

PRIMARY STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

ALLEGHENY, PA.

AS SECOND-CLASS MATTER

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Are You ^{of the} Hopeful ^{or of the} Hopeless?

THE INSPIRED MESSAGE FAR BETTER THAN THE CREED-TRADITIONS OF THE DARK AGES

"At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the Covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who then were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—Eph. 2:12, 13.

Our text shows us that the Christians of Ephesus who came into a good hope through faith in the precious blood of Christ were previously hopeless—without God and having no hope. If we apply this inspired gauge or standard to the whole world today we find the great mass of mankind to be hopeless, and hence unhappy, burdened, downcast, miserable.

And surely, as we look into the faces of the majority of the hundreds and thousands whom we meet daily, we see their hopelessness, their dejection, plainly written in their faces. True, in some cases we see mirth, in others carelessness, but these are by no means the majority, and even with them a closer acquaintance shows that they are trying to be happy, trying to be mirthful, trying to be careless, rather than succeeding. And what we see on the faces of the most civilized of humanity may be still more clearly discerned in the countenances of the heathen in general. Extremely few faces notify us that love, joy, peace, reside within, building upon a blessed hope. True, in every land there are some so rich in wealth and honor and friends that seemingly they have no need of hope for anything either in the present life or in the future. But these are exceptions also, and very many of them betoken, not only in countenance but in words, that they have not a satisfying portion—that their riches of various kinds only partially satisfy the longings of their hearts; that they know of a surety that the present life is fleeting, and that they have more or less trepidation, fear, unrest, whenever they think of the future—beyond the grave.

Hopeless Thousands—Millions

Statistics divide the population of earth into 400,000,000 of Christians and 1,200,000 heathen—just twice the number there were a century ago. It is hard for us to comprehend such large numbers, but, according to our text, this immense host of heathen are without God and have no hope in the world—they are hopeless. We should notice, however, that the Apostle does not state that there is no hope for these heathen, but simply that they do not have the hope. According to the Apostle God's favor is all centered in Christ, and only those who know of Christ and of divine mercy arranged for through him can possibly exercise faith in him, and hence only those believers could have the glorious hopes which center in him and await fulfilment at his second coming.

Indeed, we may say that the heathen are worse off than hopeless. They not only do not have hope, but instead of it they have fear, a most awful fear, which

overshadows all the affairs of the present life. Spiritism—more truly "demonism"—has long exercised itself amongst them, besetting, threatening, obsessing and tormenting them. It has taught them to fear God as the great arch-demon, and to expect a future life with new and still more trying difficulties than those they now experience, so that with many the only hope of escape from trouble is the belief that they shall ultimately become oblivious of everything, both good and evil. Alas, poor heathen! How much they need enlightenment! They do not need rum, tobacco and opium from the so-called Christian nations—neither do they need to be taught their profanity and vices; they have enough of their own. But they do sadly need the light of the knowledge of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord. They do need the true Gospel which the angels proclaimed at the birth of Jesus: "Good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people."

Another Gospel—A Corrupt One

With commendable zeal, but not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2), missionaries have gone to the heathen from Christian lands in a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice. Some of these have gladly laid down their lives in the service of the heathen according to their light, while others, as hirelings, performed the duties required of them by the denominations supporting them as the easiest and smoothest path in life. As the Apostle suggests, however, Christ is preached, whether of devotion or denominational strife. But alas! the true Gospel of Christ is rarely heard, rarely reaches the heathen ears. What they do hear is confusing, bewildering. The trumpet has an uncertain sound. The Methodist's bugle sounds "free grace;" the Presbyterian, "election" and "predestination;" the Baptist and Disciple, "water;" the Roman Catholic and Episcopal, "Apostolic succession." To the heathen mind Christ is divided, and his followers cannot agree amongst themselves as to what his teachings are and as to what message should be proclaimed. There are, however, two points upon which they all agree—(1) all mankind are sinners, "born in sin," and (2) that Christ Jesus is the only Saviour, "For there is none other name given under heaven or amongst men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) They all agree that the heathen are not saved in ignorance of Christ, and that the missionaries have gone to them to proclaim Christ and to lead them to faith in him in order that they may be saved. As the Apostle says, "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard!" for "faith cometh by hearing," and hearing depends upon the message of God.

Grand Truths Confused by Errors

In all of the above teachings respecting the necessity of faith in Christ as our Redeemer we heartily agree.

What do you think of this?

This is the very kernel and essence of the Gospel of Christ as set forth in the Word of God. But the beauty and force and blessing of this Gospel message is vitiated by a terrible error which crept into Christian faith in the Dark Ages, namely, that the salvation which Christ accomplished for us is a deliverance from condemnation to a fiery hell of eternal torment. This is untrue—unscriptural. It is a slander upon our great Creator to declare that he made our race subject to such awful conditions—to declare, for instance, that the heathen who have died during the past 6,000 years—thousands of millions of them—without any knowledge of the Savior, therefore without any faith in him, and without any hope in him, have gone down to a hopeless eternity of torment and despair. This is one of the doctrines which the Apostle Paul styles “doctrines of devils.” The heathen get enough of this through their own demonology, originated before the Christian missionaries ever preached to them; but it is doubly sad that, when the message of the love of God as manifested in Christ is being proclaimed to them, this “doctrine of devils” should be attached to it and apparently confirm the demonology under which the poor heathen have so long been held in bondage to Satan.

Can we wonder that the poor heathen, who have been taught to worship their ancestors, should be shocked with this false Gospel message—that all of their forefathers have been turned over to fire-proof devils to be eternally tormented, because they were not fortunate enough to hear and accept “the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved?” We can fancy the poor heathen saying, “Is this your God of love? And pray what are your definitions of the words love and justice? You who claim to be the only exponents of the only plan of salvation, is this the best your God can do for us? If he is loving, is he powerless?” Alas! alas! The difficulty is not with our all-wise, all-powerful, all-just and all-loving Creator, nor with the glorious plan for human salvation which he has centered in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The difficulty, the inconsistency is in the error which has become mixed with the Gospel of Christ as set forth in the Bible. The Apostle spake of some in his day who preached another Gospel—and so it is to-day. In the name of the one Father, God, and one Savior, our Lord Jesus, another Gospel is being preached, not only amongst the heathen but also in civilized lands—a false Gospel—an untrue message, which misrepresents the truth, and is a slander, a grievous slander, upon the divine character.

“Good Tidings of Great Joy”

We have seen the hopelessness of the heathen and how little hope is afforded them in the message that is being preached to them in the name of God and of Christ. Not only is this message one of despair as respects their forefathers, but equally as respects the great mass of their living kindred. Indeed, as the Prophet has pictured this erroneous teaching, it is like a bed that is so short that a man cannot stretch himself on it—cannot exercise his mind and heart so as to find rest therein; and, as the Prophet continues, “the covering is so narrow that a man cannot wrap himself in it.” If he tries to convince himself that he is one of the very select class, destined for eternal blessedness, while the great mass of mankind are destined to eternal woe, fear will creep in in spite of his efforts, just as do the chilly winds upon the person who has too narrow a bed covering. He is bound to fear that the apparent partiality of God in permitting his escape from eternal torment, to which millions of others are consigned, may some

day change toward him and drop him into eternal misery.—Isa. 28:20.

Let us turn now from these obnoxious misrepresentations of the divine character and plan and note the beauty and simplicity of the Bible’s teaching respecting what man was condemned to, what he is delivered from, and of what his salvation shall consist. Let us note first how different the tone, how different the ring of the Scripture references to the Gospel from anything that could properly be applied to these false gospels, these misrepresentations of the divine plan which have come down to Christendom from the Dark Ages. Harken to the first word from the Lord respecting the Gospel—the message to which St. Paul refers when he says, God preached the Gospel in advance to Abraham, saying, In thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (Gal. 3:8.) Is this the Gospel of salvation or of damnation? Good tidings or bad tidings? Assuredly the former. Indeed, as all are aware, this is the very meaning of the word “Gospel”—good tidings.

How evidently, then, some terrible mistake has been made by somebody when the message of eternal torment for 999 out of every 1,000 of earth’s teeming population has been called Gospel. The word could not have been more seriously perverted, for that surely would be bad tidings of great misery for practically all people. But this first message of the Gospel to Abraham tells of the blessing of all the families of the earth—it excludes none. It extends backward as well as forward. It takes in the families of the earth that were living before the flood as well as those living in Abraham’s time and all who have lived since, and all who will live in the future. God’s promise, the Gospel message, is that all of these shall be blessed. Have they been blessed yet? Assuredly not. Blind, indeed, would be the eyes of understanding or judgment that could suppose that this gospel blessing has yet come to all the families of the earth. Note again a very similar statement in the New Testament—the message of the angels at the time of our dear Redeemer’s birth. They said to the fear-stricken ones before them: “Fear not, for behold we bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people.” All Christian people, whatever trumpet they blow, by whatever name they are known, claim these records and translate them just as we have done. But it is when they come to apply them that they fall short.

Those who believe in the doctrine of election would have us understand that God did not mean that the Gospel would be a blessing to all the families of the earth, “to all people,” but merely to the Elect, chosen out from among all nations and people. Those who hold to the doctrine of “free grace” would deny this, and declare that there is no election and no preference with God; yet their theory also would make these divine promises of no effect by claiming that God has limited the blessings to the energies of his people, and that the most that these promises could mean is that ultimately the zeal of the Lord’s people will be so great that they will accomplish the evangelization of the world, that the “all nations” of these promises are those of the future, and that the thousands of millions of all nations dying in the interim have been without any blessing and will have none. These two messages are practically all the explanations of these glorious promises that the heathen have heard. Alas! Alas!

Two Errors Bar the Way

We have already intimated that errors handed down from the Dark Ages are casting this great cloud upon the divine character and plan, hindering a proper appre-

ciation of the glorious plan of salvation which centers in our Lord Jesus Christ. The first of these, as already intimated, is a misconception respecting hell. The Bible "hell," as we have elsewhere shown, is not a hell of torment, but of death, destruction, unconsciousness. According to the Bible the penalty upon Adam, which descended to us, his children, in conformity with the course of nature, is the death penalty. He, created perfect and in God's image, might have lived forever had he been obedient, but, disobeying, he came under the sentence, "dying thou shalt die." This sentence is the wrath, the curse that rests upon all mankind, dying we all die because we are the children of Adam and share his sentence as we share his depravity. Hearken to the Apostle's word on this subject: "By one man sin entered into the world and death (not eternal torment) as the result of sin, and thus death (not eternal torment), passed upon all men, because all are sinners."—Rom. 5:12.

According to the Scriptures, as well as according to the facts, as we see them, both the wise and the ignorant, moral and immoral, believers and unbelievers, die and go into Sheol, into Hades, into the state of death. This dying process has continued now for over 6,000 years and it is estimated that 20,000,000,000 have been "born in sin, shapen in iniquity" (Ps. 51:5), lived in more or less depravity and imperfection and died with more or less of pain, sorrow and hopelessness. The tomb, the great prison-house of death, is well filled with almost enough to reasonably populate the earth. The Scriptures declare "that they know not anything." (Eccl. 9:5.) They have not gone to a heaven of bliss, for our Redeemer declared that "no man had ascended up to heaven." (John 3:13.) The Apostle Peter declares that "David the Prophet has not gone to heaven." (Acts 2:34.) The wise man declares that they all are in Sheol, Hades, the tomb. (Eccl. 9:10.) How glad we are that this great mass of mankind are neither in a hell of eternal torture suffering at the hands of fire-proof devils nor in a purgatorial inferno, as taught by our Roman Catholic friends! How glad we should be that the doctrine of devils, which consign them to such torture, is entirely untrue, unscriptural, and that we are not obliged to think that our heavenly Father is an arch-demon, but, according to the Scriptures, may know him as a God of love.

We have elsewhere also shown that those who translated our Bibles have in some instances twisted their translation in harmony with their misconceptions and that our minds thus perverted have misunderstood some of our Lord's beautiful teachings and been stricken with fear at some of the symbolical pictures of Revelation which we did not understand.

Hope for the Dead

The second point of error received in the Dark Ages is that which teaches that death ends all hope. There is not one word in support of that erroneous thought within the lids of the Bible. On the contrary, its teachings abound with hope for many of the world in the future. Not that the Scriptures teach that a knowledge of the grace of God now may be trifled with, but that the vast majority never yet had a full, fair opportunity to benefit by the redemptive work of Christ. Ignorance, superstition, depravity, and the God of this world have unitedly obscured the eyes of their understanding more or less, and only in proportion as each has seen, has tasted, has appreciated the grace of God in Christ is each now responsible. This certainly throws the possible opportunities of the vast majority of the race into the future, and, as we shall shortly see, the Scrip-

tures fully corroborate this thought, and promise to Adam and all of his posterity a full individual opportunity for return to harmony with God and a possibility of life everlasting.

Let us remember that from God's standpoint the entire human race was sentenced to death as unworthy of life because, as the Scriptures declare, "There is none righteous, no, not one," and eternal life is intended only for the righteous. The Scriptures declare also that Jesus is a Savior and a great one, but human theories would make his the Savior of a small handful of the race, and then declare that that handful get their salvation by their good works instead of by God's grace. Let us see more fully what the Scriptures teach. Let us note the beauty, grandeur, length, breadth, depth and height of the divine plan therein set forth.

The Bible does teach an election—that ever since Pentecost God has been choosing from Jews and Gentiles a Little Flock to be the Bride of Christ. It also teaches that evil is permitted in order that the way of obedience to God may now be narrow, to the intent that these Elect ones shall be thoroughly tried, tested and proved as respects their faith in God, their loyalty to him and his righteousness. All of the New Testament Scriptures are addressed to this class—none of them to the world. Jesus prayed for his apostles and for all those who would believe on him through their word; but added, "I pray not for the world." The reason for this was that he knew that the present was not the Father's time for dealing with the world, but merely the time to deal with those called to be the Bride. To this Bride is promised the "exceeding great and precious promises"—to be partaker of the divine nature with our Lord, to share his glory, honor, immortality and Kingdom. The Elect enter into these joys and blessings not at death, but in the resurrection, as the Scriptures declare—"Blessed and holy are all them that have part in the First Resurrection." (Rev. 5:10; 20:6.) "They shall be kings and priests unto God and shall reign on the earth."

The Kingdom of Christ

Everywhere the Scriptures point us to the second coming of Christ and his Kingdom of righteousness, which will then be established "under the whole heavens." (Daniel 7:27.) It is for this Kingdom that he taught the Elect to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10.) That Kingdom has not yet come. God's will is not yet done on earth as it is in heaven. The Church with her Lord is to constitute that Kingdom, and it cannot be established until the gathering of the Elect from the world has been accomplished.

The long promised Kingdom of God is the hope of the world. Christ and the Church, spirit beings unseen of men, will take charge of the affairs of earth. During that reign of righteousness Satan will be bound for a thousand years, that men may be free from his deceptive influences and from all the power of demons. Then the "Sun of Righteousness" will scatter all the darkness of ignorance, superstition and sin, and the whole world will be brought to a knowledge of God in his true character as a God of love, a God of justice, a God of mercy, a God of power. So forceful will this be that the Scriptures describe the effect in these words, "Then every knee shall bow and every tongue confess." (Phil. 2:10, 11.) There will be none in ignorance. Thus the living, under the judgments of the great King, will be instructed in righteousness and helped out of their fallen and weak condition, back to their mental, moral

and physical life and health and strength. And only those who will deliberately refuse and rebel against that reign of righteousness shall be accounted wicked, and be everlastingly destroyed in the Second Death, without hope of a resurrection or any kind of recovery.

But this glorious hope is not merely for those who will be so fortunate as to live at, or after, the second coming of our Lord and the establishment of his Kingdom. The great King has all power. He declares that he has the key of the great prison-house of death, hades, and that it is his good pleasure that all that are in their graves shall hear his command to come forth—the good and the evil. The First Resurrection, as we have already shown, applies to those who have hope, but the future resurrection will include all the remainder, who will come forth for a judgment or trial or test, to see whether or not their past experiences with sin and their experience with righteousness will lead them to choose righteousness with all their hearts and thus to choose the blessing of God, eternal life. Here we have the resurrection hope which the Scriptures everywhere set forth.

We remember the Apostle's words, "For the hope of the resurrection of the dead I am called in question."

(Acts 23:6.) The Apostle Paul when at Athens preached of "Jesus and the resurrection." (Acts 17:18.) He set forth Jesus as the one who paid to Justice the ransom price for Adam and his race; and the resurrection as the glorious result—the method by which divine forgiveness will be made operative to the dead and dying race. To this agrees also the message of the Apostle Peter: that at the second coming of our Lord God will grant a great blessing, so that times of restitution will ensue.—Acts 3:19-21.

Whoever will take a concordance and look up what the Scriptures have to say about hope will be thoroughly convinced that as the heathen are without God and without hope, Christians are everywhere exhorted to hope and to allow this hope to be an anchor to their souls while they wait for the fulfilment of all the precious things God has promised through the Redeemer—to be brought unto us at his revelation, at his second coming, at the establishment of his Kingdom. (1 Pet. 1:13.) Let us, then, search the Scriptures that we may enjoy this hope, and, as the Apostle says, "Be ready to give an answer to everyone that asketh us a reason for the hope that is within us, with meekness and fear."—1 Pet. 3:15.

PARTIAL LIST OF SCRIPTURES WHICH WE UNDERSTAND TO TEACH THE

"Restitution of all Things"

Acts 3:19-21—Note that the inspired Apostle declares that all God's holy prophets spoke of these times (vss. 21, 24). We should therefore expect to find something concerning Restitution in the writings of each prophet of the Old Testament.

Gen. 12:2, 3 ; 18:18 ; 22:17, 18—All the families of the earth are here mentioned as beneficiaries. Observe that St. Paul explains that the Seed which will confer the blessing is Christ and his Church (the mystical Body of which Jesus is the Head).—Gal. 3:16, 29 ; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27 ; Eph. 1:22, 23.

Jer. 30:18 ; 31:8, 9—For comments on these words promising a Restitution blessing, see Rom. 11:12, 15.

Jer. 31:29, 30, 34—Compare Rom. 5:12 ; John 1:9 ; 1 Tim. 2:4.

Ezekiel 16:44-63—God saw fit (vs. 50) to slay the Sodomites ; yet our Lord Jesus said (Matt. 11:23) that *they would have repented* under such a ministry as had been granted to Capernaum, which repented not. Does not this course on God's part indicate that, since he is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), and since it is his will that all shall come to a knowledge of the truth, the death-imprisoned Sodomites shall be brought forth (John 5:29) to their "former estate" (Ezek. 16:55), and "in that day" be given an opportunity to believe in the "only name given under heaven or among men, whereby we must be saved?" (Acts 4:12.) Our Lord's declaration that it would be more *tolerable* for Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for some who heard and rejected him, implies that that time will be *tolerable* for all in proportion as their sins had been sins of ignorance. (Matt. 11:24 ; Luke 12:47, 48.) And it would be difficult to foretell the restitution of the Sodomites more clearly and more definitely than is done in this chapter. And in selecting so extreme an example of clemency our Lord evidently intended that we should see that the sacrifice which he gave was unquestionably "a ransom for all."

Daniel 2:44 ; 7:13, 14, 27—This is a prophecy of Restitution—because any prophecy of the Kingdom of Christ and his saints is a prophecy of Restitution ; for the Kingdom is to be set up at the second advent of our Lord Jesus, "whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things."—Acts 3:2

Amos 9:11-13—For inspired comment on this prophecy of Restitution see Acts 15:13-18. The words of this Apostle agree with those of Paul (Rom. 11), for he says that this blessing is to be brought to Israel in order that the rest of "men might seek after the Lord, and *all the Gentiles*."

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