everything that is contrary to the pure, the good, the true, the right, the just. Evil of every kind shall be burned up root and branch, so that ultimately "all the proud, yea, all that do wickedly, shall

[figuratively] be as stubble and as ashes under the feet," in full subjection to the righteous, who shall then have been brought into full accord with the Lord, and have his blessing unto eternal life.

### **THE REAL OBJECT OF OUR LORD'S RETURN.**

If the real object of our Lord's return could be clearly understood by all of his true people, unquestionably every sincere Christian would be longing and waiting for that event, as the glorious realization of their best hopes and desires, the one without which all others would be valueless, meaningless. The second coming of our Lord is closely related to the first advent as respects the divine plan of salvation. The entrance of sin into our world six thousand years ago (commonly called "original sin") brought to us as a race mental, [R2972 : page 84] moral and physical degeneracy (commonly called "the fall"), the culmination of which is death. According to the Scriptures this death would have been an interminable one, an everlasting one, had God not, in his mercy, provided for our succor – provided a ransom-price in the Lord Jesus and his sacrifice. This redemption provision was accomplished by our Lord at his first advent. We were "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ."

But there is a difference between our redemption and our deliverance, as there is a difference between the purchase of any article and the delivery of it. The world has been purchased with the precious blood; but the world has not been delivered; it is still laboring and heavy laden, under the curse, under original sin, under its weights and difficulties and disadvantages of every kind. What is necessary now? We answer, with the Apostle, that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" – through whom the deliverance is yet to be accomplished. (Rom. 8:19-22.) And when will these sons of God be manifested? The answer is that these sons of God are the elect Church of this Gospel age, who in the present time are being tried and tested; not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, according to their

will, their desires of heart. These sons of God are such as, after the Lord's disciplines and chastenings are passed, will be found in *heart* "copies of God's dear Son," however imperfect they may still be respecting their flesh. These are to be the first who will experience deliverance at the second coming of the Lord. They are variously designated in the Scriptures as "the royal priesthood," under the great high priest; as the members of the body of Christ, under Jesus, as their Head; as the "Bride, the Lamb's Wife." These are the "Jewels," whose number the Lord is to make up in the first resurrection, who shall be his, and joint-heirs with him in the Kingdom. It is for the manifestation of these that the world is waiting, as the Apostle declares, – "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God," and they will not be manifested until the second advent of their Master. "When he shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory." We see, then, that so far as the Church is concerned she is waiting for the completion of the elect number which constitutes her membership – in all, "a little flock," to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom. (Luke 12:32.) We see also that the world of mankind, altho redeemed, must wait still longer – a little longer; for it will not be long after the elect Church shall have been glorified with their Lord, and become his joint-heirs in his Kingdom, until they, with him, as the Sun of Righteousness, shall shine forth with healing in his beams, to bless the world, to scatter its night, to dispel its fogs of superstition and its miasms of error.

From this standpoint it will be seen that the second coming of Christ means, not only the blessing of the Lord's faithful in the First Resurrection, but the blessing of all the families of the earth, even as the Lord promised to father Abraham, saying, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The great mass of mankind have gone down into the prison-house of death unblessed – ignorant of God and of the only name given under heaven or amongst men whereby they must be saved. Even of those who are now living, only a small fraction have ever heard of the great Redeemer and of the great redemption which he has already accomplished in the sacrifice of himself, and of the great deliverance which he is about to effect, through the

establishment of his Kingdom of righteousness, and the subjugation of evil and sin, and the binding of Satan. Not only the living nations, to earth's remotest bound, must all know, that the Year of Jubilee has come, returning ransomed sinners home, but all those who have gone down into death, the great prison-house which now contains approximately fifty thousand millions of our race – all these also must hear the good tidings, for it is to be, according to the angel's promise, "Good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." It is to be, according to the promise made to Abraham, a blessing "to all the families of the earth." Thank God for the redemptive feature of his plan; and thanks also to him for the deliverance feature, shortly to be effected, even tho the introduction of that deliverance be accompanied by a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation – a time of fiery indignation which shall eventually devour all the adversaries of righteousness, and bring in that blessed condition respecting which we are assured that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, to the glory of God – the disobedient and unwilling being destroyed in the Second Death, from which there will be no recovery. – Isa. 45:23; Phil. 2:10; Acts 3:19-23; 2 Thess. 1:9.

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