

"WHAT IS MAN?"

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? for Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor; Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas; O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!" – Psalm 8:3-9.

THE SUGGESTION of the Prophet respecting man is one which we believe has occurred to every intelligent being. As one upon the deep looks out upon the vast expanse of water and the riding of the vessel upon it, he thinks, How little is man! How small a speck in the Universe! When we look up into the heavens and realize that they represent so much more of Divine power, we are still more surprised. When we consider the heavens, and realize that all these stars, except the planets which belong to our own system, are really suns, and that around each of these suns revolve planets, as our earth revolves around our sun, and when we think of the number of these suns and their planets, we are amazed, and we feel our own littleness all the more!

We ask astronomers as to the *number* of these suns, and they tell us that there are a hundred millions of them in sight. And if we would average the planets around these hundred million suns at ten, it would be ten hundred millions of planets. And then they tell us, further, that if we could take our stand upon the very farthestmost one of these we would see still beyond us as many more, and as many more.

Our minds are appalled as we begin to think of the heavens, the work of God's fingers, and then consider *man*, how small a work in God's sight! We have an appreciation then of what the Scriptures say man is like in God's sight – as "the dust in the balance," that is not

worthy to be taken into account. We have all been in the grocer's shop and noticed that he pays no attention to the dust in the scoop of his scale. So man is so small in the sight of the great Creator that we wonder that God should have any interest at all in humanity.

"THOU MADEST HIM TO HAVE DOMINION"

Except for the Bible we should have no knowledge of God's interest in us, and we might think that God is so great that He would pay no heed to us. But, when God reveals Himself to us in the Bible, we begin to see that there is not only Divine power exercised and manifested in the creation of all these worlds, but we see also this Divine power manifested in God's dealings with us, and also the *love* of God, which the Scriptures state "passeth all understanding." What wonderful condescension on the part of the Creator that He should give heed to us!

But our text goes on to give us further information on this subject: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him? for Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels." *Only a little* lower is the thought! Of the holy angels the Scriptures give us to understand there are various ranks, some higher and some lower, but all perfect. Then in the world we have various orders of animal life – the beast of the field, the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air – and man, as the highest of these earthly beings; and he stands related to all these lower creatures as God does to the entire Universe; and this is the honor with which our great Creator endowed His human creatures!

So we are told in this Psalm, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet." What a wonderful creature man is, then, from *this* standpoint! While he is a little lower than the angels, so far as his nature in connection with the earth is concerned, and whereas the angels are more excellent so far as their natures are concerned, this Psalm speaks of man as being

superior in that he has a dominion. The angels do not have dominion over other angels, but all are subject to the great Creator, God.

But man, in the likeness of his Creator, has been given a dominion over the lower creatures, and in this respect it is a wonderful honor with which he has been crowned – "Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and hast set him over the works of Thy hands."

It might be asked with great propriety, If God is thus careful of humanity and has so highly honored His human creatures, why should He not have made a still better preparation for them in the world? Why is it that they are subject to the unfavorable conditions under which they now exist? Why are there sorrow, pain, sighing, crying and dying? Why are there tempests, storms, cyclones and tornadoes, famine, drought and pestilence – why all these things if God is so careful of us as His creatures?

We would have no answer for all these questions were it not provided in the Bible. In this wonderful Book of all books, we have the key to the matter, the explanation, **[R4972 : page 60]** and that is: God provided originally that man should be subject to none of these difficulties and disasters. Man was made perfect and placed in favorable and perfect surroundings, in a perfect garden, eastward in Eden, with everything necessary for his welfare – no storms, no sickness, no tempests, no difficulties – and he might have lived forever. Such was the wonderful dominion of this human son of God.

Why, then, the change? This wonderful Book answers that the change all came about because of sin. And so we read: "By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world (there was no sin in the world before), and death as a result of sin." (Rom. 5:12.) There was no dying on the part of man until sin came. So all the aches, pains, sorrows and sicknesses which we experience are parts of this dying process. And so the difficulty with us all is that by nature we are "children of wrath."

Is Divine wrath eternal torture? No, indeed! That teaching was handed down to us, perhaps, by our well-meaning forefathers. The wrath of God, we see on every hand; as the Apostle Paul declares, "The wrath of God is revealed" – in our own bodies, our aches and pains, mental imperfections, physical imperfections and moral imperfections – these are all parts of this great penalty for sin. We read that when man became a transgressor God sent a holy angel to drive our first parents out from the Garden of Eden, away from the trees of life that were to sustain them in perfection, out into the unfinished earth.

While the whole earth could just as easily have been made perfect, God left it unfinished, unprepared for man, and merely "prepared a garden eastward in Eden" for the trial of our first parents, because Divine wisdom foresaw [R4973 : page 60] that man would sin; and instead of making the whole earth perfect, God left it in an imperfect condition, except the Garden of Eden. So we read that when God thrust our first parents out of the Garden of Eden, He said, "Cursed is the earth [not I will *make* it unfit, but it *is already*] for thy sake, thorns and thistles shall it bring forth, and in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread until thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

In other words, the great penalty against our race is a *death penalty* – "Dying, thou shalt die." (Gen. 2:17.) This has been upon our race for six thousand years, from the time that sin entered into the world. So all the pages of history from Adam's day to this are marked with sin and sorrow, pain and sighing, because we are all sinners; and *because* we are sinners, God is treating us according to His own purpose, "Dying, thou shalt *die*."

But this is the sad side of the matter. Is there no other side, is there no *hope* for us? The same blessed Book – the Bible – tells us. The Gospel Message, which signifies "good tidings," declares that God has some good message for those whom He condemned to death.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL MESSAGE?

We inquire, What is this good message? The Scriptures answer that the good message is that He who condemned us as unfit for eternal life has provided for our redemption; that His Son became our Redeemer; that Christ died, the "Just for the unjust," that He might bring all back into harmony with God. O, some may say, but did not Jesus die eighteen hundred or more years ago? Yes, truly. And have we not the same reign of sin and death as then? Yes. Where, then, is the blessing which was to come through Jesus? Well, we answer, a two-fold blessing has been provided. First of all, there is a blessing of hope, which some of God's people enjoy, a blessing of knowledge, that in God's "due time" He will bring in the wonderful things of which this Gospel Message tells.

God having provided a Redeemer, there will be a resurrection of the dead; they shall not remain dead, but come forth. There shall be a New Dispensation, a glorious morning, in which all sin and sorrow will be done away. So the Scriptures assure us of that time that there shall be no more sighing, no more crying, no more dying, because all the former things, all the things of sin, the things of death, will have passed away.

"THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION"

And, we inquire, who is so powerful as to overthrow sin and death, and lift up humanity and bring them back from sin and weakness and imperfection and death? The Bible answers this question, that the One who will do this is the Great One who sits upon the Throne of God; as we read, "He that sitteth upon the Throne said, Behold, I make all things new!"

But who is this? O, the very same One, who, by the grace of God, became our Redeemer – Jesus. He is to be the great King of kings and Lord of lords, and is to "reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." And under the blessed influence of that

Kingdom the full blessing of God will come to the earth again! "All the blind eyes shall be opened, and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together." These are words of the Prophets given to us for our hope and the strengthening of our hearts, that we might turn from sin and become more and more the children of God.

We have referred to the world and how it is to be blessed by the Messianic Kingdom, the Kingdom of God's dear Son, the Kingdom for which Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." But we see not all these things accomplished yet. We see not mankind brought back to perfection, nor the promise of the good tidings fulfilled amongst men. But we have a word from the Apostle upon this subject. He said, "But we see not yet all things put under man"; they are still out of harmony. But, says the Apostle, we see a beginning of God's work; we see Jesus, who, "by the grace of God, has tasted death for every man." We see more than that. More than eighteen hundred years have passed. Not only has Jesus tasted death, but a great many have been going into death, in answer to the call to be of the Bride of Christ, the Church of the First-born, to be associated with our Lord. This is the Church we sing about in our hymn: –

"The Church's one Foundation,
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His New Creation
By water and the Word.
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy Bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died."

This, then, is the first work of God in the redemption of mankind – the gathering of the Bride of Christ, the Church, to share in His glory, honor and immortality. We hope to be of this class; and to this class

belong the great promises that they shall share with Him in the First Resurrection, and then bless all the families of the earth with restitution. The world of mankind is to be restored to all that Adam had and lost, for all of which Jesus died at Calvary; and associated with Him will be the Church, called out of the world, a saintly class who have been walking in the footsteps of Jesus; as we read again, [R4973 : page 61] "Blessed and holy are they who have part in the First Resurrection, on such the Second Death hath no power; they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." – Rev. 20:6.

This will be the thousand years of Messiah's reign, the thousand years of the world's uplift, the thousand years in which Satan will be bound, the thousand years in which knowledge shall fill the whole earth, the thousand years in which the earth shall be brought to the Paradisaic condition, which was symbolically represented in the Garden of Eden – and when every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth shall be brought to that glorious condition where they will sing praises to God that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.

And yet there is another side; for the same Scriptures which tell of the exaltation of the Church to glory and the blessings of the world through the Kingdom of Messiah, which tell that the earth will be the Paradise of God – these Scriptures also tell us of a class of incorrigibles who will be punished. After this class shall have been brought to a full knowledge of God and shall wilfully sin against Divine light and blessings, the punishment against these will be, not eternal torment, but *destruction* from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. – I Thess. 1:9.

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