

## THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND HER MISSION

THERE CAN be no question that the Church of Christ is an Ecclesia, a Body, and that Christ Jesus is the Head of the "Church, which is His Body." (Eph. 1:22,23.) There can be no question that the different members of the Church are being called – drawn by a selective process – from the world of mankind. The testimony of the Scriptures as to the object of the call seems also to be clear. The Apostle Peter says that the Church is a people for a purpose; that is, God has a special object or purpose in selecting the Church. They are to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light," "that men may see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven." – I Pet. 2:9; Matt. 5:16.

We ask respecting the object of this shining of the light, and the Scriptures answer that it will have an effect upon the world, reprovng mankind and setting before them an example of better living, better thinking. We ask whether this is the ultimate object of the call. The Scriptures answer that it is not; that the Church is called out to be a privileged people and to become joint-heirs with her Lord in His Kingdom. We ask further, whether He really is to have a Kingdom. The Scriptures answer, Yes; at the end of this Gospel Age He will come, not as a Sin-Offering, but as a great King, Prophet, Judge, to *dispense* the blessings *secured* by *His death*. We ask respecting the share of the Church at the present time. The answer comes that those who faithfully follow the Lamb through good report and evil report, who take up their cross and follow Jesus, will be accounted worthy to be His associates in the Kingdom.

## THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

We ask whether the Church will be able to combat the evil tendencies in the world. The answer is, Yes; Satan will be bound for a thousand years, that he shall deceive the nations no more till the

thousand years shall have been fulfilled. During those years the Savior's mission will be to bless mankind as the "Sun of Righteousness," with "*healing*" in His beams; and the Church is to have a share with Him in the blessing of the world. We ask whether this is some *new proposition* God has made; and the answer comes, No; this was God's Plan and purpose from *before the foundation of the world*. This is the Gospel, or good tidings, first declared to Abraham: "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." – Gen. 12:3, etc.

God intended to bless all the members of the human race, all nations and kindreds and tongues, and purposed that the blessing should come to them through the Seed of Abraham. The Jewish nation were merely the *typical seed*; the *antitypical Seed* is The Christ (Jesus the Head and the Church His Body), who will "bless all the families of the earth." But the world must wait for its blessing until the Church shall have been completed, shall have passed the veil, and shall sit with Christ in His Throne.

Asked as to the success of the blessing which will attend the work of the Church, the Scriptures answer that "Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess"; [R5057 : page 214] and that the knowledge of God shall fill the whole earth. As to whether this means a *universal salvation* – that everybody will be saved – the answer is that God has provided that as all died in Adam, so all are to be revived, brought back to the privilege of attaining everlasting life, through the merit of Christ's sacrifice; but that the *attainment* of everlasting life will depend upon the manner in which the *privilege is used*. None will be *coerced* or compelled.

The majority of mankind have such respect for righteousness that if its rewards were as sure and as desirable as are those of sin, unquestionably they would prefer to do right. Many tell us that they have been almost *forced* to do evil. Only the very few are willing to renounce sin and to walk in the narrow way of obedience and self-sacrifice. While those who do so in this Age are to have a very special

reward, others who love righteousness and hate iniquity will, under the rule of Christ's Kingdom, have every *assistance* without *compulsion*. They will have co-operation in their endeavors for righteousness. The Scriptures, however, with equal force declare that as *death* was the *original penalty* of sin in Adam's case, so it will *always* be the penalty for sin; and that whoever during the future Age sins wilfully shall die the Second Death, from which there will be no resurrection, no redemption, no hope of recovery.

## THE EARTH IS TO BE MAN'S FUTURE HOME

Before sin had entered into the world, the Divine provision for our first parents was the Garden of Eden. As we think of this, let our minds turn to the future, guided by the Word of God; and in mental vision we see Paradise restored – not a *garden* merely, but the *entire earth* made beautiful, fruitful, sinless, happy. Then we recall the inspired promise so familiar to us – "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain," for the former things of sin and death will have passed away, and all things will have been made new! – Rev. 21:4,5.

Recalling St. Peter's words of assurance respecting these glorious "Times of Restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets since the world began," we see that in God's "due time" the earth is to be brought to the perfection primarily designed for it, and *typed* in *Eden*. We believe that time to be near at hand. We see the promised blessings coming. What are our vast irrigation schemes by artesian wells and by aqueducts but fulfilments of the prophecies pertaining to the reign of Christ and the blessing of the earth! "In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." – Isa. 35:6,1.

The Scriptures tell us that after God had created various orders of *spirit beings* He made *man*, "a little lower than the angels." (Psa. 8:5.) The human race began with Adam and Eve, who had ability to

grasp and appreciate the Divine arrangement, as the brute creation have not. God made man in His own likeness. The fact that sin came in and brought Father Adam under the sentence of death does not signify that the Heavenly Father had changed His arrangement. The *purpose* which He had "in the beginning" *has never changed*.

We can see a reason why the entire world was not made an Eden; namely, God intended to give the race a *trial*. According to the record of the Scriptures, if the first pair had maintained their righteousness, their holiness, [R5058 : page 214] they would have continued to be perfect and would have propagated a *perfect race*; and if sin had not come in, God would have been responsible for their maintenance. But God, foreseeing that sin would come in, merely made Eden perfect, and allowed the remainder of the earth to continue in an unfinished condition. Consequently God said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." – Gen. 3:17-19.

### **EARTH'S IMPERFECTION IS FALLEN MAN'S BLESSING**

God could have made the entire earth perfect as easily as He "planted" the little garden in Eden. But He foresaw that if the earth were perfected the *death-struggle* would be *longer*, and the *degradation* of man *greater*. The poverty of the world has assisted in keeping mankind back from greater depths of iniquity. The sentence, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," was evidently intended as a blessing, that man might learn lessons of experience by battling with the earth for his living. As the Creator said to the man regarding the curse of the earth, it was "*for thy* [man's] *sake*." So man has learned that "The *wages* of *sin* is *death*." The Heavenly Father has not, however, changed His Plan. When the Kingdom is set up, the earth shall yield her increase; and God assures us, "I will make the place of My feet glorious." – Isa. 60:13.

Edison has been the instrument of Providence in giving us wonderful electrical devices. Burbank and others have, under Divine guidance, worked miracles in horticulture. What beautiful fruits and flowers have followed as results! It is difficult to imagine anything nearer perfection either in Eden of old or the world-wide Eden to be established! In referring to the "Times of Restitution" the Prophet declares that "the earth shall yield her increase." (Psa. 67:6.) We behold preparations for the fulfilment of this promise.

A few years ago a Virginia farmer found an abnormal stool of wheat – one hundred and forty-two stalks, each bearing a well-developed head – the offspring of a single grain of wheat! Under the name of "Miracle Wheat" it is now being developed slowly in various parts of the country. The average yield appears to be about twelve hundred grains from one kernel. This very year the same peculiarity in oats has been found, a stool growing wild by the roadside. The same Divine Providence is, additionally, guiding our chemists in economical methods of extracting nitrogen from the atmosphere for feeding the soil, and thus to increase earth's blessings, in fulfillment of God's promise that He will make His footstool glorious.

Why has not the earth been already made glorious? The answer is that God is allowing the race to propagate first. Had mankind been perfect, they might have learned the lesson of the sinfulness of sin in the same way that the angels have learned. But hastening to commit sin, they have learned *evil* first and have been subject to all the vicissitudes of sin and death. The angels have learned the other lesson – what righteousness is, what good is – not merely in the abstract, but in an appreciative sense.

## **MANKIND WILL LEARN A SECOND LESSON**

God is now selecting the Church. As soon as the *Church* shall have been completed, then *mankind* will have opportunity to learn the lesson of righteousness, the knowledge of God, and will be raised up out of sin and death, out of the weaknesses that have come to them through sin.

This uplifting time is definitely marked out in the Scriptures as "Times of Restitution" – the restoration [R5058 : page 215] of that which was lost. Since that which was lost was *human perfection* and *Edenic bliss*, mankind will not get *heavenly* things, but *earthly* blessings. God's will shall be accomplished. The world will be brought to perfection during the thousand years of Messiah's reign. The most important piece of Restitution work relates to man. The hard, stony selfishness of heart, which is world-wide, is neither God-likeness nor to God's glory.

"Man's inhumanity to man  
Makes countless thousands mourn."

Nineteen centuries of preaching show that the cure for this malady is not in our power; and that only the few even desire to seek for the Lord's spirit of gentleness and tender-heartedness. But the great King of Glory is also the Good Physician. He alone can cure the disease of sin and its results. Through Him God's promise to Israel will be fulfilled: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." (Ezek. 36:26.) This work will proceed from Israel to all the families of the earth, uplifting all the *willing and obedient* out of sin and death to all that was lost in Eden and redeemed at Calvary. Thank God, the *unwilling* and *disobedient* will not be consigned to endless torture, but to the "Second Death" – "everlasting destruction." The perfected earth will abide forever for the glorious being, *man*.

## THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

God has purposed to make a New Creation. Incidentally He takes the opportunity to call the Church to be associated with her Lord in the divine nature, far above principalities and powers and every name that is named. Thus eventually, when all wilful sinners shall have been blotted out, we find, as the Scriptures state, that "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea" will be heard saying, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." (Rev. 5:13.) Thus the Lord will gather together all the faithful, both in heaven

and in earth, under the headship of Christ, whose Head is Jehovah.  
– Eph. 1:10.

