

"CHOOSE YE THIS DAY"

– *DECEMBER 28.* – *JOHN 3:16.* –

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

THE closing of the year and the opening of a new one is properly considered an opportune time for an inventory or balancing of the books and the carrying forward of profit and loss, and the determination of advantageous policies for the future. It would be a pity and a shame for all of us if we should be thus prudent in respect to earthly matters, and careless as respects higher interests. We may safely say that no human soul can strike a thoroughly satisfactory balance of accounts at the close of this year unless Jesus has been a partner and counselor and guide. And every one dissatisfied with his status of affairs at the close of the year – every one who finds himself weary and heavy-laden, perplexed and discouraged – we would like to have know how to begin the new year aright by entering into covenant relationship with the Redeemer, who declares, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Today's Study is full of helpful instructions. The very first lesson that all need to learn is that "God so loved the world." No other message than that has any attraction for thinking people. The difficulty with the world and with the Church in the past has been that we have not emphasized the Love of God. How could we do so when our eyes of understanding were misdirected by our creeds away from the God of the Bible to a creedal image which pictured the Heavenly Father in most Satanic colors – more loveless, more unjust, more diabolical than any human being we have ever known and than any demon we can possibly imagine! It is well for us as Christians that we have tried to forget those horrible pictures and

instead to fill our minds with precious Scripture texts such as the one of today's lesson.

But while we have thus gotten away from the "doctrines of devils," as St. Paul calls them (I Timothy 4:1), we forget that Christendom is still holding up those terribly slanderous creeds before the world, hindering them from getting even a glimpse of the length, breadth, height and depth of the "Love of God which passeth all understanding," and giving them, instead, awful misrepresentations – of the height and depth and length and breadth of Divine injustice. We have thus been unintentionally driving the world away from God, instead of helping them in their endeavor to feel after a Friend, the true God.

But the people of God are awakening to the Truth, and gradually gaining courage to assert it and to "show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." We are now met with the difficulty that the world has so thoroughly believed our blasphemy of the Divine character that they can scarcely believe the gracious Message of the Bible when we bring it to them – the message of great joy.

"MIGHT NOT PERISH"

The very text we are considering illustrates our bondage, our blindness of the past, and tells us of God's righteousness. It does not say, as we once supposed, that God gave His only begotten Son to save us from eternal torture. Quite to the contrary, it declares that His mission was and is to save from perishing. We know what perishing signifies. The brute beasts, when they die, perish, because God has made no provision for their resurrection. And mankind under the death sentence, "Dying, thou shalt die," would have perished like the brute beast, without hope, had it not been for God's mercy and provision in Christ. "Christ died for our sins" – "tasted death for every man" – to the intent that, the sentence of death having been thus satisfied, all men might have a resurrection.

Without the death of Jesus our race would perish like the brute beast. Because of His death there is to be a resurrection, not only of the just who now come into harmony with God through faith, but also of the unjust – the unjustified, who have not yet come to a knowledge of God, whose eyes of understanding have not yet been opened to see the grace of God and its length and breadth and height and depth. Thus we read that "as all in Adam [R5354 : page 348] die, so all in Christ shall be made alive." Even "as by a man came death, by a man also [Christ Jesus] comes the resurrection of the dead" – "*every* man in *his* own order."

It is St. Paul himself who particularly points out to us that, unless there be a resurrection of the dead, there is no hope of a future life, but all who have fallen asleep are perished. It is he who points out that, because Jesus died for our sins and has been raised from the dead by the Father, we have an assurance that all who sleep in Jesus – all who were purchased by the redeeming blood – the whole world of mankind – will God bring from the dead with Him. Therefore we need not sorrow as those who have no hope – even in respect to our friends and relatives who are not in Christ and have not the hope of the Church. – See I Corinthians 15.

THE "BETTER RESURRECTION"

The chief resurrection to glory, honor and immortality is only for those who are called during this Gospel Age, who receive the call into honest hearts, and who lay aside every weight and run the race for the prize with patience. These saintly ones Jesus declares will constitute the Royal Priesthood, who, in association with Himself as the Royal Chief Priest, will be engaged in blessing the world, restoring the world, resurrecting the world from sin and death, during the thousand years of his Messianic Reign.

The resurrection of the Church begins in the present life with believers, who in their minds rise in newness of life into Christ. (Colossians 3:1.) These will be perfected by the instantaneous

change mentioned by the Apostle, "When this mortal shall put on immortality," they "shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." – I Corinthians 15:50.

"WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM"

The Divine Plan is purposely arranged so that none can obtain everlasting life except through a personal relationship to Christ, the Redeemer, and the exercise of faith in His redeeming blood and obedience to His counsels. This being true, none of the heathen are saved yet. None of those who lived before Jesus came into the world are saved. And the great mass of our friends and neighbors, yea, of our own families, are still unsaved, because they have not come into vital relationship with the Savior. "He that hath the Son hath life"; "he that hath not the Son shall not see life." – I John 5:12; John 3:36.

"TESTIFIED IN DUE TIME"

St. Paul, commenting upon the fact that Jesus died for all – a Ransom-price for all – declares that this is to be testified in due time. (I Timothy 2:5,6.) God's due time for the testimony to reach the world evidently has not yet come. The testimony began when Jesus "brought life and immortality to light through His Gospel." As we read, "So great salvation began to be spoken by our Lord." – Hebrews 2:3.

Since then, a few here and there have had the hearing [**R5354 : page 349**] ear, have heard of the grace of God and have seen something of His Divine providences. Jesus congratulated this class, saying, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." The great mass of mankind see not and hear not, because, as St. Paul explained, the God of this world hath blinded the minds of those that believe not, that thus he might hinder them from seeing the true light of the grace of God, as it shines in the face of our Lord Jesus. – 2 Corinthians 4:4-6.

God has permitted this blindness, but declares that it will soon end; that under the blessed influences of Messiah's Kingdom the true light shall shine everywhere; and not only so, but He also assures us that "all the blind eyes shall be opened, and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped." What a blessed vista this opens before us on behalf of the poor world! We see that God has special grace and blessing for His faithful Church, the Little Flock, the saints; but now we perceive that He has a blessing also for the world, although a different blessing from that which He has provided for the Church.

Our text tells us of this, assuring us that God not only loved the Church, but also loved the world – not only redeemed the Church, but also redeemed the world. All will have an opportunity that, by believing, they may attain everlasting life. The life provided for the world, however, according to the Bible, will be very different from that provided for the Church. The latter are to have life on the Divine plane, being made partakers of the Divine nature; and they are to be sharers of the glory, honor and immortality of the Master. The world, by faith and obedience during the Messianic Kingdom, will be privileged to re-attain the earthly life and perfection which Adam lost, and which Jesus redeemed for the world at Calvary.

All the willing and obedient may thus come into relationship with the Life-giver and obtain the everlasting life, the eternal life, which was given to Father Adam conditionally and lost by disobedience. Nevertheless, all who will refuse this grace of God in Christ and fail to come into vital union with Him will perish. But they will not perish in the first, or Adamic death, from which all were redeemed and will be rescued by the Master. Their perishing will be in the Second Death, for their own wilful sins, and there will be no hope of recovery; "for Christ dieth no more." None will be redeemed from the Second Death.

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