

THE WORLD CALLED TO REPENTANCE

"God now commandeth men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." – Acts 17:30,31.

WHEN GOD sentenced Father Adam to death He very properly said nothing about repentance, for He offered Adam no hope of a future life. If, then, no hope of a future life was known to Adam or revealed to him, why should God deal with him at all? Adam was sentenced to death, to destruction. There is no basis upon which to command a man to repent unless something is offered him as a reward for repentance.

God had put upon Adam the sentence of death, which could be removed only by the payment of a ransom-price. God fully intended that some day all mankind should have an opportunity of coming into harmony with Him and of having another trial, or judgment, for life; but it was not His due time to explain His program. Therefore, Adam lived and died without any command whatever to repent. And so did his children.

The first intimation of what God might do was given by the Prophet Enoch. But the revelation made by Enoch was not a sufficient basis for offering hope to mankind nor for telling them to repent. – Jude 14,15.

A SUGGESTION OF HOPE FOR THE WORLD

So years passed by until the time of Abraham. Then God told Abraham that He would reveal a secret to him, because Abraham was His friend. That secret was not a message to be preached, but to be believed by himself and by those who would be heirs of that promise, which was not yet applicable to any outside of Abraham's descendants. The secret was, "In thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 28:14.) I intend to bless the world, Abraham.

If you are obedient to My instructions, your Seed will get the blessing and transmit it to the world in general. It was only by implication, therefore, that Abraham had any suggestion that a life of repentance would be rewarded.

In due time God called the children of Israel and dealt with them through Moses. Practically He said, "Do you wish to be My people? If so, come now, enter into a covenant with Me; I will be your God and you shall be My people." – Lev. 26:12.

Israel was not commanded to repent, nor were any of the rest of the world. It was an *invitation*, not a command. God was ready to make a covenant with them. That covenant was that they were to obey the Law, and that by their obedience to the Ten Commandments and the spirit of their covenant they would become God's people. But when they tried to keep the Law they found that they could not do so, because of inherited weakness. Hence there was nothing more to be said to them along that line. They had had their opportunity and they had failed.

THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

When Jesus came He kept the Law, and inherited all the promises of the Law Covenant. Then He offered a share of the Kingdom which God had promised to set up (Dan. 2:44), and blessing, honor and glory to as many of the Jews as would come into harmony with Him, as many as would walk in His steps of self-sacrifice and thus have God's favor. (John 1:12.) In substance He [**R5083 : page 260**] said, "This is the way. Trust in Me and walk in My steps. Thus you shall be My disciples. You shall share in My sufferings now, and by and by in My glory and Kingdom."

In due time, after a certain number had been gathered from the Jews, this message was extended to all the Gentiles who were in the right condition of heart. The Gentiles not having indicated their desire to come back into harmony with God as the Jewish nation had done, God then commanded them everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30.) This

He did through those who were the representatives of His teaching, the Apostles and the Church. In proportion as they understood the Plan of God and were in harmony with it, they could tell their neighbors that a new condition had been established and that God would deal henceforth with the Gentiles.

THE RANSOM THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE WORLD

Why should God deal with the Gentiles now, when He had refused to deal with them before? The explanation of this new condition is that Christ had died, and God's great Plan had now matured enough to be made applicable to all men everywhere. God had appointed a day in which to judge the world in righteousness. (Acts 17:30,31.) That great Day is the next Age, the Day of Christ, the Day of Messiah's Kingdom. God has made this provision for the redemption of all through the death of Christ. Mankind were all under the death sentence, and God could not deal with them until that sentence was lifted, or until provision was made for lifting it. He has not annulled the death sentence, but He has provided a Ransom for all. – I Tim. 2:6.

Whoever knows of this Plan of redemption knows that God intends to give every individual of Adam's race an *individual* trial for life. That trial will not be merely to determine whether mankind will try to do right and battle against all the evil influences of the world, but God will subdue sin and uplift all of Adam's race who are desirous of being uplifted.

God has declared that no member of Adam's race need die. Everyone who will may return to God through the great Atonement to be effected by the Redeemer. He has not completed this work yet, but to those who have an ear to hear, the word has gone out that there is to be a future trial, and that the manner of one's life *now* will have a bearing upon that trial. It is proper to tell this now, because the provision has been made through Christ's death.

THE PRESENT MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

Prior to the Gospel Age it was of no use to tell the people to come into harmony with God. But now the whole world is to be brought into a trial to help them and not to condemn them – a trial to see whether they are worthy to have the everlasting life that God will provide for them and assist the willing to attain. Wherever people are willing to hear, the message is, Repent! repent! Cease from sin, and this reformation of character will have an influence upon your everlasting life.

If one is not of the Church class he is not on trial for life or death. But it will be to his advantage to live uprightly, for there is a time of reckoning coming. God has provided for this day of trial in the death of Christ. Beforehand, however, the Lord is selecting a Church class. The Lord is thus preparing a great class of missionaries who will do everything possible to assist men out of sin and degradation back to harmony with God.

In times past God acted as though He did not notice when sin was committed – unless it was a grievous sin. Then He merely took the lives of the sinners under unpleasant conditions – they went to sleep. The Prophet Ezekiel says that God took all of the Sodomites away as He saw good. (Ezek. 16:50.) After the Church's trial, or judgment, shall have been finished and the overcomers shall have been found worthy, then, in that time of the world's judgment, the Sodomites will have an opportunity as had the Jews who heard Jesus at the first advent. And it will be much more tolerable then for the people of Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Gomorrah than it will be for the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, etc.; for the latter had had opportunities of knowledge, against which they had sinned; they therefore had more wilfulness in the matter than did the Sodomites. – See Matt. 11:21-24.

At that time God had sent no command to the Sodomites to repent. So God merely "winked at" (overlooked) the ignorance and sin of that time. (Acts 17:30.) He neither threatened nor did anything else in the

matter. He merely blotted the Sodomites out of existence. Their fate served as a foreshadowing, as the Apostle says, that God will not forever permit mankind to remain in sin, but that He will destroy the sinner. None shall be destroyed, however, until first he shall have had the opportunity for everlasting life, secured for every member of Adam's race, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

JESUS' RESURRECTION THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FAVOR

The Apostle recognizes the fact that the judgment had not begun in his day. He points forward to the Day of Christ and declares that God's assurance now set before the world of mankind is that there will be a future time of judgment. Through Christ's sacrificial death the opportunity for everlasting life will come to all. Mankind have already been condemned in Adam. They could not have another trial until the condemnation of the first trial was lifted. Therefore, not until God had provided a Redeemer would He command any to repent. The Apostle says that God's assurance to mankind in this matter is based upon the fact that He had raised Christ from the dead. – Acts 17:31.

When God had raised Jesus from the dead it became a testimony that His was a sacrificial death, an acceptable offering. And Jesus' ascension was a still further demonstration that this One whom the Father had raised from the dead by His own power, was to be the great King to rule, the great Priest to succor, assist and instruct, and the great Judge to direct and order the affairs of the world and to give proper rewards in the great Day of God.

Whoever therefore hears about Jesus' death and resurrection should understand that this was God's redemption arrangement. They should also be informed that mankind are all sinners and that death is the penalty of sin. If any should ask, How does Jesus' death affect humanity? we show that God has highly exalted Him to be a Savior. In God's due time, as soon as the elect class shall have been completed and the reign of six thousand years of sin and evil shall have ended,

then He will grant redemption from sin to all – to the Jew first and afterwards to the Gentile.

As many as hear *now* should *repent*; but as many as do not hear in the present time are not commanded by God to repent. St. Paul's thought seems to be, Repent now and thus influence your future conditions, even if you do not wish to become a member of the Body of Christ. Thousands of millions of mankind have gone down into death. When they are awakened during the period of Messiah's reign, this will be the great message – "God has opened up a fountain for cleansing from sin and uncleanness. Whosoever will may partake of the **[R5084 : page 261]** blessing and reconciliation with God and thereby attain everlasting life." – See Zech. 13:1; Rev. 22:17.

At present the god of this world hath blinded the world's eyes of understanding (2 Cor. 4:4), but soon their eyes will be opened. The time is coming when all shall see and hear, and when none, from the least to the greatest, will need to say, Know ye the Lord, for all shall know Him. Then when they know, each will be responsible. At the end of the Millennial Age when they shall have received their full blessing through the Mediator they will be required to do God's will on earth even as it is done in Heaven. – Jer. 31:33,34.

FUTURE LIFE INFLUENCED BY PRESENT CONDUCT

It is a very important feature of our work to let our light so shine that men may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven – not *their* Father, but *our Father*. (I Pet. 2:12.) The present time is not the world's, but the Church's visitation. God is seeking the people who are in a voluntary condition of righteousness. This is not the time for dealing with the world, but for God's people, as burning and shining lights, to reprove all sin. In proportion as the light shines out it will reprove darkness.

If we speak at all about a future Age it is a special part of our duty to make clear to our hearers that the conduct of life at the present time

will have a bearing on the future life. To say that there are *two* chances – a chance now and a chance by and by – is wholly *wrong*. We say to them that during this Gospel Age there is only one chance, and the only way to get that chance is to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

But for those who are by and by to be under the Mediatorial Kingdom it is proper to tell them that a life of obedience to God in harmony with the principles of righteousness will be a blessing to themselves in the present, and also in the future. There are a great many people who are living upright and honorable lives and who are doing a great deal of good in this present time. If they thought they were not doing good, they would be discouraged. An incentive to a high standard of life would be taken from them; for they believe that righteous living now has a bearing on the future. In this they are right. But their standard is not so high as that set forth in the Scriptures for the Church. That standard is necessarily high; for saints, and saints alone, are to be joint-heirs with Christ and members of the Bride class.

A great mistake was made in the past when Brother Calvin declared that the non-elect were to be roasted to all eternity. On the contrary, we find the teaching of God's Word to be that the non-elect are to be blessed by the Elect with an opportunity for life on the earthly plane. God will use the elect class for the purpose of blessing the world of mankind. God has a loving, sympathetic Plan for all of His creatures, which will be revealed to them in His own due time.

