

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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TRUTH FROM THE SCRIPTURES – The Beginning

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD

The Psalmist expressed the attitude of his heart when he said, "I meditate on all Thy works; I muse on the work of Thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto Thee, my soul thirsteth after Thee. May this truly be the attitude of our hearts. May we desire to know Him, His works and His ways.

It is my deep conviction, a conviction that can allow no change, that the true knowledge of God, His works and His ways can only be found by patient, persistent and honest investigation of God's living and life giving Word.

The works of God cannot be fathomed and His ways are past finding out. These statements are scriptural facts. Therefore, when man by reasoning tries to discover God, he is sure to experience defeat. Strange indeed have been the theories that have come from man's reasonings about God. Those who deplore the heathen gods that hands have made, might well examine themselves to see if they have not adopted some civilized God that minds have made. The statement, "my conception of God," is often just another way of saying "my idol."

We are in possession of a revelation from God which tells us of His ways, and gives us a faithful record of His works. To this we must turn if we would be delivered from our own conceptions of God, or those conceptions which others would force upon us. While every true believer must readily admit that "the secret things belong to the Lord our God," yet he must also strongly insist that "those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." Deut. 29:29.

In these studies we will examine together the things that are revealed concerning the works and the ways of God. May we seek from God complete freedom in doing this. As we meditate upon these things let us keep in mind:

"Our Lord is righteous in all His works which He doeth." Dan. 9:14,

"Talk ye of all His wondrous works," 1 Chron. 16:9,

"He is the Rock, His work is perfect." Deu. 32:4,

"As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him." Psalm 18:30.

IN THE BEGINNING

That the words "in the beginning" represent a definite date in history is a truth that is not sufficiently recognized and considered. These words do stand for a definite date in divine history. Just as a schoolboy may write: "July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was signed," even so we have a date and a fact in the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." There are no dates earlier than this since time is not reckoned before that point called "in the beginning." It is not that no events occurred prior to this. It is simply that nothing can be dated before then.

It is exceedingly plain that this does not mark the beginning of God, since God existed before this time. In fact, He has no beginning. Neither was it the beginning of all creation, for certain created beings were in existence before. The words of Jehovah in Job 38:7 are sufficient to demonstrate that two distinct groups of created beings were in existence when God created the heavens and the earth.

This is not the beginning of that realm that is **"far above all that is of the heavens (Eph. 4:10)."** It is the beginning of the heavens, but not of that realm called the "heavens of heavens."

It seems that this point marks the beginning of *time*. It will be well for the student to carefully observe and note that *time* is something which God has imposed upon the heavens and the earth and upon every creature associated with these two realms. It is utterly impossible for us to get away from the fact of *time* even in our thoughts. The mind is incapable of imagining how time could cease to flow. Our ideas of time depend upon a law imposed upon our reason by the God who made us. Does it need to be stated that God is not bound by that which He has imposed upon us? There is no past, present or future with Him.

This point also marks the beginning of those periods of time which are called eons or ages. In fact the first eon is before us in Genesis 1:1. It is the eon of the original heavens and earth. If one studies all the way through the Word of God he will come at last to the final period of time, the final eon, the eon of the new heavens and the new earth. The first eon, the last eon and the eons that are between make up the *eonian times*. Recognition of this will greatly help us to understand a passage such as **Romans 16:25** where the original speaks of **"a secret hushed in eonian times."** Also such passages as 2 Tim. 1:9 and Titus 1:2 where we read "before eonian times."

The "beginning" recorded in Genesis 1:1 is mentioned in other places in the Word of God. Very important among these are the two occurrences found in **John 1:1-2.**

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

These words carry us back to Genesis 1:1 and give us the complete picture of God and the Word in association when the heavens and the earth were created. Surrounding these are two great orders of created beings, spoken of in Job 38:7 as "the morning stars" and "the sons of God." These were there in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.

MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

In reviewing the more than twenty years that I have devoted to the study and teaching of the Word of God, a conviction comes to me that if certain great truths had been learned and understood at the very beginning, these years of study would have been more profitable and the knowledge of these truths would have greatly helped to make the Bible a simple and understandable book. Today, I know that the knowledge and recognition of these great truths are of infinite value in understanding and appreciating the work and the ways of God as they are revealed in His Word. These great truths to which I refer are clearly intimated or else set forth in the opening chapters of Genesis. He who begins his studies at the beginning of the Word, and who does not pass too hurriedly over these early chapters will surely come to know them.

Laborious and difficult addition might possibly take the place of multiplication in the study of mathematics. But imagine the feeling of one who had spent years in the study of mathematics if he suddenly discovered the principle of multiplication. He would rejoice in his discovery, but at the same time he would chide himself for not having known this at the start. He would feel that most of his difficulties in mathematics had arisen from failure to know one of the most basic and fundamental principles. Even so it will be with us if we fail to learn and give full scope to certain great truths that are literally thrust upon our attention the moment we open the Word of God.

The first of these great and important truths is clearly intimated in **Genesis 1:1**. Man opens this Book and reads, "**In the beginning God created.**"

Since no statement is made that God exists, since no argument is entered into to prove His existence, and since His existence is treated as a fact that is already known, it follows that every man who ever opens this Book will do so with a knowledge that there is a God. The truth that there is a knowledge of God that has been thrust upon the consciousness of every man is clearly intimated in the manner in which God begins His Word.

It will help here if we keep in mind that the first great purpose behind the giving of the Word is that it was given for teaching.

This is the meaning of the Greek word translated *doctrine* in 2 Timothy 3:16. Those who teach, or a book that would teach, can never ignore the fundamental rule that all teaching must begin with that which is already known and then proceed to the unknown. The next lesson must always begin where the last one ends. Man cannot begin with the unknown. By his very nature he must begin with the known and from this point pass on to learn of the unknown.

The Bible does not begin with a revelation of God. The reader is not introduced to God. He is brought at once face to face with something that God did. The Bible opens with the assumption that every man who ever opens this book has a knowledge of God. It offers no proof that there is a God, neither at the beginning nor in the volume of its pages. It presents no arguments at anytime that can be used to convince an atheist. It takes it for granted that every man has a certain knowledge of God. And it is not taking too much for granted. This is not an unwarranted presumption upon the part of the One who inspired this Book. God makes no mistakes.

It is the opinion of the majority of people that the knowledge of a supreme being comes to man from the Bible, and that if there were no Bibles, this knowledge would soon perish from the earth. Some have the opinion that this knowledge is simply passed on from man to man, therefore, if one generation should fail to pass it on to the next, the result would be a world of atheists. Both of these opinions are erroneous.

We must always keep in mind that the human race was upon the earth for 2400 years before the first word of the Bible was inspired. This is an important fact that should be fixed firmly in the mind so that it will not slip from us and become worthless. It has a positive bearing upon any true understanding of the work and ways of God. If we allow 25 years to a generation, almost 100 generations had appeared upon and passed from the earth before God saw fit to give a revelation in writing. This resolves into the truth that if the knowledge of a supreme being comes from the Bible, then the first 100 generations of the human race had no opportunity of knowing that God exists.

But the Bible was not given to reveal the existence of a supreme being. This knowledge is instinctive in every man. **No man has ever appeared upon this earth who did not have an inherent and instinctive knowledge that above his own being, above all beings like himself, above all beings of the air, the field or the forest, there is one Being who is supreme.** I do not say that he will know any more than this. This knowledge may be the full extent of his light, but this light he will have. He may not call Him God, Jehovah or Theos. But he will know that there is a Being who is supreme.

This knowledge is guaranteed to every human soul. Man may deny it, refuse it, and repudiate it, but he can never get away from it. He does not need to wait until some missionary comes to him and proclaims a message or places a Bible in his hands. He will have this knowledge just because he is a man.

If all we had in regard to this great truth was the intimation of it in Genesis 1:1 that would not be enough. It is not right to build a teaching upon an intimation or suggestion. However, there is much more. This truth which is intimated in the first verse of the Bible, is set forth by positive and direct statements in many places in the Word of God.

In fact, the importance of this truth is seen in that it is one of the foundation stones upon which Paul builds his great revelations set forth in the book of Romans. The great truths presented there cannot be properly understood until the great truth of man's inherent and instinctive knowledge of God is understood and believed. In the opening verses we are told:

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Rom. 1:19,20.

As this passage is, in my judgment, the leading one that bears upon this theme, it seems well to examine its leading statements in some detail.

Because that which may be known of God. This should read, **"that which is known of God."** Man's inherent knowledge of God is limited in its scope, nevertheless, it is true light, and man is responsible to act upon it. God so created man as to leave the impress of Himself upon him. Wholly apart from any special revelation, like that given to Israel, all men have the truth concerning God thrust upon them,

Is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them This should read, **'is manifest in them, for God has manifested it to them.'** Note that this does not say "is" revealed to them." Man can ignore a revelation so as not to know it, but he cannot fail to know that which has been manifested to him. .

For the Invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen. God's invisible attributes, even though they cannot be seen, yet they are made clear to man's intelligence and conscience by the things that are made. The invisible things of creation give full witness to the

glory of the invisible Creator. This Creator cannot be denied just because He cannot be seen. Man cannot convince himself against this witness. He knows the created things have a Creator. If he asks, "Who made these things?" he has the answer within himself. He may not believe it, he may try to get away from it, he may not desire to retain God in his knowledge, nevertheless, he will never be free from this witness. This is the clear teaching of **Psalm 19:1-3**.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

Man's inherent knowledge of God does not come from observing these things, but the truth concerning God which He has manifested to every man is maintained and reiterated by forces from which man can never be free. Every man who lives under the heavens has before him a continual declaration of the glory of God. All who live upon the earth have before them a continual display of His workmanship. Every day brings a message and every night teaches a lesson. This witness is incessant and universal. Indeed the time has come for men to cease regarding the nineteenth Psalm as a piece of beautiful and meaningless poetry, and accept its clear and unmistakable testimony in regard to the universality of man's knowledge of God.

Man can quickly forget what he knows if he is never reminded of it. God has so arranged it that man can never forget that above, his own being there is a Being who is supreme. The result of these great manifestations is to leave men without excuse if they fail to glorify God and thank Him. If there is a Being who is supreme, it logically follows that that Being should be glorified, revered and sought after. God wants reverence and gratitude from men, and man is able to give these to God.

To me, the fact of man's inborn knowledge of God is sufficient answer to every question that has ever arisen concerning the fate of those who have never heard the gospel. We are inclined to pity the so-called heathen in his ignorance and blindness. They certainly need our pity and our prayers, but we must ever keep in mind that their ignorance is the result of their turning the truth of God into a lie, and their blindness is the blindness of those who refuse to see. When they hear the gospel it offers them a glorious deliverance from their own folly, but at the same time it brings an additional light and an added responsibility. However, if man never hears the gospel, he is still responsible to obey the light that he has. A just God requires nothing more than this. If men turn from the instinctive knowledge of God and deny the impression that is continually made upon them by His works, there is nothing left for them but apostasy.

The responsibility of those who have never heard the gospel is set forth by Paul in **Acts 17:27**.

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from everyone of us."

The words "might feel after Him" is a clear recognition of the blindness which rests upon the human race. A blind man has no sight, but he does have the sense of feeling, so he uses his fingers. God expects that even those who are spiritually blind will grope after Him. If they do, that groping will not be fruitless.

I will have more to say upon this in later articles when this great truth can be linked up with its companion truth - the universal knowledge of right and wrong.

THE THREE REALMS OF THE UNIVERSE

The second great truth clearly intimated in Genesis 1:1 is that the heavens and the earth that were created in the beginning do not make up the entire universe. That states the truth somewhat negatively, but stated positively it would be said that this passage suggests that there is yet another

realm to the universe. This would make three realms, instead of just the two that are commonly recognized.

Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 gives us a picture of God and "the Word" in association and unity at the time of the creation of the 'heavens and the earth. Job 38:7 adds to this picture two groups of witnesses called "the morning stars" and "the sons of God." Therefore we have set before us in Genesis 1:1 the realm of the Creator, which is here unnamed, and the realm of that creation which took place in the beginning, called "the heavens and the earth."

Inasmuch as these 'morning stars" and "the sons of God" were in existence before the heavens and the earth were created, it is only logical to ask, "Where were these beings before these realms were created?" The answer is found in the great truth that the heavens and the earth do not make up the whole of the universe. There is yet another realm.

Therefore, in the very first verse of the Word of God we are brought face-to-face with the great truth of three realms of the universe. It is a truth that God would have us to recognize and to realize the moment we open the Word of God. It is a truth to be embraced and fixed firmly in our minds before we go on. It should become a fixed point, a great landmark at the very beginning of our travels through the Word of God. It will keep us from getting lost in total confusion when we come to Paul's final epistles. It will keep us as members of God's highest calling from trying to crowd into some realm which is not our destiny.

If we consider the spoken and written messages of that great group of sincere men who are classed as fundamentalists and premillennialists we see nothing but uncertainty and confusion in their teachings in regard to the place of God's saints during the one-thousand year Kingdom period. Some would have us on earth ruling over cities, others have us in heaven in the New Jerusalem, while others have us commuting between earth and heaven.

A friend of mine asked every minister he could contact this two-fold question. **"Where will Christ be, and where will I be during the millennial kingdom?"** The answers he received were so varied that he became convinced that nothing but confusion prevails in regard to this question.

All this confusion has its origin in the failure to recognize that there is more to this universe than the heavens and the earth. There is a third realm clearly indicated in the very first verse of the Word of God.

Since this is one of the first truths we find when we open the Bible, we must embrace it and carry it with us in all our studies. We must never lose sight of it. If we do, we will soon confuse the purposes of God and the callings of God. He has a distinct purpose and a distinct calling for each realm, and if we confuse these we fail to make a distinction in things that differ.

Further Testimony

As we read on through the first four books of the Bible we find no further information concerning this third realm which is distinct from the heavens and the earth. However, when we come into the fifth book we find three realms clearly set forth under three different names.

"Behold the HEAVEN and the HEAVEN OF HEAVENS is the Lord thy God, the EARTH also, with all that therein is." Deut. 10:14.

Here we have the three realms of the universe named. They are called by the Spirit of God, **"the heaven of heavens," "the heavens" and "the earth."** We know that the last two were created "in the beginning." We have no record of the creation of the heavens of heavens. But this does not

mean that it is an "uncreated realm," as one of my detractors has inferred that I believe. It is just that we have no record of it. This, is not unusual, since we have no record of the creation of spirit beings. Nevertheless, we know they exist and do not believe they are uncreated beings.

This passage proves that Moses knew of this third realm, and it also sets before us the fact that this third realm, which is only intimated in Genesis 1:1, is definitely set forth in other places in the Word of God. This cannot be honestly denied.

The only reason anyone can have for believing that there is a realm called heaven is because it is clearly set forth as a habitable realm in the Word of God. Nevertheless, while many are confident that this is their reason for believing in heaven, yet this is not their reason at all. Their real reasons are that it is believed by everyone else, that it is supported by tradition, and they learned it as children. The proof of this is seen in the fact that when they are shown that the Bible sets forth a realm called the "heave of heavens," which is "higher than the heavens" they cannot believe it, since so very few do, and it has no support in tradition, and they were not taught it as children. Those who are governed by the Word of God, who are not afraid to be alone in their beliefs, and who need no crutch of tradition upon which to lean, will just as readily believe in the "heaven of heavens" as they do in "heaven." Both realms are clearly revealed in the Word of God.

The next witness to the great truth of three realms of the universe is Solomon. When the temple was complete and he was offering the prayer of dedication, he beseeched God to come and dwell in it. And, as if to guard against any mistaken idea that he considered God to be of such nature that He could dwell in a temple built by men, he said:

"But will God indeed dwell upon THE EARTH? behold THE HEAVEN and THE HEAVEN OF HEAVENS cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" 1 Kings 8:27.

It is apparent that if the heavens and earth make up the whole of the universe, Solomon's reference to the "heaven of heavens" would be superfluous and meaningless.

The priests and Levites of Nehemiah's day were familiar with the truth of three realms of the universe and they spoke of them by name in their song of praise to Jehovah.

"Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone; Thou hast made HEAVEN, THE HEAVEN OF HEAVENS, with all their host, the EARTH, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein." Neh. 9:6.

In the Psalms we find numerous testimonies in regard to these three realms.

"O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Who has set Thy glory above the heavens." Psalm 8:1.

"He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth that He may judge His people." Psalm 50:4.

"Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Thy glory be above all the earth." Psalm 57:5.

"To Him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, He doth send out His voice, and that a mighty voice." Psalm 68:33.

"For Thy mercy is great above the heavens: and Thy truth reached unto the clouds. Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and Thy glory above all the earth." Psalm 108:4-5.

"The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens." Psalm 113:4.

"The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men." Psalm 115:16.

"Let them praise the name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven." Psalm 148:13.

I fully realize that an accumulation of texts does not make a valid argument, nevertheless, when the passages quoted above are considered, we have set forth in them a definite realm called "the heaven of heavens" and "above the heavens." If there is no such realm, these passages are meaningless. Therefore, upon the basis of Old Testament testimony alone, we are justified in calling upon those men who claim to be guided by the Word, yet deny the great truth of three realms in the universe, to bow their minds to the testimony of the sacred Scriptures. There may be many difficulties and questions in connection with this truth, but none of those difficulties will ever be cleared away and none of the questions will ever be answered by those who deny the existence of a realm that is far above all that is of the heavens.

The Testimony of Ephesians

In **Ephesians 4:10** we are told that the Lord Jesus ascended "**up far above all heavens.**" A more literal translation of this would read, "up above all that is of the heavens." In the eighth verse of the same chapter we are told that "He ascended on high." This indicates that the realm which is above the heavens is also called "on high." Therefore, the "on high" calling spoken of in Philippians 3:14 is a calling which is related to that realm which is far above all that is of the heavens. The goal of every believer in Christ should be to obtain the prize of the "on high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Also, in Ephesians we find the only occurrences of the phrase (*en tois eporaniois*." This is the dative plural in all five occurrences. It is translated "in heavenly places" in four occurrences (1:3, 1:20, 2:6, 3:10) and "in high places" in one occurrence (Eph. 6:12). After long and careful study of the matter, it is my deep conviction that the phrase "in the super-heavens" is the translation that best expresses the truth.

In the super-heavens a certain body of saints are to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3). A body of saints will also be blessed in the heavens, and another group on earth.

In the super-heavens Christ has been seated as Head over all to the out-calling which is His body (Eph. 1:20). He has also been seated in the heavens as King and Priest. He will yet be seated upon the earth as its rightful ruler.

In the super-heavens certain saints have been seated with Christ (Eph. 2:6). Other saints will be identified with Him in the heavens, and others will rule and reign with Him upon the earth.

In the super-heavens even now can be found inhabitants called principalities and *powers* (Eph. 3:10). Even so there are the hosts of heavens, and the peoples of earth.

There is to be an out-resurrection which will bring forth from their graves a body of saints who are destined for the super-heavens (Phil. 3:11), also one which will bring forth saints whose destiny is the heavens (1 Thess. 4:16), and a resurrection for those whose destiny is the millennial earth (Ezek. 37:11-14).

Satan and the Three Realms

The truth of three realms in the universe provides a key which unlocks the truth contained in many passages of Scripture. In **Ezekiel 28** we have an obscure passage which becomes more plain the moment we recognize the relationship of Satan to the three spheres.

In the first ten verses of that chapter the ruler of Tyre is indicted and judged by the word of the Lord. He is called "the prince of Tyre" even though he was actually a king. Every word said in these

verses were true of the ruler of Tyre. However, a new strain comes in at verse eleven, and Ezekiel is ordered to take up a lamentation upon the *king* of Tyre. There is a definite change here from *prince* to *king*. This is God's way of declaring that the ruler of Tyre was in reality only a prince, and that he really ruled under a regency. He had a king who was the real ruler of Tyre, and this king controlled and energized him. And since the words *prince* and *king* carry in them the idea of father and son, of all the works of the ruler of Tyre it could be said: **"Ye are of your father the devil." John 8:44.**

Most of the statements made from verse 12 to 19 could not possibly be true of the human ruler of Tyre. They could only be true of some supernatural being, even Satan himself. In this portion some of Satan's history and prospects are set forth. The description is of one who is superhuman and superterrestrial. It can refer to no other than Satan himself. The chapter is of such importance that we will examine some of its leading statements.

Thou sealest up the sum. In other words, "You are the finished pattern." He may have been created as an example for others to aspire to. He was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God. This does not refer to the garden that God planted "eastward in Eden." Gen. 2:8. This speaks of the land in the original creation, a matter that will be dealt with in detail in later studies.

In the day that thou wast created. He was not born of man or woman. He was created.

Thou art (you were) the anointed cherub that covereth. He was one of the cherubim: and was anointed or set forth as *the one who was to guard, cover, overshadow or protect.* This refers to God's glory, which was set above the heavens, but it also included His glory as manifested in the original creation.

Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God. The word *holy* means *separate* and a mountain in Scripture is the symbol of a realm. He had been in the separate realm of God. It is my conviction that this refers to the heaven of heavens.

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created until iniquity was found in thee. This speaks of the time before Satan's fall when he was "Lucifer, the son of the morning." Isa. 14:12. The time came when iniquity was found in him.

I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God. This should read, **"I have cast thee."** The son of the morning lost his place and position in that realm which is far above all heavens.

At the present time Satan holds fast in the heavens. His binding and final doom has been delayed while God's present purpose is being worked out. The time will surely come when he will be cast out of the heavens to the earth. Rev. 12:7-12. His stay on the earth will be short. He is bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years. Rev. 20:1-3. From this abyss he will be loosed for a little season (Rev. 20:3), after which he is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10). This will be his end. He will not live or exist forever. Before the eon of the new heavens and new earth God will have taken from Satan the life that He gave when He created him.

The place and position forfeited by Satan and his angels, God will fill by a people redeemed from this earth. Yes, even that separate realm of God, the heaven of heavens, will be filled by men from this earth. What a hope! What a destiny! Can my readers say that they are a part of this calling?

THE ORIGINAL CREATION

There are seven words in the Hebrew sentence of Genesis 1:1. These seven words tell the complete story of God's creation of the original heavens and earth. No information is given here concerning the methods used by the Divine Architect. Nothing is revealed that tells us how much time He used. We are not told whether the heavens and earth were called into existence in a split-second of time or whether their formation covered many eons. Speculation at this point is useless and irreverent. The bare fact is given as a statement of truth to be received. The believer says with unquestioning faith, "I believe that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

We are not told just what this original heaven and earth were like, nevertheless, we cannot but believe that these creations were worthy of their Divine Creator. They reflected all His perfections, and were exceedingly fair in their pristine beauty. The original creation was perfect, it came short in nothing, it was exactly as God desired it should be, and it must have satisfied and delighted Him.

It may seem a commonplace statement, but I am convinced that it is vitally important to any true understanding of the Word of God that we fully recognize and comprehend that the heavens and earth as originally created were exactly what God wanted them to be. All of God's creations are perfect and mature. Even so the heavens and earth were so perfect that nothing could be added. They were complete, with no need for development.

THE CHAOTIC EARTH

The student of the Word of God will quickly realize that the earth, on the morning of its creation, must have been vastly different from the chaotic state described in **Genesis 1:2**. There we read, "**And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.**" This statement is often taken to be a description of the earth after its creation, but that is an error. Traditional beliefs and teachings, deeply imprinted upon the mind by childhood Bible stories, make it exceedingly hard for most people to see **that there was a period of original creation, followed by a period of ruin, then a work of restoration before Adam ever appeared upon the earth.** Most people confound the primitive creation of Genesis 1:1 with the ruin into which it had fallen as described in Genesis 1:2.

In harmony with the truth revealed in other places and in harmony with the Hebrew, Genesis 1:2 should be translated, "**And the earth became waste and empty.**" A translation such as this is true to the truth and true to the Hebrew. The same Hebrew construction appears in Genesis 2:7, man *became* a living soul;" Genesis 4:14, "it shall *come to pass*;" Genesis 9:15, "the waters shall no more *become* a flood;" Genesis 19:26, "*became* a pillar of salt."

The truth of this is a matter that can be settled by the Word of God, therefore, it should be settled in the mind of the student. The words, "**without form and void**" are the Hebrew words *tohu va bohu*. These two words appear in Isaiah 34:11 where they are translated *confusion* and *emptiness*. The word *tohu* also appears in **Isaiah 45:18**, where the context speaks of creation and emphatically declares, "**He created it not tohu.**" So, whatever *tohu* means, it is evident that God did not create the earth *tohu*. Therefore it must have become so, at some time, and in some way, after its creation. If all occurrences of *tohu* and *bohu* are considered in their contexts, it will show that these two words are related to severe judgment. In other words, things *tohu* and *bohu* become that way as the result of judgment being visited upon them.

To sum up, Genesis 1:1 reveals an original heavens and earth that were as perfect as their Creator. Genesis 1:2 reveals an earth that was waste and empty, as the result of some divine judgment. Something had happened which caused the Creator to determine to overthrow in judgment His

original creation. The order that existed in Genesis 1:1 was overthrown by God and the earth became waste and barren. Doubtless it became such as the result of the divine judgment that took place when sin and evil entered into the universe. This necessarily leads us to a more careful consideration of the overthrow or disruption of the order that God had created in the beginning.

THE OVERTHROW

When God created the heavens and the earth, He did not merely create two realms. He created and established an order, a system or an arrangement. This order was also perfect, and it satisfied God. We do not know just what the order was, but unity was probably its chief characteristic, just as division is the main characteristic of the present order. The earth and the heavens were probably united in such a way that those who walked upon the earth also walked in the heavens. Today we must say, "as the heavens are high above the earth," because of the great distance between them. However, in the beginning, I do not believe that this was so. In that day heaven rested upon the earth and controlled it, just as it will be in the new heavens and new earth. God will yet gather together and unify the things in heaven and on the earth.

The heavens and the earth in the beginning were like two great main gears in an intricate piece of machinery. The teeth of the gears meshed perfectly and moved together harmoniously. This can be called a divine order, divine system or divine arrangement, just as long as we keep in mind that the whole order revolved around the heavens and the earth. This was an inhabited order, but not by human beings. The Greek word used to designate such an order is the word *kosmos*. This word appears many times in the New Testament where it is usually translated *world*.

The Testimony of 2 Peter 3

One of the most important passages bearing upon this theme is **2 Peter 3:4-14**. The reader should have his Bible open as we consider this passage as lack of space forbids its full quotation.

Scoffers. . . saying. . . all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. This is not true. These are the words of a scoffer. Nevertheless, this has become the belief of many who claim to believe the Bible. Some, who will admit a great change in the earth since the original creation, refuse to admit that there has been any change in heaven. They insist that this continues as it was from the beginning of the creation, even in spite of our Lord's statement that He was going to prepare a place.

For this they willing are ignorant of. Or, in other words: They want to be ignorant of this. The great truth which Peter is about to state is so vitally linked up with God's great purposes that men desire to be ignorant of it.

That by the word of God the Heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water. This is a description of the original creation set forth in Genesis 1:1. The land mass was one great island -- not broken up as in its present condition of continents and islands, and intersected in every direction by the seas. The land was a unit, raising itself through the waters.

Whereby the world (kosmos) that then was being overflowed with water perished. In verse five Peter speaks of the heavens and earth that were of old. In verse six he speaks of the world or order. This shows that the heavens and the earth formed the *kosmos* or order. If either one is touched the order will be disrupted or overthrown. That is what happened between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The

earth became barren and waste. The land mass was overflowed with water and disappeared beneath it, the earth was swathed in vapors. This caused that order to perish, or be destroyed. It was destroyed, for that exact order is never to be restored. The chief inhabitants in that order were angelic beings. The chief inhabitants of the new heavens and earth will be human beings.

Some have asked, "Since the waters did not overflow the heavens, how could this have destroyed the order?" In answer I would say, "Break one tooth from a main gear in any machine and the whole working order will be disrupted."

But the heavens and the earth which are now. In the last part of Genesis 1:2 God begins the work of restoration and brings in a new order (kosmos). The vapors or water that swathed the earth are separated from it by an expanse (firmament), and the land mass is made to arise through the waters that covered the earth (Genesis 1:7-9). In this new order the heavens and earth are separated by space. Heaven does not dominate the earth, unless some contact is made between the two.

By the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition (destruction) of ungodly men. The present heavens and earth will continue throughout the millennial kingdom. They will be purged of all things that give offense. Nevertheless, they are not permanent or eternal.

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. This sets before us a new heavens and a new earth, God's own new order, created by Him to replace the creation that was in the beginning. This is the third heaven and earth.

The truth that we are considering is so full that it seems well to set it forth graphically in various ways.

1. The heavens and the earth of old. 2 Peter 3:6.
2. The heavens and the earth which are now. 2 Peter 3:7.
3. The heavens and the earth that shall be. 2 Peter 3:13.

The same truth may also be stated in these words.

1. The world that was. It was destroyed.
2. The world that is now. Reserved unto fire of judgment.
3. The world that shall be. Promised by God.

The word *world* does not mean this globe or earth. It includes the heavens. We often say "heaven and earth" but who would think of saying "heaven and world?" It is better to translate *kosmos* by some such word as *order* or *system*. Then it will appear as follows:

1. The order that was.
2. The order that is.
3. The order that shall be.

Knowing very well the unspiritual tendency of most professing Christians to consider nothing to be of any importance except what they call "the plan of salvation," I trust that my readers will not consider these truths to be unimportant. I believe that the understanding of them is vital to any true understanding of the real plan of salvation. Their importance becomes evident when we come to passages such as **Eph. 1:4**. There we find the phrase "**before the foundation of the world.**" The Greek word here translated *foundation* is *katabole*. "**Foundation**" is not a correct translation of this word, as can be easily demonstrated. It means **to cast down, overthrow or disrupt**. It refers to that great cataclysmic change which caused the earth to become waste and barren and destroyed the order that then existed. The time "before the overthrow" of the world (Kosmos) would be that time before Genesis 1:2. In the New Testament certain things are declared to be "before the overthrow" and certain things to be "since the overthrow."

The Son of God had great glory and was loved by the Father **before the overthrow** of the world (Kosmos). **John 17:24**. The Lord Jesus was foreknown as the Lamb of God (therefore, a sacrifice) before the overthrow of the world. **1 Peter 1:19-20**. The church which is His body was, before the overthrow, chosen to be separate and without offense before God. **Eph. 1:3**.

The entrance of sin into the universe caused the overthrow, but the entrance of sin must not be confused with it. These are two different events. The entrance of sin and evil came first and this resulted in the order being overthrown and destroyed. Let us not change the Word of God and say that the Lord Jesus was foreknown to be a sacrifice before sin ever entered. The Bible says, "Before the overthrow" and does not say before the entrance of sin.

Things since the overthrow are referred to in Matt. 13:34-35, Matt. 25:34, Luke 11:49-51, Heb. 4:3, Heb. 9:26, Rev. 13:8, and Rev. 17:8. Some truths have always been open but some have been kept secret since the overthrow. The kingdom was prepared since the overthrow. Many prophets have been slain since the overthrow. The Lamb was slain since the overthrow. Names have been written in the book of life since the overthrow.

These truths are only suggested here. The interpretation and application of them will appear in future studies.

(To Be Continued, Vol. VI, No. 6)

DIVINE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD

Radio Message - Station WJJD, Chicago, November 7,1942

My regular listeners will remember that in a previous message I dealt with the great fact that God has spoken and made Himself accurately known to man, then of the imperative need of having a true purpose in mind when we open the Word of God. In this message I desire by the use of the Bible to impress upon your minds the importance which God Himself has attached to knowing His Word. I am sure that it can be demonstrated that there is nothing in relationship to God, nothing in Christian life and experience that is more important than knowing the sacred Scriptures.

The Lord Jesus said, **"Thy Word is truth."** **John 17:17**. The Word we know is the truth we know, the Word we possess is the truth we possess, the Word we can give to others is the truth we can give. He who does not have the truth can only conform to this world. He who enters into the truth will be transformed by the renewing of His mind.

There is a genuine difference between knowing the Bible and understanding the Bible. When I speak to you of knowing God's Word, I do not mean understanding God's Word. We can know things which we do not understand, but we cannot understand things which we do not know. The divine order would be, first, knowledge, then, understanding. It is possible for anyone to know the Word of God. Diligence in reading, close attention to what is said, patient study and continual meditation is sure to bring a knowledge of what God has said. But an understanding of the things God has said comes to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God can and does give an understanding of the Word that is known, but he does not give knowledge to those who are too lazy to apply themselves.

It is our part to get the knowledge, it is God's part to give the understanding. Too many people open the Bible and want to know the meaning or to have an understanding of every word they read just as they read it. They want the joys of understanding apart from the drudgery of first getting knowledge. They can see no reason why they should not be able to understand things which they do not even know.

Have you ever had someone approach you with a paper or book in hand and ask the question, "What does this mean?" You automatically ask, "What does it say?" This is a confession that you cannot tell what a thing means until you know what is said. You even may not know after you know what is said, but, of this you are sure - you can never know what a thing means apart from what is said.

The divine process by which we come into possession of the truth is to know what God has said, and then to discover what He meant by what He said. It is utter folly to seek the meaning of any passage of Scripture when we have no accurate knowledge of what is said in that portion.

There are many passages of Scripture with which I am completely familiar, but which I do not now understand. I seek to increase and maintain my familiarity of these, in the complete confidence that when the understanding becomes important in relation to my life and service, it will be given. God does not reveal His truth to those who are merely curious. He does reveal it to those who would be governed by it and walk in it.

The great principle of knowledge first and understanding second is set forth in **Proverbs 4:7**.

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

An outstanding witness to the importance which God attaches to His Word and to knowing His Word is the testimony of the **119th Psalm**. This is the longest Psalm in the book of Psalms, and the longest chapter in the Word of God. It contains 176 verses and exalts the Word of God under ten different names. These are *way, testimonies, precepts, commandments, saying, law, judgment, righteousness, statue and word*. In the Hebrew the equivalent of one of these words appears in every verse except verse 122, and this one exalts the living Word, the surety of God's people. Therefore, this whole Psalm, the longest in the book of Psalms, speaks of one thing, exalts one thing, magnifies one thing, and glorifies one thing - the Word of the living God.

The student should make a close personal examination of each statement made in this Psalm, but, to emphasize the importance God has attached to His Word, let us examine a few verses together.

In the first two verses the Psalmist speaks of the happiness (blessedness) of those who walk in the way of the Lord and who keep His testimonies. How can one walk in His way and keep His testimonies if they are not fully and accurately known? Imagine the contradiction in the life of those who are fully assured that they are walking in the way and keeping His precepts, yet at the same time they confess they know very little about the Word of God.

In the fourth verse he states, "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently." Can His precepts be kept if they are not known? Many people believe that if they were not walking in His precepts, God would be severely punishing them. Therefore, they reason, that since their lives are more or less serene, they must be walking in and keeping His precepts. They fail to realize that God's present administration is one of grace and not one of judgment. .

In verse seven the Psalmist says, "I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned Thy righteous judgments." Many people believe they are praising God just because now and then they shout out "Praise God" or "Praise the Lord." Such ejaculations often are not praise at all. Sometimes they are simply a meaningless use of the name of the Lord in vain. The only praise that is acceptable to God is that which comes from an upright heart. This praise is impossible apart from learning the righteous judgments of God. These righteous judgments are the very Word of God.

Volumes could not exhaust this Psalm, as the student will quickly discover if he meditates upon each verse of it. He will realize that no matter how much importance we may place upon the Word,

God has already attached an importance to it which we can never equal. Take, for example, this matchless portion:

"O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation.

I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts.

I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Thy Word,

I have not departed from Thy judgments: for Thou hast taught me.

How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:97-105.

The importance of knowing the Word of God receives its greatest emphasis in the book of Proverbs. In order to fully appreciate its testimony, let every reader consider that maybe tomorrow, or next year, or in ten years a situation will arise in which he will realize the imperative need of a wisdom that is higher than his own. He cannot lean upon "would-be" advisers because of their conflicting voices, and he will long for a wisdom that far exceeds anything possessed by mortal men. The hour of need is positively too late to secure such wisdom, and if we would be ready to face the problems of life, we must secure our wisdom in advance. But, someone will ask how wisdom can be obtained in advance to meet a problem which is unknown in advance? Is there a general wisdom that will make a man wise in every situation? The answer is, "Yes." There is a wisdom that never fails. That wisdom is a knowledge of the Word of God.

In the first chapter of Proverbs wisdom is personified and appears as a herald. She cries outside our dwellings, and her voice is heard in the busy thoroughfares. In the busy marts of trade, wherever men gather, her voice is lifted up above the noise. She seeks the attention of those who are engaged in seeking gold, gain or success. She asks a direct and challenging question:

"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" Provo 1:22.

Since wisdom still utters her cry, this question today can only be applicable *to* those who feel that it is ideal to be in possession of the barest minimum of truth. They take pride in confessing that all they want to hear or know is what they call "the simple gospel." In this passage wisdom places these simple ones who love simplicity in the same class with the scorners who delight in scorning and the fools who hate knowledge. These words are spoken in reproof, and are intended to make men turn. **If they turn from their love of ignorance and their hatred of every advance in knowledge, they will enter into possession of the spirit of wisdom and be in possession of the words of wisdom.** Man's failure to do this brings the following judgment. Wisdom says:

"Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." Proverbs 1:24-29.

These verses are often quoted in connection with the gospel and are presented as God's call to sinners to come to Christ, and a threat of dire consequences if men refuse. But in fact they are wisdom's call to those who love simplicity and to the fools who hate knowledge. If they fail to heed now, wisdom will laugh at them when they call in the day of distress and anguish.

I claim no power to see into the future, and I would not be guilty of painting dark pictures of the years to come. Yet, I know that the problems that the post-war world must face will be as great as those imposed by the war. Victory will bring its day or week of celebration, and after that comes such things as untold millions of defeated soldiers fleeing back to their countries in disorder, imported foreign workers and prisoners of war abandoning the countries of their captivity and returning to what was once their homes, the people who were forced to migrate returning to their war ravaged lands. In Russia alone fifty million Soviet citizens will return to the wasted territory of western Russia. Starvation, disease, disorder and chaos is almost sure to have its reign. Our own country may remain untouched by the ravages of war, yet we will not be isolated from the problems of the post-war world. These problems in our own country may be so great that all the combined wisdom of men may not be equal to them. These years are just ahead for us, nevertheless, we can face them with assurance and confidence if we know the personal and the written Word of God. We cannot imagine the problems we may have to face, but we do know that a knowledge of the Word of God will make us wise in that day. In the days that may intervene before these days are upon us, let us diligently seek to greatly increase our store of divine wisdom.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:5-6.

THE RADIO MINISTRY

Soon after sending out the radio letter in December it became apparent that there was need of making some changes in our radio ministry in the Chicago area. The response from the friends of the witness to that broadcast has exceeded all expectations, but all the friends felt that the time (8:15 a.m.) was not good, and that the staggered days of broadcasting were unwise. The time was wrong in homes where children were leaving for school, and the staggered days made it easy to miss a broadcast and break the connection. There was no opportunity for any change on WJJD, but it so happened at that time that six periods each week became available on WAIT. The friends of the witness were unanimous in the opinion that the change should be made, and, even though it meant greatly increasing the work, the contract was signed, The new broadcast begins on Monday, March 1 and will be heard every morning, Monday through Saturday at 10 :15 a.m.

The new arrangement is better from every standpoint. It gives better coverage, a more favorable time for the broadcast, twice as many broadcasts each week, and more friendly and cooperative spirit from the station management. Station WAIT was formerly WCBD, therefore, it is in reality the same station over which I was formerly heard for thirty minutes every Tuesday morning. On its present wave length (820 Kc) it has a much stronger signal than before. It can be heard over all of Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa, the northern half of Indiana and the western half of Michigan. Over eight million people live in this area. If any of our readers have friends in this area, they should write for some of the advertising cards and notify them of the broadcast. These cards need only to be addressed and stamped. Please state how many you can use.

In beginning the new ministry over WAIT, the messages already given over WJJD will be repeated. In the first two weeks of March the first twelve messages will be repeated. These will be followed by a new series which will expound the book of Galatians. After this, the series on Romans, which had been started on WJJD, will be resumed and the studies carried to their completion.

The enlargement of this radio ministry places a much heavier financial burden upon us. We will welcome the help of every friend everywhere in the task of supporting this. Do not think that this ministry is intended for the benefit of those people in this area who already know the truth. It is a missionary work, an evangelistic work and a Bible teaching work intended for the people who have never heard the rightly-divided Word. Those who know the truth will derive pleasure and profit from it, but the ministry is not specifically for them.

A number of friends who read the three messages printed in the last issue have inquired about the announcements which precede and follow the radio messages. These vary from time to time, but for the information of those who cannot hear the broadcast, here is a general idea of what is used.

(Station Announcer, Opening) FIFTEEN MINUTES WITH THE BIBLE. Make it a habit. You are invited to spend fifteen minutes every week-day, Monday through Saturday, at this time with Otis Q. Sellers, independent Bible student and teacher, in considering the things that are written in the Word of God. And now, by transcription, we hear Mr. Sellers (The Message).

(Station Announcer, Closing) You have just spent FIFTEEN MINUTES WITH THE BIBLE. Make it a habit. The speaker was Otis Q. Sellers. This program is heard over WAIT every week-day morning, Monday through Saturday at 10:15. Mr. Sellers is the Editor of the Bible study magazine *The Word of Truth* and the writer of numerous pamphlets dealing with Biblical subjects. Sample copies of *The Word of Truth*, and a descriptive list of his writings may be obtained without cost by writing to him at Post Office Box 777, Chicago. Tune in every week-day at 10:15 a.m. for FIFTEEN MINUTES WITH THE BIBLE. Make it a habit.

This will give our friends an idea of the entire program. The name of the program, and its character comes from a studied effort to make it honest, sincere and devoted. Will every reader pray for it, and if led, give it their material support?

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS **(selected subjects from original text, RDH)**

****This witness has a friendly and helpful group of readers in New Zealand. Chief among these is Mr. William Barron of Gisborne, whose life for many years has been devoted to the task of helping those who teach the rightly-divided Word. All who have been blessed through the use of *The Companion Bible* are indebted to Mr. Barron for the material help and spiritual encouragement he gave to Dr. Bullinger, the compiler of that monumental work. Mr. Barron has been one of the very best friends that *The Word of Truth* has had. For many years he has constantly covered his country with literature, and this work has led to the enlightenment and encouragement of many. With inexhaustible faith and courage he has lived and walked as a member of the Church which is His body.

****Another good friend of this witness in that country is Mr. Ralph V. Gibbs, 48 Sunshine Avenue, Karori, Wellington, W. 3, New Zealand. And it is with pleasure that I am able to announce that Mr. Gibbs has graciously consented to represent me in his country. He will, as a labor of love in behalf of this witness, represent me in all matters which pertain to this ministry. All orders for books,

requests for the magazine and gifts to the work should be sent to him by all readers in New Zealand. All gifts sent to him will be acknowledged first by him and then in due time by me. Friends there will please note that mails are very slow and it may require as long as four months before acknowledgments reach them from the U.S.A.

****Concerning last issue. No articles heretofore published have brought as much favorable comment from my readers as the three radio messages. Others will appear from time to time. The readers enjoyed the article by Dr. J. H. Pettengell, but many stated that they prefer the Editor to do the writing and maintain the magazine as a personal witness to the Word. Once again, it is necessary to state that Dr. J. H. Pettengell and Dr. Wm. L. Pettingill are not the same.

****Concerning this issue. I will appreciate it if individuals and groups will give full consideration to the subjects discussed in this issue in the *Truth from the Scriptures series*, then write me their reactions, questions and comments. This will be very helpful to me. However, it will be impossible for me to enter into correspondence with anyone in regard to these subjects.

****The growth of this witness has created a demand that more efficient means be provided in order to take care of it. Greatest need at the present time is for addressing equipment. This is especially needed in connection with the radio ministry. I will deeply appreciate it if the friends of this witness will send in gifts to pay for this equipment. Please designate that your gift is intended for this purpose.

*****The Bible Fellowship* of Muskegon, Michigan, where our brother Garret Hazekamp ministers the Word rightly divided, have purchased a building in order to secure a suitable meeting place. It is now being remodeled and redecorated and will be in use about March 15. The building is very well located, being at the corner of Catherine and William St. 'Bus passes the door. The morning service is held at 10:00 a.m. Bible School at 11:00 a.m. and Evening Service at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Hazekamp has a radio broadcast every Sunday afternoon at 2:45 p.m. over Station WKBZ, Muskegon.

****Our two missionaries, Miss Pearl Brookman and Miss Mary Morgan, continue their work near Blytheville, Arkansas. They face innumerable problems in their attempt to carry on a faithful testimony. They need the spiritual and material support of all who love the truth. If their experiences parallel mine, I am sure that they are tempted at times to throw off the yoke of faithfulness to the truth and insure success by adopting a message and method that is sure to bring it. But the yoke is His, so we try to serve in meekness and humility. The recognition that this is a day of apostasy, and that our failure to do great things is in accord with His will, makes His yoke easy and His burden light.

****HONORARY AGENTS OF THE WORD OF TRUTH

GREAT BRITAIN. Mr. F. W. Gardiner, "Anathoth" Pepper Lane, Earley, Reading, Berks, England.

NEW ZEALAND. Mr. Ralph V. Gibbs, 48 Sunshine Avenue, Karori, Wellington W. 3, New Zealand.

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