

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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THE GREAT WORK OF THE SPIRIT

In spite of all of man's material progress, the human race is in a pitiful condition when considered from the moral, spiritual, or physical standpoint. No matter which way man takes, it ends in destruction and misery. He does not know the way of peace. In view of the deplorable situation that exists throughout the world, there are many who feel that it is high time for Jesus Christ to come back again. The nearness of His coming is being freely proclaimed by many.

But when all scriptural facts are honestly considered His second coming would be of no benefit to the human race as a whole, inasmuch as at His coming He takes vengeance upon "them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ." These shall "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in them that believe." See **2 Thessalonians 1:7-10**. Since the description "them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ" takes in the overwhelming majority of living humanity, it is evident that the second coming of Christ now would be a great catastrophe for the human race as a whole, and it would accomplish nothing more for the world that knows not God than did the flood of Noah's day.

I for one, do not believe that the second coming of Christ should take place, or, that it will take place until mankind has reaped the benefits that were purchased by the first coming of Christ. By His "first coming" I mean His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The glorious blessings that were to come to mankind through His great self-humiliation and sacrifice have never been realized. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved," is the witness of John. (John 3:17) "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world," are the direct words of Christ. Yet after 2,000 years the world is not yet saved. It has never yet partaken of the glorious fruit of His redemptive mission.

That a few out of each generation should be redeemed and forgiven does not exhaust the blessings that were purchased for the world at the first coming of Christ. The earnest expectation of the creation has never yet been realized. Creation has not yet been delivered from the bondage of corruption. The whole creation still groans and travails in pain. The head of Satan has never yet been bruised. The night is still upon us. The glorious day promised by Paul has not yet come. The world still gropes in darkness. The infirmities and the sicknesses, which He bore still plague mankind even those who believe (See Matthew 8:16, 17). The blessings of peace, truth, health, light, and life were all purchased by and guaranteed to mankind by the first coming of Christ. Not one thing more needs to be done by Him to make this a reality. He need not come again to finish the work. Yet the world has never yet experienced the glorious blessings, which were purchased for it by the first coming of Christ.

There can be no doubt in the mind of any careful reader of the book of Acts but that the first fruits of all these blessings were seen in the early days of the Acts period. The Spirit descended upon 120 and their number quickly increased to 3,000 as the result of one message. The confusion of languages, a curse laid upon men at the tower of Babel, was lifted so far as these believers were concerned. Lame men were made to walk, sick men were healed, dead men were raised, good men were blessed, and wicked men were punished. Beyond all question, the heavens had begun their glorious government, even though that government is only in a stage comparable to the blade in growing grain (Mark 4:26-29).

But by the time we reach the end of the Acts period it is evident that there is a lull in the battle. God's first purpose in His program to "bless the world" has been accomplished. An ecclesia has been called, trained, and demonstrated as faithful and competent. The time has now arrived for God to bring forth all His power and skill and gain the complete victory. Paul fully recognizes this and predicts the outcome. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," is his firm declaration. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," was his promise to the saints in Rome (See Romans 13:12 and 16:20). But something radical happened. The good work, which God had begun was wholly suspended. I believe that his suspension officially began when Paul announced at Acts 28:28 that "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles." By these words those who were to receive the blessings first (Israel) are cut off from the channel of blessing. In letters which he wrote after this suspension had taken place Paul states that Epaphroditus had been sick unto death (Phil. 2:25-27); declares that he had left Trophimus at Miletum sick (2 Tim. 4:20); and advises Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach's sake and for his repeated infirmities, (1 Tim. 5:23). These statements speak eloquently. They tell us that the blessings of physical health, and freedom from infirmities and sicknesses, purchased for man kind by the death of Christ, are not now the portion even of those who believe. Exclusive of redemption and forgiveness, now available to all as individuals on the basis of faith, the full blessings for mankind based upon the death of Christ are all "reserved in heaven," while God demonstrates the graciousness of His character. This is His present purpose. This is what He is now doing.

If I Be Lifted Up

One of the greatest blessings purchased for mankind by the death of Christ is stated in His own words in **John 12:32, 33:**

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.

The controversies which have long raged concerning the meaning of this passage have served to blind most men to its true significance. This passage is, as a rule, watered down in its meaning and force, so that it can be made to speak of something that God is doing today. Many teach that He draws all men, but since most of them refuse to come, very few are saved. Others believe that the "all men" here means all kinds of men, rather than all mankind living at one time. In the past, I have preferred the second explanation, rather than to believe that the drawing is so weak that most men never seem to feel it, and out of those who feel it the majority reject it. Today, I reject both of these explanations.

In this day of grace God has made Jesus Christ attractive and desirable to many, but this gracious work cannot be described as drawing all unto Him. This statement of Christ stands as a promise to mankind, which has never yet been fulfilled. The time must yet come when Jesus Christ will draw all men unto Himself. This drawing must be universal and unlimited, and it must be accompanied by such light and truth that men have a true basis upon which to come to Him. If after this gracious act of drawing, men continue in their perverse obduracy, they will be eliminated from among the children of men. The time will come when there will be no place on earth for a Christ rejector. The declaration of John the Baptist that He will thoroughly purge His floor, gather His wheat, and burn up the chaff, will most certainly be fulfilled (See Matt. 3:12). This promise is linked with His first coming and not with His second. It will be fulfilled when the heavens resume their government, and this government passes from that stage likened to a blade and advances to that stage likened to "the ear" in growing grain.

This specific drawing for one part of mankind is clearly set forth in **Hosea 2:14-23**. It is there that we learn of its character, its power, and its effectiveness. Speaking of the children of Israel the Lord declares:

Therefore, behold, I will ALLURE her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi (my husband): and shalt call me no more Baali. Hosea 2:14-17.

I recommend that the reader read this entire portion with an unprejudiced mind. If he does, he can come to only one conclusion. In the light of 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10, if this prophecy is not fulfilled before the second coming of Christ, there will not be an Israelite left to whom it can be fulfilled.

When God does allure the children of Israel, there will be some who will repudiate all His allurements. This is made plain by **Ezekiel 20:37, 38**:

And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

Thus from this specific example of Jehovah alluring or drawing one part of mankind, we can learn much about His drawing of all mankind to Himself.

In complete harmony with and operating concurrently with this drawing of all men declared in John 12:32, 33 is the great work of the Spirit of Truth described in John 16:7-11. It is this work of the Spirit which will make the drawing by Christ effective and complete.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin,

because they believe not on Me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. John 16:7-11.

This is another strong declaration which men in their interpretations of it are constantly seeking to weaken in order to make it fit in with something which they feel the Spirit is doing today. I do not believe that the great work described in this passage is going on today so far as the world is concerned. I further believe that when it is done the effects will be so cataclysmic that it will result in a complete change in God's administration, and mankind will be living under a new order of things. When this great work is done by the Spirit on behalf of mankind it can then be said, "The night is gone, the day is here" (Compare Rom. 13:12). It can then in truth be said, "The darkness is past, and the true light now shines" (Compare 1 John 2:8).

At the present time a definite attempt is being made to confuse and belittle my teaching concerning this passage due to the fact that I have used the word *enlighten* to translate the word *elegcho*. This is the word *reprove* in the King James Version. This to me is nothing more than throwing dust, for it makes no difference whether you translate this reprove, convict, convince, expose, or enlighten, the effect will be the same when the Holy Spirit does this great work. It matters not whether the Paraclete (Comforter) **reproves, convicts, convinces, exposes, or enlightens**, when He does it no man will ever again be the same, neither will he stand the same before God. This work will either be a savor of life or a savor of death to every man, who becomes a partaker of it. If he acts upon it he will be blessed, but if after this merciful work he remains obdurate, he will be cut off from among the living. In this connection see Isa. 1:28. No man can ignore or reject this great work and go unpunished.

Some are creating confusion in their own minds concerning my interpretation of this passage due to their failure to recognize and keep clear certain facts. They charge me with teaching a sudden and instantaneous enlightening of every human being, then when they look for it in this passage it is not there. They are right. It is not there, nor anywhere else in the Word. I teach no such thing. I believe that this work will be done upon unbelieving Israel first, then later upon the rest of mankind. Furthermore, I believe that Israel in due course will receive additional light which is not granted to other nations by the Spirit, and which they must receive through Israel. This is in harmony with God's great call to Israel recorded in Isaiah:

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people (peoples, in Hebrew): but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. Isaiah 60:1-5.

Others are creating confusion by failing to recognize the twofold work of the Spirit set forth in this passage. They are pointing to his work for the believing disciples, and insisting that this is all that is taught here. But a twofold work is declared here. "I will send him unto you," describes his work for the disciples, and this is explained in detail in verses 12 to 15. But the Spirit of Truth also has a mission to the world, a work to do which he has never yet done. That this work is done for those who are not believers is made plain by the words "because they believe not on me." I see no value in using the truth that declares his work for the disciples to deny his larger work for mankind.

In order to fully appreciate the great work of the Spirit for mankind we will need to fully understand the Greek word *elegcho* (pronounced, *el-ENG-kho*). In the *King James Version* this is translated *reprove* but to the best of my knowledge no translator except Rotherham has ever fol-

lowed this example. Later translators gave up "reprove" for "convict." Those who followed gave up "convict" for "convince." N. Darby used the phrase "bring demonstration to the world" in his Version, and Weymouth concurred in this in a footnote in his translation.

Since almost every translator, expositor, and commentator has abandoned the word *reprove* as a translation of *elegcho*, I see no reason for maintaining it. My own studies in this word have brought the following results.

At the time the *King James Version* was translated the English word *reprove* had one meaning which it does not have today, and it seems that at that time the word *reprove* was considered a fair translation of *elegcho*. It did mean then, as it does now, "to chide as blameworthy, to rebuke," but it also meant "to convict or convince," as an unabridged English dictionary will show. But the word *reprove* did not maintain that meaning, so translators abandoned it and used the word *convict*. But *convict* also failed to maintain its value, taking on a strong legal and religious coloring, so it was abandoned for *convince*. When I began to set forth the truth I saw in this passage, I sought for a more expressive word, and came upon and used the word *enlighten*, as a means of setting forth the truth. Since then some have declared in writing that my entire teaching concerning a period of blessing for the world before the second coming of Christ is based upon my belief that *elengcho* means enlighten. It has been announced that this is to be disproved, that it will be demonstrated that *elegcho* does not mean enlighten. They feel that in doing so that my teaching will fall like a house of cards, inasmuch as they have pulled out what they declare its main support. But as I said before, even if we go back to the old translation "reprove," the effect or results will still be the same. When the Holy Spirit does this work, whether he reproves or enlightens, complacent and ignorant men will never be the same again.

Since there are those who would make "a man an offender for a word" (Isa. 29:21), I will seek to give my understanding of the Greek word *elegcho* without trying to encompass its meaning in one word. We may well wish that there were some word in English that has in it the breadth and comprehensiveness of thought expressed by this Greek word. The comprehensiveness of this word is sometimes startling. A careful consideration of every occurrence of every form of this word in the New Testament, along with all occurrences in the Septuagint has brought the following understanding. Truth seekers will bear with me as I try to set this forth.

If a child should say to me, "Three and two are six," my answer would be, "No, three and two are five." Then I would hold up three fingers on one hand and two on the other and ask him to count them, so as to demonstrate the truth of what I have told him. This simple act, which I have done for the child would be what the Greeks meant by *elegcho*. Now if we seek an English word to describe what I have done, we face a great problem. We could use the word *reprove* (providing there is no idea of rebuke in it), since the child held a wrong idea and I corrected it, but there was also instruction and demonstration, and these ideas are not encompassed by our word *reproof*.

That which I have done could also be described as "to bring conviction" or to "enlighten." Personally, I like the word *enlighten* as a translation for *elegcho*, even though I readily admit that it does not fully express all that is in the Greek. However, if anyone objects to it then let them give their own definition of *elegcho*, and also suggest a suitable translation. If it is more expressive than enlighten, I will be glad to adopt it.

The fundamental or approximate definition, which I gave to *elegcho* in my previous studies was "to impart information or understanding concerning the subject in question." Further study has led me to enlarge on this. I would now say that *elegcho* means to impart correction, information, or understanding concerning the subject. I do not believe that any idea of "rebuke" is in this word, neither do I believe that the ideas of "expose" or "put to shame" are in it. However, I would say that once correction, information, or understanding has been imparted a man may as a result be exposed,

put to shame, or reproved by it. At times correction, information or understanding may be imparted with such ends in view, but this is not the idea set forth by *elegcho*.

Take, for example, two men dining together. One unknowingly drops some food on his necktie. His friend discreetly tells him about it, or, we may say, he imparts to him information concerning it. This information greatly embarrasses the man, he being very meticulous as to his manners and appearance. But even though this information does embarrass the man that was not in the least the purpose in back of it. His friend has in truth done him a favor.

When the Holy Spirit reproveth, convicts, or enlightens (choose any word you desire) the world in respect to sin, righteousness, and judgment, the purpose of this will not be to put to shame, even though in many cases this will be the immediate result. The real purpose of this work and the end desired is that the knee shall bow and the tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.

Since the meaning of any word comes from the usage made of it, it follows that the meaning of Biblical words comes from the use made of them by the Spirit of God. The three words to be considered here are *elegcho*, *elegchos*, and *elegchis*. We will consider these in the order of their occurrence. The reader is asked to follow with an open Bible, as space forbids the full quotation of the passages in which these words are found.

Matthew 18:15. Translated, "tell. . . fault." This could be better translated, "Go and enlighten him (that is inform him of the wrong he has done) between you and him alone," Dealings between God's people concerning wrong one feels has been done should never begin by the one wronged reproving, rebuking, or exposing the other. They should begin by the wronged one imparting full information to the transgressor concerning his alleged offense.

Luke 3:19. Here the word *elegcho* (translated "reproved") would seem to mean rebuke, exposure, or censure. But when we consider what John said it takes on another light. "It is not lawful for thee to have her,"

(Matt. 14:4) was John's simple but authoritative way of enlightening Herod as to his sin and guilt. A dear example of how John exposed and rebuked is found in Matthew 3:7, 8. In Matthew 14:4 we see how he enlightened one who had sinned. Religious sinners received rough treatment at John's hands.

John 3:20. Translated "reproved." Here *elegcho* means "to show the true character of," and it is used concerning deeds rather than the man. Men who do evil seek no understanding from God concerning the nature of their deeds.

John 8:9. Translated "convicted." Here it is the work of the conscience, not the work of the Paraclete. These men were suddenly enlightened by their own conscience, their own knowledge of all the facts in the case suddenly welled up in their minds, causing them great shame.

John 8:46. Translated "convinceth." He had convinced them of their sin by bringing the truth to bear upon them. Then He asked which one of them could convince Him of sin. Some accused Him of sin, some rebuked Him for sin, but not one of them could impart to Him information that would show where He had missed the mark. He had at all times perfect understanding in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment. No one could enlighten Him in regard to these things.

John 16:8. Translated "reprove." This is the main passage under consideration. This work of the Spirit concerns three great matters-sin, righteousness, and judgment. It is evident that while men may need to be reproveth concerning sin, they should never be reproveth concerning righteousness. They might need to be reproveth concerning a lack of righteousness, but that is not what the passage says. The fact that righteousness is mentioned here demands some better translation of *elegcho* than

"reprove."

1 Corinthians 14:24. Translated "convinced." The idea of reproof or exposing an unlearned person is repugnant to anyone who has the love of Christ in his heart. If these Corinthians prophesied instead of "speaking in languages" they would enlighten these unlearned men who came in when the ecclesia was assembled.

Ephesians 5:11. Translated "reprove." This does not refer to men, as the passage deals with "the unfruitful works of darkness." We are not to participate in any manner in these works. By means of the word of God we are to impart information concerning the true character of these works. *Elegcho* is a comprehensive word that sometimes means to turn the light on a thing, as well as to give light to a man. The whole context here deals with enlightening.

Ephesians 5:13. Translated "reproved." The real message of this verse is that all things that have had the light turned on them are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

1 Timothy 5:20. Translated "rebuke." The translation here is much too harsh. The idea of one believer rebuking another believer for his sins is foreign to the grace, which we know. This would make us "rebukers" of men rather than heralds of God's Word. "Those that sin, enlighten (in the sense of imparting correction) before all, that others also may fear," is a better translation of this passage. In 2 Tim. 4:2 we are told how this is to be done.

2 Timothy 3:16. Translated "reproof." This is the first occurrence of the noun *elegchos*. This passage tells us that all Scripture is beneficial for teaching, enlightenment, correction, and for discipline in righteousness. These are the things that equip the man of God for every good work.

2 Timothy 4:2. Translated "reprove." Here we have "reprove" and "rebuke" in the same sentence. Both of these are to be done with all patience and teaching. Paul does not repeat himself. To reprove is not to rebuke.

Titus 1:9. Translated "convince." To convince the gainsayers means to impart truth to those who contradict. He who has won an argument has won nothing. He who has imparted truth has given light.

Titus 1:13. Translated "rebuke." The exhortation here, as it stands in our English version is foreign to those who have been dealt with in grace. "Enlighten them rigorously," better expresses the truth, and all gracious men will concede that this is the best course. Clerical pretenders who seek to be lords over God's heritage may prefer the *King James Version* translation. All teachers know that there are times when the truth must be imparted forcefully and emphatically, permitting no further discussion, which might lead the hearers to think that the matter is not yet settled. This is what Timothy was instructed to do in the case set forth here.

Titus 2:15. Translated "rebuke." This is another translation, which is loved by those who emulate Diotrephes (3 John 1:9). "Enlighten by means of every precept," is the meaning of the Greek.

Hebrews 11:1. The second and final occurrence of the noun *elegchos* translated "evidence," an interesting translation, to say the least, and giving proof that the translators of the *King James Version* hardly knew what to do about the Greek word *elegcho*. They used six different words to translate twenty occurrences (rebuke, reprove, convince, convict, evidence, tell. . . fault). Faith brings enlightenment or conviction concerning matters which are not visible to the eye or manifest to the senses.

Hebrews 12:5. Translated "rebuke." This is a quotation from Proverbs 3:12. There it reads "correction." The purpose of imparting information is usually to correct our thinking, since our thoughts are not God's thought.

James 2:9. Translated "convinced." An understanding of this passage is based upon the meaning of the term "royal law." This is sovereign over all other laws, and all other laws hang upon it. This law instructs, it enlightens. It imparts understanding to the transgressor of the nature of his offense.

2 Peter 2:16. Translated "rebuked." The only occurrence of *elegchis*. If we read Numbers 22 we will find what the ass said to Balaam. It said very little, but what it did say was a shaft of light into the darkened mind of the prophet.

Revelation 3:19. Translated "rebuke." A poor translation indeed, and foreign to the truth declared here. Those whom He loves, He enlightens and disciplines. This is the final reference.

The reader now has the facts before him. He can make his own independent study and come to his own conclusions. May his sole desire be to lay hold of the truth.

It is always wise in dealing with the Word of God to let it mean all that it can mean. John 16:7-11 sets forth one of the greatest acts of God that the human race upon the earth will ever experience. As said before, I believe that his work will be done first by the Spirit upon the seed of Abraham. The prophets were not ignorant of this work, it being no secret, and if we consider what this will mean to Israel, one part of mankind, we will get some idea of what it will mean to all of mankind. This great work of the Spirit for Israel is spoken of by Isaiah.

And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. Isa. 29:18.

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. Isaiah 29:24.

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. Isa. 30:21.

These passages, I believe, set forth the results and effects that come from the Spirit of Truth enlightening Israel to sin, righteousness, and judgment. They tell us a little about what we can expect when the same work is done for the balance of mankind.

The greatest difficulty I have to overcome in presenting this truth is the traditional idea that John 16:7.11 presents a work which the Holy Spirit is doing today. This was an idea that I had to surrender in order to make room for the truth. When considered honestly in the light of every fact it is impossible to believe that the Holy Spirit is reproving, convicting, or enlightening those who do not believe. The greatest argument in proof of this is that mankind today is not reproved, convicted, or enlightened concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. In the more than thirty years that I have served the Lord I have never yet met a man or woman who did not believe who showed any evidence of reproof, conviction, or enlightenment concerning these three great things. I have met innumerable men who feel that moral offenses are sins, but I have never yet met anyone who felt any sense of sin and guilt because of his failure to believe the record God had given of His Son. Even the believer of today never knows or recognizes that this is sin until after he has been delivered from it. Furthermore, mankind today knows nothing of righteousness and judgment, and even the average believer gropes in darkness concerning these two great things. The time will yet come when the Spirit of truth will do for mankind what he came to do. If he is doing this work today, it is so ineffectual that it cannot be recognized in the lives of those who do not believe. No unbeliever today shows any evidence of this work. They continue in the same complacency and self-satisfaction that men manifested before the Spirit of Truth came. Surely the Spirit can do more than this. Surely he will do it. When he does the world will realize one of the fruits of Christ's redemptive mission.

THE RECOVERY OF TRUTH

It is my firm belief that God has spoken, and that all He has said is enshrined for us in the book we call the Bible. I believe further that it is the duty of God's people in every generation to labor incessantly to bring forth the truth, which God has placed in the pages of His book.

It is evident that this duty is completely ignored by the majority of those who profess to be ministers of the Word. Their views of the truth are stereotyped from the beginning of their labors, and they never open God's book with any expectation of discovering truth. They prefer to fill their little vessels at this or that system's theology, and they do not believe that any advance beyond this is desirable or possible.

The few individualists who are today engaged in Biblical research are as a rule guilty of defeating their own purposes. They, with whatever equipment is available to them, go into the Word in the search for truth. And since God has never failed to reward the honest seeker, all who seek for truth in His book are sure to find a portion of it. But the moment a truth is found, it is immediately stamped by them as being God's final, irrevocable, and complete revelation upon the subject in question. And, most tragic of all, once it is placed in print it can never again be opened up for clarification, reinvestigation, or advancement. They appear to take their stand with Pilate who said, "What I have written, I have written."

Those who do Biblical research must always keep in mind that when a truth is uncovered it comes forth only as an inference or an intimation. These inferences and intimations are often considered to be THE truth, but as a rule they are only an indication of the direction in which the truth will be found. If these inferences and intimations of truth are established as being THE truth, they will become error, for part-truth always becomes a lie when we refuse to advance from it.

It must be fully recognized by all who undertake to labor at the task of uncovering or recovering the truth that no truth ever emerges one hundred percent perfect or complete. And this must also be recognized by all who seek to follow along in the efforts of others who labor in the Word. In the present dispensation it is impossible that truth can be brought forth in one hundred percent purity. We often spoil its purity in the very process of mining it out. We more often contaminate it as we seek to bring it forth in harmony with ideas already held which we think are true, but which will not stand up when tested by the Word of God.

Well meaning friends often exhort me not to set forth anything until I am sure it is perfect and complete, then once having set it forth, never to change concerning it for fear I will be charged with inconsistency and instability. To one who insisted that I follow this course I answered as follows: "I am the publisher of two magazines. One is called THE WORD OF TRUTH and the other is called FINAL AND PERFECT TRUTH. In the first I set forth my findings to date as a student of the Word, and in it will be found all the inferences and intimations of truth I have uncovered. In the second I publish such things as are final and irrevocable, upon which all study and research has ceased, and no further advance is possible. The first has now been published in many issues, but the first issue of the second has never yet gone forth and probably never will." He saw the point, and remained my good friend and helper till the day of his death.

Many people feel that true Christian consistency consists in stereotyping our views, then resolutely refusing to make any change lest we should be charged with instability. I believe that true Christian consistency consists in admitting that "we know nothing as we ought to know it" and in holding open our minds to receive truth from every part of God's Word upon every subject in it, then

changing our views, language, and practices as often and as fast as we receive further light. If in doing this we are charged with inconsistency and instability, we can only consider such criticism as being beneath our notice. It is seldom that I find much in the writings of Emerson with which I can fully agree, but the following quotation from his writings strikes a responsive chord in my heart.

"A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds; adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do; he may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now, in hard words; and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks, in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said today."

The discovery of new truth will most certainly modify former views and opinions, and there can be no end of this process until we know as we are known. It is often the stubborn refusal of men to modify views and opinions already held that keeps them from receiving truth.

The true disciple of Jesus Christ must advance in knowledge. And he will do so unless he is asleep or his mind has become stultified with prejudice. It is even as the Lord Jesus said to those who believed on Him, "If he continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and truth shall make you free." John 8:31, 32.

In my own ministry there is an experience which often repeats itself. Someone will read one of my studies and be greatly helped by it. It may have answered a question that long puzzled them, or shed light on a passage, which has long been obscure. This leads them to get in contact with me in the hope of obtaining "all truth" in one large package, which when they open will contain thousands of smaller packages, all of them labeled, classified, and ready to be placed upon their shelves, to be opened up as need may require. In those packages they hope to find truth upon every subject pure and complete.

They are often disappointed when they find that I do not have this, that I am only a sinner saved by grace, and a seeker after truth myself. I often need to explain that there are thousands of subjects in the Word upon which I have never done any personal research, and on what subjects I have studied I feel that I know nothing as I ought to know it. Furthermore, every time I have tried to tie some truth up in a neat package, I find that the string breaks, burned through by the ever increasing light that comes to all who progressively study the Word.

In view of the fact that no truth emerges perfect, and also that no one lifetime is sufficient to bring to perfection even one truth, the honest seeker will reserve the absolute right to change, clarify, advance, or add to any idea he has ever set forth as being the truth. He must not be deterred from progressing in the truth by charges of inconsistency or contradictions. He must not fear that someone will embarrass him by pointing out what he said or wrote five or ten years ago. As E. W. Bullinger is reputed to have said; "If anyone would know what I believe upon a subject, he must find out what I believe now."

It is always evident to any teacher of the Word that many of God's people are more interested in getting their questions answered than they are in the truth as a whole. When a question has arisen as a result of our own investigations in the Word, we should honestly and with patience seek the answer. An honest question or difficulty concerning the truth is a legitimate subject of believing prayer. But if our questions are merely the outcroppings of our curiosity, if they are the result of our minds having thrashed around a bit, if they came up merely because we wondered about something, then the answers to them will not advance us in the truth one whit.

It is strange indeed what some expect of the truth. They think that the truth should produce much better churches than church theology. They should learn that truth has no relationship to earthly organizations, and that as a rule it does a church more harm than good.

Others think that the truth should open up for them a much wider sphere of service and make it possible for them to be a greater help to more people. They are often disappointed when the opposite takes place. Satan and men will conspire against them so that the truth is never allowed to come up for discussion. This Satanic strategy has led many to abandon the truth. "I almost froze to death for want of fellowship," was the confession of one who abandoned the truth. "I grew tired of speaking to little groups all the time," is the declaration of another who turned away. We leave all such to their Lord, but cannot refrain from firing one question at them as they turn their heels: "What did you expect of the truth?"

THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS

(Continued from Volume XII, No. 3)

THE SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM

In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel our Lord began to reveal certain truths concerning the kingdom of the heavens, which hitherto had been kept secret. The revelation of these truths permitted His disciples to enter into an understanding of the secret workings of God's government when it became a reality in the earth. The multitudes had their own ideas concerning the operation of God's government. They thought that "the kingdom of God should immediately appear" (Luke 19:11), that is, that it should suddenly loom up and become manifest. Our Lord made no attempt to correct these false impressions. He spoke in parables so that His own would know the secret of how God's government would be established upon the earth.

The parables of Matthew 13 are called "the secrets of the kingdom of the heavens" (Matthew 13:11), and it is also there declared that our Lord spoke in parables so that his true disciples would know these secrets.

The **first parable** uttered is that of a sower going forth to sow seed. This parable is not prefaced by the words "the kingdom of heaven is likened unto," as are all the other parables in this chapter. But it reveals a secret of the rule of the heavens, and it deals with the four classes of hearers who heard "the word (message) of the kingdom" in the period before the death of Christ. Some of the seed had fallen on good ground. The word of the kingdom had been heard by some who understood it. There were 120 of these present on the day of Pentecost, and before the day was over they had increased to 3,120. Truly they did bring forth, "some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23).

But we are not primarily interested just now in the men who heard the message of the kingdom. Our special interest is in those parables in Matthew wherein our Lord said, "the kingdom of heaven is likened unto," or in the companion parables in Mark and Luke where He said, "the kingdom of God is likened unto." We can learn more about the kingdom of the heavens in these parables than anyplace else in the Word, and yet these great revelations of truth have been almost universally ignored, misapplied, misinterpreted, or explained away. In dealing with these parables it will be my purpose to take God at His word and think accordingly. When it says "the kingdom of heaven is likened unto" then that parable is going to be rigidly interpreted as being a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens. I refuse to even consider it as a likeness of the gospel, the church, the world, the believer, Christendom, or Israel, no matter how apropos such an application may seem to be. God gave these parables to teach us truths concerning the kingdom of the heavens, and we make void His word when we use them as likenesses of other things.

The Tares Among the Wheat

As already stated, the first parable of our Lord concerned a sower who went forth to sow. This is followed by a **second** parable concerning a man who sowed good seed in his field followed by an enemy who sowed tares. These two parables are often needlessly confused, and the interpretation our Lord gave of the first parable is often applied to His second parable, which has its own interpretation. This is a serious mistake, since there are two distinct parables and two distinct interpretations.

Some of these parables deal only with the beginning of God's government in the earth. Others deal with one feature of it, and others deal only with the close of the first great period of heaven's government. The parable of the tares among the wheat deals with that period of time when the Lord establishes (plants) the sons of the kingdom in the world, and continues until He appears and severs the wicked from the just at the time of His second coming. There can be no question but that this parable reveals that the rule of the heavens as set forth by Matthew precedes the second coming of Christ and His millennial rule. A detailed exposition of the tares among the wheat was given in *THE WORD OF TRUTH*, Volume XI, No. 5, but it seems wise to reconsider it here so that this study will be complete in itself, also so that certain points can be clarified and enlarged. This parable and its divine interpretation falls automatically into three sections. We will consider these in order.

PARABLE The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man, which sowed good seed in his field. Matt. 13:24.

INTERPRETATION: He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children (sons) of the kingdom. Matt. 13:38.

It is to be noted that this parable does not deal with the producing of the sons of the kingdom. God's government, once it is established in the earth, will soon produce men who have the stamp of His rule upon them. Only the kingdom can produce sons of the kingdom. All governments seek to mold men to their character, and heaven's government will seek to mold its subjects to the character of God as revealed in Christ. It will not fail, for God's government will never fail in any detail. This will not be a quick process. The kingdom of the heavens does not loom up suddenly, and neither will the sons of the kingdom. But when they are produced they are to be established or planted in this world.

In harmony with God's great purpose to establish His beneficent rule in and over the earth, the Son of man will someday plant this world with men who have the kingdom character, men whom the kingdom has produced.

Thus we see in one great declaration three great symbols - sower, field, and seed- -are positively identified so that no question can ever arise as to their meaning. Therefore, if any think or say that maybe the sower is the preacher and the seed is the gospel, we can only leave them to flounder in their own lack of faith. The sower is the Son of man, the field is the world, the good seed are the sons of the kingdom. God has spoken. Let us take Him at His word. Let us not be slow to believe what He has spoken.

Before the good seed, the sons of the kingdom, can be planted in this world, the field must first be cleared. But John the Baptist declared "He will thoroughly purge His floor," so we can rest assured that this will be done. He will never plant His good seed among tares. Let us not change this parable. The wheat is not sown in a tare field. The tares are sown in a wheat field. There has been nothing in the past, and there is nothing in the present that corresponds to the truth of this parable. Much good seed is seen in the Acts period, but not one of these sons of the kingdom was planted or established in the earth during that time.

The peculiar construction of the Greek word which is here translated "is likened" (*homoiothe*) has led some to think that "the Lord was indicating a condition that had already taken place," and that "He had already sown the world with the sons of the kingdom, and consequent upon the rejection set forth in chapter twelve, He could say that the enemy had sown the counterfeit sons, the sons of the wicked one." All this is based upon translating *homoiothe* "has become like." This in my opinion is translating badly and interpreting worse. A. T. Robertson states that this word is "timeless, aorist, passive." In view of this it is not right to 'inject a time element into this verb then build an interpretation upon it. Let us consider the next section.

PARABLE: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. Matt. 13:25.

INTERPRETATION: The tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil. Matt. 13:38.

Again by means of a positive and simple declaration our Lord positively identifies the tares and the enemy that sowed them.

Since the days of Cain there has never been a time when Satan did not have his sons upon the earth, planted, rooted, established, and growing. They are men whom he has produced, men who have his character. "Ye are of your father the devil," was our Lord's words to one company of Satan's sons. (John 8:44). Therefore, any idea of Satan slipping in while men are asleep and sowing tares among the wheat seems almost preposterous in view of the world being already filled with such weeds. In view of this, and since this parable is in fact a prophecy, it can never have any fulfillment until such time as the world has been thoroughly purged of tares, then planted with the wheat, following this an oversowing of the wheat with tares while men drowse. The idea of Satan sneaking in and sowing a few more weeds in a weed field is ludicrous. And yet that is what he is supposed to have done by those who see this parable as having been fulfilled in the past.

It seems almost unbelievable that after God has brought His rule (kingdom) into the earth, and has established in the world those whom His rule has produced, that men would ever again become careless and let Satan enter and sow tares. But they do, for it is while men drowsed (the Greek word means lounged, or, to place oneself in a comfortable position) that the enemy came and sowed tares. A few more facts about the kingdom of the heavens will make this clear.

It needs to be carefully noted that after Christ has purged the world of wicked men only two classes will be left. These are disciples of the kingdom and sons of the kingdom. All men must begin as disciples (learners) but those who do learn go on to become sons. It is the sons of the kingdom who are established (planted), not the disciples. This will mean that every position on earth where a man's work touches the lives of others will be filled by a son of the kingdom. Any disciple can go on to maturity and become a SON, but alas some never do. It is from these disciples that Satan in the end produces a new company of sons. These take on his character. An illustration of this is seen in the twelve disciples of our Lord. Eleven of these men went on to maturity, and when we see them in the Acts period each one has the kingdom character. However, Judas Iscariot never advanced to maturity, and when the test came he quickly developed into a true son of Satan.

We will now consider the third and last section of the parable.

PARABLE: But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye

together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. Matt. 13:26,30.

INTERPRETATION: The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matt. 13:39-42.

It is to be noted that the truth revealed by this parable comes up to the second coming of Christ, but does not go beyond it. Also that at the conclusion of this eon the Son of man sends forth his messengers and they gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and those who do iniquity. This kingdom began in a different manner, as recorded in **Ezekiel 11:17-21**.

Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people (peoples, meaning nations) and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God.

This passage sets forth what takes place when God's benevolent government begins in the earth. Matthew 13:41, 42 reveals a purging that takes place at the end of the first eon of God's rule. It is a far more radical cleansing, which takes place at the close. The first is done by men acting for God. The last is done by angels acting for God. The first precedes the kingdom of the heavens and is introductory to it. The second precedes and introduces the millennium, called here the "kingdom of their father." See Matt. 13:4,3. As a result of the first cleansing men will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. This will bring a long era of peace. Later they will be called upon to beat their plowshares into swords and their pruning hooks into spears. See Joel 3:9, 10, and compare Isaiah 2:4. As a result of the second cleansing there will not be a spear or sword left to be converted into farming implements. The angels have purged from under His rule all such things. Without a doubt, the parable of the wheat and tares belongs to the premillennial kingdom and not to the millennial kingdom.

The Grain of Mustard Seed

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Matt. 13:31,32.

This second great likeness or similitude of the kingdom of the heavens is in harmony with all the truth that the Bible reveal concerning it. I question the honesty of purpose of those who interpret this parable by rewriting it, as if the Lord did not know what He wanted to say. This parable is declared by Him to be a likeness of "the kingdom of the heavens." It is not a likeness of "the church," "the gospel," or of "Christendom." This parable is a likeness of the same kingdom of the heavens that John declared was "at hand," which the Lord had heralded, and which He sent forth His disciples to do the same. With all my heart, mind, and soul I repudiate the idea that the term "the kingdom of the heavens" suddenly changes its meaning beginning with Matthew 13 and from that time on means "Christendom." The "heavens" never produced the frightful mixture that today is called

"Christendom." Christendom is not the rule of the heavens. The first two parables of our Lord are quite true to nature. That is, they are in harmony with the normal actions of men. There is nothing about them that is incongruous with normal life in Palestine where these words were spoken.

In the parable that is before us the actions are incongruous, as a careful reading will show. The picture our Lord paints in His words is that of a man taking one tiny grain of mustard seed and planting it in his field. This is not the ordinary way a man would do it. He would at least take a small quantity of the seed, plant this in one corner of his field, then later pull out and discard the weaker plants until only the strongest one remained. The picture here shows a man who sowed too sparingly, and who failed to make proper use of his land. Nevertheless, this is exactly the picture our Lord desired to paint, for incongruous as this man's actions may appear to be, they give a true likeness of the kingdom of the heavens. It is to be noted that a man acting in this manner must have had only one grain of seed, that he was sure of its fertility and ability to produce, and that he must have highly prized the seed since he gave it his entire field in which to grow.

In its beginning God's government in this earth will compare with a single grain of mustard seed. To men this seems so insignificant that they would not be inclined to bother with it, and anything that small could easily be ignored and lost. A man could have a grain of mustard seed in his pocket and not even know it was there. Our God takes His government and puts it into the earth, primarily in His own field the land of Palestine. He can depend upon this seed. He knows it will grow speedily until all other governments are overshadowed by it.

Many will want to know the significance of the "birds of the air" which find lodging in the branches of the mustard tree. Some will insist that since the "fowls" of the first parable represented "the wicked one" that this must be followed out and here too the "birds of the air" must represent the wicked one. In view of this it will be proper here to state two great principles, and these should be kept in mind as we consider other parables.

I do not agree that once an object has been used as a symbol, likeness, metaphor, or illustration that this fixes its meaning in such a manner that it will always mean the same. Some things are inherently bad and are never used to illustrate what is good. Some things are inherently good and are never used to illustrate that which is evil. Other things are neutral and may be freely used to illustrate that which is bad or that which is good. For example, a lion is neither good nor bad. Lions can be either good or bad. Therefore Jesus Christ is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5), and in 1 Peter 5:8 we read "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Thus it is evident that a lion can be used as a symbol of Christ and as an illustration of the work of Satan. In view of this, the birds of the first parable (the sower) need not have the same meaning as the birds in the parable of the mustard seed.

The second principle I desire to state is that every detail in a parable is not necessarily significant. This is shown in our Lord's interpretation of the parable of the wheat among the tares. He attached no significance and made no explanation of "the servants of the householder" who came to him saying, "Sir didst not thou sow good seed in thy field?" These men were incidental to the illustration, and, I believe, the birds of the heaven are also incidental in the parable of the mustard seed. The following quotation is pertinent here.

"In a sword there's hilt, and back, and edge, but only the edge cuts. In an instrument there's wood, and brass, and belly, and frets, but only the strings do make the melody. So there are many passages in parabolic Scriptures subservient to the main scope, which must only be understood with tendency and reference thereto. The scope of a parable is the key of a parable." Francis Roberts, quoted by A.R. Haber. shown in *The Study of the Parables*

These two principles are of major importance in considering the parable, which follows.

The Parable of the Leaven

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. Matthew 13:33.

In regard to the interpretation of this parable men hold such fixed opinions that I ask for openness of mind as we reconsider this great likeness of the kingdom of the heavens.

The great controversy between the pre- and postmillennial schools of thought has died down until there is not much left but the embers. The postmillennial view is that the millennium is yet future, and that it will come upon the earth as the result of the efforts of present gospel agencies, and that the second coming of Christ will follow this man-made millennium. Today, so far as I know, there is no living voice that expounds or defends this theory. Not one Scripture was ever produced which proved a millennium before the second coming, or that proved a second coming of Christ after a millennium. It is my firm belief that the second coming of Christ precedes the thousand year period set forth in **Revelation 20:1-7**. This period is the result of His second coming, and it is not the result of the spread of the gospel.

Throughout the great controversy that raged for so many years, the postmillennialist held that the world would grow better, that the church would increase in strength until righteousness and peace reigned upon the earth and that these conditions would persist for a thousand years. The premillennialist held that the world would steadily grow worse until finally the Lord would remove all His own and then deal with the world in justice and wrath.

In relationship to the idea that the second coming of Christ precedes the thousand year period spoken of in Revelation 20:1-7, I am premillennialist. But this does not mean that I accept every detail of premillennial teaching. I am not in any position in connection with the premillennial school of thought where I must "take it all or nothing." As a student of the Word I consider all facts and come to my own conclusions, ever seeking to "prove all things, hold fast to that which is good."

Much of the controversy in years past between the pre-and postmillennial schools of thought, one holding that the world would wax worse, the other holding that it would grow better, seemed to center in the parable of the leaven. The postmillennialist, ignoring the words of the Lord that this is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens, insisted that the leaven was the gospel, that the woman was the church, and that the meal was mankind. From this they agreed that the gospel preached by the church would someday convert the whole world.

The premillennialist, likewise ignoring the plain words of our Lord that this is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens, made it to be a likeness of Christendom, declared that the leaven stood for evil, that the woman represents evil workers, and that this evil represented by the leaven would work subtly until the whole of mankind became ripe for the wrath of God. One of the strongest points in this argument is that leaven is as a rule used as the symbol or illustration of something evil.

We need to be prepared to set both of these ideas aside in order to take an unprejudiced look at this parable. The idea that "leaven" here does signify something evil is pretty well fixed in the mind of most premillennialists. This idea determines in advance their interpretation of this parable. I believe it is wrong to fix this meaning upon leaven.

I am convinced that an honest answer to one simple question can clear up and settle forever the question of whether leaven here means something good or evil. This question is, "Is the kingdom of God a good thing or an evil thing? If the answer is "a good thing," and it must be, for no other answer is possible, then how, if leaven symbolizes evil, could the Lord say in the parallel parable:

And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. Luke 13:20,21.

From this it is plain that if leaven is evil, then the kingdom of God is like something that is evil which when placed in the earth will so permeate it until the whole becomes evil. Perish the thought!

Leaven can be used as an illustration or likeness of anything which when placed as an active agent among other things works to conform these things to its own character. Evil works this way, but Christ is not here illustrating the workings of evil. He is illustrating the workings of the kingdom of the heavens. .

The previous parable, the grain of mustard seed emphasizes the seemingly insignificant character of the government of the heavens as it begins on earth among men. One declaration from God is all that is required for the heavens to begin their rule. If He at this moment should say, "Let there be light;" the divine processes would begin which in time would roll back all present darkness and result in that state of affairs set forth in 1 John 2:8, "the darkness is past and the true light now shineth." No such majestic event as the second coming of Christ is required for the heavens to resume their rule. No such tragic event as the great tribulation needs to precede it. It begins like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. I believe that our Lord is represented by this man. He alone can place God's government in the earth.

In the parable of the leaven, our Lord is represented by the woman in the illustration. If any think it strange that a woman should be used to represent a man, then let them learn from the Word that this is not unusual. Our Lord once likened Himself to a mother hen (See Matthew 23:37). Paul used a nursing mother to illustrate himself (See 1 Thess. 2:7), then changed the figure and used a father to illustrate his solicitude for the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:11).

The woman and the three measures here are only incidental to the story or illustration. The woman is mentioned because baking was done by women rather than men. Three measures are probably mentioned because this would be an average baking for an average family.

The leading truth taught by this similitude of the kingdom of the heavens is that when God's government by means of the heavens is placed in the earth it will reach out until the whole world is brought under the government of the heavens. From other passages we know that this will be accomplished by a process of elimination as well as by incorporation. Everything that remains upon the earth must be incorporated into God's government. His rule will be like leaven in meal. It will change the character of the whole earth.

The first four parables were spoken in public. The last four were spoken to His disciples inside the house. We will consider these in our next study.

(Continued, Vol. XII, No. 5)

THE DAYS OF NOAH

It is my firm conviction that there will yet be a "ministry of the Spirit" which will bring about an era of peace, righteousness, justice, and blessing to the human race. I believe that the processes, which will bring this to pass are entirely divine, that man has no part in doing it, neither can he make any contribution to it. The divine effort that brings this state of blessing will be of gradual growth, but once it begins nothing can stop it from reaching its full development. The changes it brings will

be introduced slowly but surely, and all living men will have full opportunity to become loyal subjects under God's government. This era of blessing is called by Matthew "the kingdom of the heavens," and by other New Testament writers "the kingdom of God."

I further believe that even though this era of blessing begins in a small way, comparable to a man sowing seed in the earth, that it develops to a state of fullness or maturity, and that this state is maintained for a period of at least five centuries. I believe then that there is a decline due to the fact that men have begun to take God's rich blessings for granted, that they have become lethargic. Satan then takes advantage of this to plant his sons in the world, and this leads to a rebellion against God's government, a rebellion clearly described in Psalm 2. This is the "falling away" that precedes the day of the Lord (2 Thess. 2:3), and it is the time when men will say "peace and safety" in answer to those who warn them of the danger that is ahead. There is no one anywhere today in his right mind who is saying "peace and safety." Moffatt translates this: "When 'all's well' and 'all is safe' are on the lips of men, then all of a sudden destruction is upon them." This "sudden destruction" is linked up with the second coming of Christ. He comes to ruthlessly put down a rebellion against His government.

It is my opinion that my teaching fits in perfectly with the statement of our Lord recorded in **Luke 17:26:**

And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

That this is a statement concerning the conditions which will prevail immediately preceding the second coming of Christ is made plain by the parallel passage (Matthew 24:37), and also by the further declaration of the Lord concerning Sodom in Luke 17:30. As to the meaning of this passage, I am confident that many preachers are led astray by their own sermons on it, and that the people are hopelessly entangled in what they have heard. They believe that this declaration of our Lord teaches that the world will grow progressively worse until God strikes in sudden wrath, just as He did in the days of Noah.

Upon the basis of this popular interpretation, there are some who believe these words of our Lord present an irrefutable argument against my teaching that the world will enjoy a long period of peace, righteousness, and blessing under heaven's government before the second coming of Christ. Their mistake is that they reason the Lord is telling of the moral conditions that will prevail before He comes again. Some go so far as to take this as a "sign of the times," declaring that when these same moral conditions prevail, it is a sign that His coming is near.

My answer is that the statement of our Lord does not deal with the moral conditions which existed before the flood or in Sodom, nor is He setting forth the moral conditions that will precede His second coming. He is dealing with the fancied security that prevailed among men just before the flood, and likens this to the same fancied security that will precede His return to the earth. He brings in no moral charges. In Noah's day men ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. There is no moral wrong in any of these things. But as men went on in their ordinary affairs, they were indifferent to the danger that threatened. They may have said in answer to the warnings of Noah, "All is well, all is safe,"

But in spite of these obvious facts, there are those who insist that these words present a full picture, and that all conditions that existed in Noah's day will be reproduced before the coming of Christ.

Very well, for the sake of the argument, I will agree to this. Now, let us take an honest look at some of the conditions that existed in Noah's day. We will soon see how much this favors my teaching.

Up to the year of the flood, longevity was a characteristic of the human race. Methusaleh, who probably died in the flood year, was 969 years of age. Note also the other ages of the antediluvians,

Seth, 912 years. Enos, 905 years. Cainan, 910 years. Mahalaleel, 895 years. Jared, 962 years. Since it is my firm belief and teaching that longevity is to be restored under heaven's government, this condition that existed in the days of Noah fits my position perfectly.

Up to the time of the flood, man had complete control of the animals. They answered his call, obeyed his commands, and responded to his every word. Since it is my teaching that this dominion is restored to man under heaven's government, this condition that existed in Noah's day fits perfectly.

But in spite of the advantage I gain in argument by taking the words of our Lord out of their context, I must be honest with the Word. I believe that the words of our Lord concerning the days of Noah tell us that man will have again become drowsy, complacent, unwatchful; that he will have a feeling of false security, saying, "all is well, all is safe" just before the Lord comes again.

The End

GOD'S PRESENT SOVEREIGNTY

Our God has always been the Sovereign of the universe, which He created. He has always been the Governor of every member of the human race. At times He may give up men, a fact clearly stated in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28, but He has never been dethroned, He has never abdicated. His sway is universal. He can give up man, or He can take him back. He can refuse His beneficent rule, or He can rule in the lives of men. .

This was the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar had to learn. It is clearly stated in the words, "till you know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (Daniel 4:25). The same truth is revealed in the words, "thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule" (Daniel 4:26). In view of these facts it would be sheer folly to deny that God rules now, or, to say that the heavens do not rule. But the fact of God's present sovereignty is constantly used to deny the Scriptural truth that some day God will intervene, establish His government in this earth, and rule by means of the heavens.

My answer to this is that while our God is sovereign, and while He has ever been reigning over man, a divine sovereignty, a divine government more special than anything that has been seen since the fall of man will some day be a reality upon the earth. When John the Baptist announced, "Repent for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand," none but a fool would have answered saying, "The kingdom of the heavens is here now." When Jesus Christ said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel," it would have been the height of spiritual stupidity to have answered, "The kingdom of God has always been, and always will be."

The truth of God's present Sovereignty must not be used to deny that absolute sovereignty which He will some day impose upon all mankind. Instead of doing this it would be much better to give careful consideration to the extent of God's rule in this the dispensation of the grace of God.

PAUL'S FINAL WORD

A translation of the New Testament is at its very best a commentary. In them men seek to set forth in English what they feel the original writer said in Greek. Translations are of real value when we regard them as commentaries on the sacred original. They become stumbling blocks when we consider them to be the Word of God. I know of no better commentary on 2 Timothy 4 than that provided in the translation by Dr. James Moffatt.

2 Timothy 4-Moffatt Version

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who will judge the living and the dead, in the light of his appearance and his reign, I adjure you to preach the word; keep at it in season and out of season, refuting, checking, and exhorting men; never lose patience with them, and never give up your teaching, for the time will come when people will decline to be taught sound doctrine and will accumulate teachers to suit themselves and tickle their own fancies; they will give up listening to the Truth and turn to myths.

Whatever happens, be self possessed, flinch from no suffering, do your work as an evangelist, and discharge all your duties as a minister.

The last drops of my own sacrifice are falling; my time to go has come. I have fought" in the good fight; I have run my course; I have kept the faith. Now the crown of a good life awaits me, with which the Lord, that just Judge, will reward me on the great Day-and not only me but all who have loved and longed for his appearance.

Do your best to come soon to me, for Demas, in his love for this world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens is off to Gaul, Titus to Dalmatia, Luke is the only one who is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him along with you, for he is of great use in helping me. (I have had to send Tychicus to Ephesus.)

When you come, bring the mantle I left at Troas with Carpus, also my books, and particularly my paper.

Alexander the blacksmith has done me a lot of harm: *the Lord will pay him back for what he has done* (beware of him), for he has been bitterly hostile to anything I have said. The first time I had to defend myself, I had no supporters; everyone deserted me. God grant it may not be brought up against them! But the Lord supported me and gave me strength to make a full statement of the gospel and let all the heathen hear it. I was rescued *from the jaws of the lion*. The Lord will rescue me from every assault of evil, he will bring me safe to his own realm in heaven. To him be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

Salute Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed on at Corinth: I left Trophimus ill at Miletus. Do your best to come before winter.

Eubulus salutes you; so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brotherhood. The Lord Jesus be with your spirit.

Grace be with you all.

THE CHOICE OF TRUTH

Blind Bartimaeus cried to the Lord for mercy, and the Lord Jesus called him to His side and asked what it was that he wanted done. He gave him the opportunity of being specific in regard to his desire. It greatly simplified matters that Bartimaeus knew his need, knew exactly what he wanted, and asked for that very thing.

It is amazing just how complex, confused and disordered the new life in Christ Jesus can become for most people. If we permit it to become this, we can never be happy or useful in it. We will always remain among the number who need help, rather than finding our place among those who help others. A confused and frustrated guide can show no one the way.

There is nothing that will clear up the complexities and confusion of the Christian life like knowing exactly what we want, making choice of that thing, and then determining upon it.

In the 119th Psalm David announced boldly that he had chosen the way of truth. This simplified everything for David, for a choice had been made and it was to be allowed to dominate and control every other decision that had to be made. It did not leave him in the foolish predicament of the man who was looking for a house in which to live, but had not yet chosen the city in which he desired to live. Since David had chosen the way of truth, it made it possible for him to say, "I have stuck to thy testimonies," and "I will run the way of thy commandments." I have chosen, I have stuck, and I will run. These words expressed the course of his life. The second and third statements could be made because he had chosen the way of truth.

In Christian experience there is a continual clash between truth and our wills, truth and our desires, truth and the path we have chosen to follow. This conflict continues until we make an honest choice of the truth, and then it is over in an instant.

I have talked to people who readily admitted that they were afraid to investigate a thing because of fear that it might be the truth. I have known those who became greatly excited over the truth, only to discover it was not truth that they wanted after all. One man thought he wanted truth, but what he really wanted was to direct a choir. When the conflict came he chose to be a choir leader and truth was forgotten. Another became exercised over the truth, but found that his one desire was for a successful ministry. When a position was offered him that conflicted with the truth, he forgot the truth at once and renounced fellowship with all who proclaim it.

I have become well acquainted with those who come seeking help when no help is wanted. They seek for light, when their real desire is for someone to confirm their opinion. They ask a question, prepared to reject the answer if it should be contrary to their ideas. Very few who claim to be seekers after the truth really want truth for their portion. Their greatest fear is that they shall find it and become responsible under it.

On every hand is seen the efforts of some to force the truth to fit into their work, their ideas of service, or their religious programs. They have never made a choice of truth. Truth can have a place only if some niche can be found where it will fit in apart from any major alteration or readjustment.

Truth is able to use the service of very few. Christendom is so organized that it can find some place of service or some form of service for everyone. It has so multiplied its organizations and activities that any who desire can have an office with a title, or at least a place on a committee. It is able to make everyone feel that they are indispensable in the service of the Lord. Anyone who can blow wind into a horn or play plunk after plunk on a guitar is hailed as one the Lord can use. If a man has a hobby he soon becomes convinced that it can be used to glorify the Lord. If it be sleight-of-

hand or parlor magic he feels it can be used to bring children to Christ. Therefore, such entertainment is dignified by the name of "object lessons" and it finds a place in the so-called service of the Lord.

Some time ago I went to a religious service for want of something better to do while waiting for a train. A rack stood upon the platform, and upon it were hanging about two dozen bottles filled with varying amounts of water. The man in charge of the service announced that these bottles had once been filled with liquor and had served the Devil, but they had been redeemed and now they were to serve the Lord. He seemed to consider this a very clever thought. A young lady arose from her seat on the platform and began to strike the bottles with two small mallets. This produced the music to "When They Ring the Golden Bells." At least that is what the man in charge said she was playing.

Yes, in Christendom even empty whiskey bottles are regimented into the service of the Lord. But when men determine to leave the camp of Christendom and cast their lot with the truth, they have to be informed that they are expected to leave their empty bottles, their playthings, their religious trappings and gear, because these things are of no service in connection with the truth. This fact alone is sufficient to keep a great number of so-called servants of the Lord from ever making choice of the truth.

How pitifully few there are who seek truth and prize it above all else. There is no praise in Christendom for the quiet, humble, devoted student of the Word, who, like Mary, chooses the better part and sits at the feet of the Lord to hear His Word. Those who choose this "better part" are usually despised, and as a rule they are reprov'd for lack of zeal in "saving souls." Let all such take heart. Man's judgments are all premature. They will be reversed when the Lord does the judging.

(Reprinted from Vol. V, No. 1)

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****There is a popular religious song, the last line of which invites everyone to "join in the battle for truth." I have heard this sung by some whom I am sure cared nothing for the truth. I feel they would run away screaming with fright if someone suggested that they open God's book and seek to discover just what "the truth" is for which we are supposed to battle. Nevertheless, be that as it may, there is such a thing as the battle for truth, and it is a warfare in which I enlisted many years ago. It is war in which there is no discharge, even though at times there may be a lull in the battle.

But just now there is no lull, for the big guns and the little guns have started firing again. It is a guerrilla warfare in which opposition to me and my message is coming from men who are far apart, so far as their doctrinal positions are concerned. At times they appear to have joined forces in opposing and criticizing my message. My friends can rest assured that I will not run for cover, seek a discharge, or sue for peace from my enemies. I like the battle, and will engage in it in the certain and joyful sense that the Word of God fully supports the message I am declaring. I feel assured that present opposition will in the end greatly advance the truth. I challenge no one to duel, but when I am challenged by others, I reserve the right to chose the weapons. My choice, of course, will not be the carnal weapons, which are often effectively wielded by men of this world. I shall seek to take the whole armor of God for defense, and nothing but the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God for offense.

The present shooting began about a year ago, at a time when I was greatly handicapped due to the

illness of my wife. Attacks on my person, my message, and my ministry seemed to come from all directions. Definite movements to abandon our separate walk and unique position, and to seek closer fellowship with organized religion arose in several places. Deliberate attempts were made to destroy the confidence, which many have in me, as it was well known in advance that I would be unalterably opposed to any such compromise. My teachings concerning the kingdom of the heavens, it being new and not yet fully developed, came in for special attack. For some months there was little I could do. I longed to pitch in and wield the sword of the Spirit, but the admonition "husbands love your wives" seemed more important for a time than to "fight the good fight of faith."

It was a happy day for me when Mrs. Sellers no longer needed my care, and I could return to my desk and enter again the battle for truth. I wrote the article on "The Importance of Truth" and published it in the previous issue of this magazine. No article I have ever written brought forth as many favorable comments. It spoke to the hearts of many, and brought a new realization of the value of truth. Soon after this I was able to make a trip to all the groups to whom I have previously ministered. Today, I am enjoying the fruits of a glorious victory, but that is what I expected.

The battle is not yet over. New challenges are arising, on every side. My teaching on the kingdom of the heavens is making a deep impression upon many. Hearts that were closed fast against anything but creedal theology are being opened up for "all truth" by means of this one truth. Those who would keep the people bound to the traditional teachings concerning things to come are not taking this lightly. But I have no fear as to the outcome. This truth is going to be established in the hearts of many. So, let's move forward, all along the line.

****For the information of the friends of this ministry I feel that a somewhat detailed account of my ministry in the Mid-West and East should be given. At all points visited I sought to present the truth concerning the coming "kingdom of the heavens," which I fully believe precedes the second coming of Christ and the millennial period. To this end I dealt with such subjects as "God's Present Administration," "The Heavens," and "The Kingdom of the Heavens," enlarging on these truths as much as time allowed.

My ministry began in the Chicago area in Evanston on April 11. Eight messages were given from Wednesday through Sunday. In spite of difficult weather, the attendance was most gratifying, the interest was keen, and the reception of the truths presented was all I could desire. I spoke for an hour or more each meeting, and then gave from thirty minutes to an hour for questions. This permitted me to accurately gauge the interest of those present and the reception of the truths presented. With the exception of two, all friends, of my ministry who usually attend my meetings were present, and were most liberal in their material and spiritual fellowship. Those who make up the *Chicago Bible Fellowship* are to be complimented on keeping their feet on the ground during a difficult time of testing.

From Evanston I went to Milwaukee for three nights, from Monday through Wednesday. The attendance and interest here exceeded my expectations. The truths presented were well received, and the question period revealed an honest desire on the part of those present to fully consider every phase of the truth. I was more than pleased with the spiritual and material support, which the friends in Milwaukee gave to these meetings.

Next came Rockford, Illinois, with six messages given from Thursday to Sunday, I enjoyed every moment of my visit here. There were no "missing ones" from among the friends who have fellowshiped with me in truth over many years. Some here are unable to receive my present testimony concerning the kingdom of the heavens. However, these are true friends of long standing. They were present at every meeting, gave me their wholehearted material and spiritual support, and showed me every consideration. The attendance here was good, some traveling many miles to be present. I would congratulate the Rockford Fellowship in having maintained their testimony and love

of the truth through a period of difficulty.

My next place of ministry was in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Three messages were given here on as many nights. The attendance here was not up to our expectations, but interest was good and the messages were well received. I have faced some stiff competition at times as I have sought to get people to lend me their ears for my message, but I have never faced such competition as General MacArthur gave me. He had the eyes and ears of everyone for a few days. However, these days of fellowship with my good friend Mr. Carl Elleby, were most enjoyable.

Then came Muskegon, Michigan, with three messages on Sunday and one each on Monday and Tuesday. Here the attendance, interest, reception of the messages, and the material support was most gratifying. I appreciate this open door of witness in this city, and it is a real joy to teach the Word here.

Next came the place, which for personal reasons is always the high spot of the trip, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where I ministered for twelve years before coming to Los Angeles. Six messages were given here from Thursday through Sunday. The attendance was good at the first meeting, and it increased at each succeeding meeting. The auditorium was filled for all three meetings on Sunday. The truths presented were received with enthusiasm, and the spiritual and material support left nothing to be desired.

From Grand Rapids I went to Buffalo, New York where I spent three very enjoyable and spiritually profitable nights. The messages were heartily received, everyone present expressing deep appreciation for the truths presented.

My next stop was Endicott, New York for one meeting, which was arranged by Mr. Daniel Anderson, the young man who wrote the article on "Purpose in Bible Study." This was my first visit to Endicott, and I had the pleasure of meeting some who have read my written ministry for some time. I hope I can make this a regular stop as I make these trips for ministry.

My final place of ministry was Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Here, a small group of faithful brethren have maintained an open door of testimony for many years, and this in spite of constant attempts, which have been made to destroy it. I always enjoy teaching here. I have lost track of how many times I have ministered the Word here in the past seventeen years. Some of the closest and best friends I have are in this group. Even on this visit, definite attempts were made by some without to upset the meeting, which I planned to hold. But, needless to say, these attempts made no headway with the Philadelphia brethren. The attendance was good, the interest manifested delighted my heart, the messages were well received, and the material support of the meetings was, as always, most liberal.

In all I spoke thirty-nine times, traveled seven thousand miles, and made hundreds of personal contacts. Never have I been so warmly received or so royally treated. I state this, not to boast, but to counteract the rumors that are being circulated that all my friends are turning from me. I saw no evidence of this anywhere. In fact, I found the exact opposite. I plan to make another such trip for ministry in the fall.

****Some of my detractors are having a lot of fun flaying me with a little wooden sword of their own making, which they claim came from me. I hate to take it away from them, but someone might possibly get hurt.

In Volume XI, No.5 of *The Word of Truth*, I said, "I consider this truth of the premillennial kingdom of the heavens the most transcendent that it has been my privilege to uncover and declare." This statement has been taken and interpreted to mean that I hold that God's revelation concerning the kingdom of the heavens is the most transcendent in the Scriptures. I do not believe it, and if any

say that I do, they deceive themselves and all to whom they say this. If they think there is any ground for it in the statement quoted above, then I will explain what I mean.

Since I make no claim to having uncovered or discovered the truth of "the Secret" the statement had nothing to do with this truth. It had to do with truths that I have uncovered as a result of my labors within the Word.

****An article claiming to be an answer to my teachings has appeared in a magazine called the *Berean Searchlight*, written by the Editor, Mr. Cornelius R. Starn. After reading it I decided that it was written entirely for those in Mr. Starn's circle, and that it would fall flat among those who know "the Secret" and who recognize the correctness of the Acts 28:28 dispensational boundary line. Mr. Starn is a partial dispensationalist, who has got himself half-way disentangled from the ordinances. He believes that God's present calling began at Acts 13, that the first six epistles of Paul reveal "the Secret," and that the hope of God's present calling is to be caught away before the day of the Lord begins. These ideas were set forth in his article, so I felt it would answer itself to all who believe in full dispensational truth. In his article Mr. Starn was exceedingly careful not to let his readers know what I taught, probably fearing that it might prove too attractive to some who have great difficulty with the Darby-Scofield interpretation of prophecy, which he teaches.

But, to my surprise, the article was reprinted in another publication called *Questions and Answers* in a revised form which at no point reveals what Mr. Starn does believe, and which sets him forth as a great champion of the truth of the Secret. If the entire article had been published in *Questions and Answers*, Mr. Starn would have been revealed as simply a champion of the discredited *Darby-Scofield* system of interpretation, a fact that is concealed to the readers of *Questions and Answers*. *The Berean Searchlight* was exceedingly careful not to let its readers know what I believe. *Questions and Answers* exercised the same care so that its readers would not know what Mr. Starn believed. In view of this, I may see fit if time permits to answer Mr. Starn's article.

****Friends of this ministry living in the vicinity of Muskegon, Michigan will profit greatly if they hear the messages which Mr. Carl E. Elleby brings at the Muskegon Bible Fellowship each Sunday. The morning meeting is at 10:00 and the Evening meeting is at 7 :00. Meeting place is at the corner of Catherine and William Street.

****Mrs. Sellers continues to increase in health and strength. We consider her recovery to be a miracle of grace. God worked secretly. He never once came out in the open. His blessings were always untraceable. But, He worked, and now we see the results.

****In spite of the fact that we increased the size of this issue to thirty-two pages, the *Studies in Acts* were crowded out again.

****A change has been made in the time of our Los Angeles radio broadcast. It is now heard each Sunday from 4:30 to 5:00 P.M. over Station KGER, 1390 kc. This is a 5,000 watt station and it can be heard throughout all of Southern California.

****Beginning Wednesday July 11 a Bible Class will be conducted by the Editor every Wednesday in Pasadena, California. We have rented the auditorium of the Pasadena Women's Club, located at 28 South Sierra Madre Boulevard, one block south of Colorado. The time of the meeting is 7:45 P.M.

****It was my pleasure to teach the Word for three nights in San Diego, California this month. Interest in the full truth of God's Word is constantly growing in this area.

End, Vol. XII, No. 4