

THE LIFE-RIGHTS OF THE ANCIENT WORTHIES

RIGHT TO LIFE is one thing, but right to eternal life is another. Adam had the right to live, which would have been eternal if by obedience he had demonstrated his worthiness to live forever. So with the Ancient Worthies; when raised from the dead they will have the right to live, but only through the Mediator. They will not have life-rights of their own, for there are no such rights except those which are recognized by the Father and Justice. The Apostle Paul tells us that already the Ancient Worthies have the Divine approval. But although they pleased God, He did not give them eternal life; and although they shall please the Mediator, He will not turn them over to the Father, to Justice, until the end of the Millennial Age.

The Scriptures say also that *all live* unto God (Luke 20:38), for from His standpoint they only sleep. (See Deut. 31:16; John 11:11, etc.) Not the Ancient Worthies alone, but the rest of the world live unto God in the same sense, although they were not counted *acceptable* to Him. He has made provision for them through the Mediator, but that provision will not be complete until the end of the Millennial Age. The Ancient Worthies, approved of God, had this testimony, that they "pleased God," in that they came up to the standard – perfection of heart-intention and obedience to the extent of ability. While He approved them, nevertheless they did not have eternal life given them nor was any right to eternal life recognized.

God has, however, made provision whereby all of Adam's race will be redeemed and have the *opportunity* of gaining eternal life. This provision will, of course, include not only the Ancient Worthies, but also the remainder of mankind.

LIFE THROUGH THE MEDIATOR

This arrangement made by God is not, however, outside of the Mediator, for through the Mediator alone will mankind, including the Ancient Worthies, obtain eternal life. (The only exception to this provision of the Mediator is the Church Class, who come to the Father through Christ's acting as their Advocate.) Hence the Ancient Worthies cannot come by any different route. They must be recognized of the Father through the Mediator; for since they are not joint-heirs with Christ, they must come in under the other class, during the period in which the Mediator will deal with the world as a whole. The process of dealing with the world as a whole will go on, and not until the end of the Millennium will The Christ deliver any of them over to the Father.

The Lord Jehovah has made a plan by which he can, through His Son, deal with mankind. That plan is that "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." (John 5:22.) Hence the Father, aside from His Son, did not judge the Ancient Worthies. But they may expect a blessing in God's own time and season – in "due time" – when Messiah will have taken His power and begun His reign; and particularly at the end of that reign, when the Son shall have delivered up the Kingdom to the Father. – I Cor. 15:24.

The Father is not taking any cognizance of this arrangement for the blessing of the world, but is leaving it all for the great Messiah, who will be their Mediator, their great High Priest, making reconciliation, mediation. When the mediation, arranged for from before the foundation of the world, shall have been accomplished, it will be satisfactory to the Ancient Worthies, who will have been "rulers in all the earth," and to mankind as a whole.

ANCIENT WORTHIES UNDER THE MEDIATOR

The question as to whether the Ancient Worthies will have life-rights when they come forth, may be viewed from different

standpoints. According to the teaching of the Scriptures, whoever is *perfect* is worthy of eternal life. We understand the Scriptures to teach that the Ancient Worthies will come forth from the tomb perfect, lacking nothing. We would be inclined to say, then, that being perfect they would come within the Divine arrangement that whoever is perfect shall live. But we must remember that God is the Judge of all. (Heb. 12:23.) Yet, even so far as the Ancient Worthies are concerned, they will not have direct dealings with God during the Millennial Age. Personally, *they* will be ready thus to deal; but God in His wisdom has seen fit to deal with them through the Redeemer, the Prophet or Teacher, the Priest, the Mediator of the whole world of mankind. And since the whole world of mankind is not ready to be turned over to the Father, the Ancient Worthies must wait until the remainder are delivered over into the hands of the Father, the Great Judge of all.

At the end of the Millennium, the whole world of perfected humanity will be turned over to the Father. (I Cor. 15:24.) As soon as He accepts them they will stand in the same position in which Adam stood when He was perfect. But as Adam was required to be tested, so the whole world of mankind will be tested in that same condition of perfection in which Adam was. Divine Justice must test their *worthiness* of life eternal before it will be granted.

SECOND RANK IN THE WORK OF SALVATION

The various statements regarding the Ancient Worthies all give the impression that, by their *voluntary course*, they reached the point where they were pleasing to God. And the Apostle Paul declares that these Ancient Worthies all *died* in faith, not having received the blessing of eternal life, because God had some better thing for us, the Church, that they *without us* should not be *made perfect*. (Heb. 11:13,39,40.) In other words, while they had the testimony that they pleased God, they are not to have *first rank*, but *second*, in the work of salvation. They could not receive their blessing, their perfection, until, in the outworking of the Divine Plan, Messiah has taken His

Kingdom and His Bride has been perfected. Then they shall have their restitution blessings.

The fact that the Apostle says also that the Ancient Worthies desired "a better resurrection," implies that the [R5074 : page 244] resurrection given to them will be better than that given to the remainder of mankind, in that they will be worthy of having perfection of life at the time of first coming forth from the tomb, while the resurrection of the others will be *gradual* after they come forth. "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets" – all the Ancient Worthies – will be awakened from death fully restored to human perfection; and will not require a "resurrection by judgment," a thousand years long, as will the residue of mankind.

These Ancient Worthies will come back in exactly the same condition that Adam was before the fall; but they will have the advantage of greater experience than he had. Adam was perfect; these will be perfect. Adam had *no experience* with sin; these will have had *much experience* with sin. These experiences tended to develop character; that is to say, they brought about a favorable determination in respect to righteousness; the testing that came to them was to demonstrate their obedience to God, their loyalty to His will. To maintain this loyalty many of them laid down their lives.

While these Ancient Worthies will have neither part nor lot in the Spiritual Kingdom, because not called thereto – that high, or "Heavenly calling" not being possible until after the Ransom had been laid down by our Lord Jesus – yet they will occupy a position of preferment above the world, having attested their faith and love during the reign of evil, in a manner approved of God. Thus they were prepared and proved worthy to be the earthly ministers and representatives of the Spiritual Kingdom. In harmony with this it is written by the Prophet David, as addressed to *The Christ* – "Instead of [being longer considered] Thy fathers [they] shall be Thy children,

whom Thou mayest make Princes [chief ones, captains] in all the earth." – Psa. 45:16.

The resurrection of these Ancient Worthies will also be "better" than that of the remainder of mankind in that they were tried severely during their life and received a "good report through faith," and will have attained the reward of that faithfulness. They will be perfect men, having completely restored to them all that was lost in Adam – mental and moral likeness to God, and perfection of physical powers.

ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER-DEVELOPMENT

If these Worthies of the past have had large experience with sin and have proved themselves faithful in that they remained loyal to God, even unto death, why should they not receive *life-rights* as well as *perfection of life* at once? Why should they be obliged to wait until the end of the Millennial Age for recognition by Jehovah, instead of receiving it at the beginning? The answer is that God has included the whole world in the Mediatorial work of Messiah, as He has included all the Church in the preparatory work of the Royal Priesthood, through the great Advocate, the Redeemer; and the Mediator's work will continue for a thousand years. Hence, all who come under that work will be obliged to wait for the end of that Epoch before the recognition of any of them will be effected.

The Ancient Worthies "had this testimony that they pleased God." They pleased Him in that when they ascertained His will they set about doing it, even before He gave it to them as a Law, or obligation, even before He could ask them to obey Him and promise them eternal life for their obedience. Abraham, one of these, manifested his faith in God although there was no redemption yet accomplished in the world. Christ had not yet come. And although Abraham was not on trial for life or for death, God granted him His favor and declared that he *pleased Him*. He and all those Ancient Worthies will have this resurrection to human perfection. But since human perfection – to the world of mankind – will come only under the Mediatorial reign of

Christ, the Ancient Worthies cannot be introduced to the Father until the close of the Millennial Age.

Hence they will not have life in its fullest sense until the time when at the close of the Millennial Age the Kingdom shall have been delivered over to the Father. What they will have in the meantime – during the thousand-year period – will be perfection of human nature and all the blessings that God provides for mankind through the great Mediator.

ESTABLISHED CHARACTER NECESSARY

If perfection of *organism* makes *character*, then Adam was perfect in this respect. He was created perfect in mind and body. His mind was in the image of God; no blemish was there, no preference for sin, but the reverse of this; he had an appreciation of righteousness and a tendency toward it; he was all that would constitute a *good* man, for *God so made him*.

In another sense, Adam never had perfect character; that is, he had no character *developed, tested* and *proved*. God tried him, and because of his inexperience he failed, even though his character was good and his organism perfect. He failed in the very first feature of his trial. So we might wonder in what manner the Ancient Worthies received any testing which would constitute a full proof of character. When we examine the records of these men we find that they manifested great faith, and that they endured some severe ordeals and testings of their loyalty to God and their confidence in Him. It does not surprise us, then, that the testimony that they pleased God was given respecting them. This assures us that they had considerable character development. God must have seen their *hearts* to be very loyal, else He never would have considered them worthy of a better resurrection. Yet we believe they will have need of further experience and testing.

These Ancient Worthies will not be begotten of the Holy Spirit, as is the Church; but we are informed that "*after those days*" God will "pour out His Spirit upon *all flesh*." (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17.) The Ancient Worthies lived prior to the time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, therefore, if they receive any measure of this blessing to come upon "all flesh," it must be in the future, and the giving of the Holy Spirit to them will have much to do with fixing, establishing, crystallizing their already perfect characters. They will be brought to greater knowledge, and having already endured severe testings and having proved their thorough heart-loyalty, they will have to learn only how to use their talents and powers in fullest conformity to the Divine will.

While this class will be *mortal* and hence liable to death, it is almost unthinkable that any of these would come short of eternal life. Men who have stood crucial tests under conditions of ignorance and superstition, who have endured temptation from the world, the flesh and the Adversary, and proved loyal under such conditions, would, it is only reasonable to suppose, maintain their perfection under the more favorable conditions of the Millennial Age.

It is not probable that they would make mistakes; but if, upon their awakening, they should be at once turned over to Jehovah, and, as in Adam's case, the slightest deflection would mean *death*, we can see that their position would be much less favorable than it will be under the New Covenant arrangement during the Millennial reign of Christ. This is a very gracious arrangement for their **[R5074 : page 245]** best interests, for any possible mistake would be covered by Christ's mediation and not bring them under sentence of death.

The history of some of these Ancient Worthies is very meager and does not always imply that they were "overcomers" in the sense in which the Church is to be. Take, for example, the case of Samson, who is mentioned as one of these Ancient Worthies. The last we read of Samson, still in the hands of the Philistines, is that he was still loyal

to God and prayed for the opportunity of serving God's cause; the Lord granted his prayer, permitting him to push down the pillars of the building in which he was making sport for the Philistines; they were the middle pillars upon which the house stood, and in its fall more than three thousand of the enemies of the Israelites were killed along with himself.

Faith seems to have been the chief element of character that was developed under Samson's experiences. We do not know how much patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, gentleness, meekness, etc., were developed in his character; nothing is stated in regard to the matter and we have no reason to suppose that Samson was a very gentle man. Indeed, we have never thought of gentleness and meekness as being amongst his characteristics. The slaying of one thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass, as well as other experiences of his, would not seem to indicate this.

We may reasonably suppose, therefore, that although Samson will be brought back in an absolutely perfect condition, and under the favorable environments of the Millennial Age, there will probably be experiences in life that he never encountered and that will be so new to him that he might be in danger of making mistakes. Assuredly he will have much to learn respecting the things of the Spirit of God, in the days of the blessing of "all flesh."

Summing up, we would say, The Ancient Worthies will not come into actual and personal relationship to God, so as to be determined worthy of eternal life, until the completion of the Millennial Age, because that Age is set apart for the very purpose of determining who of all mankind may have eternal life – aside from the spirit-begotten ones of the present time. At the close of the Millennial Age, when all mankind shall have reached perfection of being, they shall be tried of the Father for their *worthiness* or *unworthiness* of eternal life – just as Adam, while enjoying perfection, was tested as to whether or not he was worthy to have his life made perpetual.

Since the Ancient Worthies will be a part of the world under the New Covenant arrangements, it follows that they will not have the decision of the Divine Court, Divine Justice, respecting their worthiness of eternal life, until the completion of the Millennial Age, until the conclusion of the trial at the end of that Age, which will bring to them, as it will bring to all others who are faithful, the great reward of life eternal.

