

THE WORD OF TRUTH

OTIS Q. SELLERS, Editor April, 1953

Vol. XIII, No. 4

Table of Contents

- * **The Enlightenment of Mankind**
 - * **Acts, 9:32 – 43**
 - * **The Times of the Gentiles**
 - * **The Fullness of the Gentiles**
 - * **He Alone Has Immortality**
 - * **A Note on Dispensations**
 - * **The Editor to His Friends**

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF MANKIND

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul speaks of "God our Savior" and declares that He "will have all men to be saved." This statement has never been regarded with affection by most professing Christians. They seem to feel that if they incorporate it into their thinking it will open the door to ideas of universal salvation. This fear is without foundation. I have long regarded this statement of Paul with deep affection and have made it a vital part of my thinking and teaching, but at no time in all my Christian experience have I ever held any ideas of universal salvation. In order to clear the ground for proper consideration of this passage I desire to emphatically say that I have never believed and I do not now believe that the Word of God teaches any form of universal salvation, universal restoration, or universal reconciliation. As long as the end (consummation) of even one man is destruction (and Philippians 3: 19 declares this) the end of all men cannot be reconciliation. I have carefully considered every passage where universalism is supposed to be taught and do not believe that it has any real foundation in the Word of God.

In understanding I Timothy 2:4 there are two questions, which must be asked and honestly answered. What is meant by "all men"? and, What is meant by the word *saved*? The superficial reader with his own axe to grind will hurriedly say that "all men" means every man who has ever lived since Adam, and that "saved" means to be brought into such relationship with God through Christ that one is forgiven, redeemed, and justified. Both of these definitions are without foundation.

Let us consider first the term "**all men.**" This term has already been used in the immediate context (I Tim. 2:1) where it cannot possibly mean all men who have lived since Adam. There Paul urges that supplications, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all men. Since I do not believe in "prayers for the dead", I cannot believe that "all men" included any who had died before Paul spoke these words. The Greek here could be better translated as "all mankind" or "the whole

human race." The reader is also referred to Luke 6:26, Acts 17:30, Acts 22:15, Romans 12:17, I Corinthians 7:7, II Corinthians 3:2, Philippians 4:5, I Thessalonians 2:15 and Titus 3:2 where the phrase "all men" would become ridiculous if we made it to mean all who have ever lived upon the earth. The truth declared in I Timothy 2:4 concerns all mankind, that is, the human race, and it does not concern all men who have lived since Adam. The people living at any instant on the earth make up mankind. They are humanity. They are the human race.

The word *saved* belongs to a familiar family, the principal members of which are save, salvation, and Savior. The Greek word for *save* is *sozo*. It is found again in this same chapter (I Tim. 2:15), where it could not mean forgiven, redeemed, or justified. This is also true of its occurrence in I Timothy 4:16. Timothy could not redeem or justify himself or anyone who heard him by taking heed to himself and his doctrine. We abuse the truth of God when we force into many passages the commonly accepted theological meaning of the word *save*.

The Greek word *sozo* and the English word *save* are so much alike that if it had not been for the theological incrustation that has become attached to the English word *save* it would make a perfect translation for *sozo*.

In seeking to understand the meaning of this word it is well to begin by recognizing that both the Greek and English word means *to bless*. Save, is to bless; salvation, is the blessing; and Savior is the Blesser. But it would defeat our purpose if we stopped here. Blessings can be of many kinds and men can be blessed in many ways. Some blessings can be called salvation and others cannot. In order for a blessing to be called salvation it must have in it the qualities of deliverance and preservation.

When the British people say, "God save the Queen", they are requesting that God shall bless the Queen in delivering and preserving her from everything that may do her harm. In some parts of England the people say to one another "God save you", while in another part they say "God bless you." Both mean the same thing, for to save is to bless.

The word *save*, *preserve*, and *deliver* are very close relatives. Take for example the act of a woman who in the months when fruit is plentiful purposes to save some of it for the future. She saves it by preserving it, and in preserving it she delivers it from the decay and destruction, which is bound to come upon it if it is left to itself.

When we realize that "all men" means "all mankind" and that *save* means to preserve and deliver, we then can see that I Timothy 4:2 reveals that it is the declared will of God in this the dispensation of the grace of God that mankind is to be blessed by being preserved and delivered from all forces and powers that would seek to destroy it. This declaration of the will of God takes on a very majestic nature when we consider the circumstances under which it was made.

In times previous to Acts 28:28 God had permitted all nations to walk after their own ways. Nevertheless, He held over their heads a threat that if their ways led them too far astray, He might pour out His wrath upon them. This happened in the case of Sodom, and it almost happened in the case of Nineveh. Their repentance saved them from a like fate to Sodom. However, the time came when God in connection with His purposes in grace gave men an unlimited freedom to walk after their own ways without even a threat of retaliation from Him hanging over their heads. Such liberty would be sure to bring about an end to mankind, and especially so when malignant spirits are free to do their evil work. But God has declared that it is His will that mankind shall be preserved, so after 1900 years we still have the human race and it is no better and no worse that it was when God's great display of grace began.

It is a positive truth revealed in the word of God that there are malignant spirits which are ever seeking the corruption and destruction of the human race. This is seen in Satan's original moves against Adam, and again in the corruption of mankind by "the angels which kept not their first estate" at the time of the flood. The tragedy is that ignorant men have always seemed willing to cooperate with these malignant forces. There is no doubt but that if the human race were left very long to itself it would soon perish in its own corruption. In previous times God acted in adverse judgment to clean up the situation, as is seen in the destruction of mankind in the flood, and the destruction of Sodom by fire rained down from heaven.

That God wills the preservation of the human race is a truth never revealed before Acts 28:28. At the time of the flood He did not will the preservation of mankind. He said "I will destroy man whom I have created." But for 1900 years it has been the will of God that mankind shall be preserved. Therefore, no malignant powers have been able to destroy him, and he has not been able to destroy himself. God has in grace alleviated the effects of men's sin, He has alleviated the effect of the work of evil spirits. Mankind has been preserved, and is today found in the same condition as he was when the dispensation of grace began. Apart from God's preserving work the human race would long ago have perished in its own corruption.

The time in which we live is a time when God in grace is acting as the Savior of all mankind.

I Timothy 4:10. He is preserving and delivering the human race from that which would surely be its fate. He is also acting in a very special way as the Savior of those who believe. These enjoy deliverance from the guilt of sin, they have been redeemed from the penalty of sin. The permanence of any work, which God is now doing in grace for men is guaranteed only to those who believe.

It needs to be recognized that God is the Savior of mankind only in this the dispensation of grace. This is true now. It was not true even in the Acts period, and it will not be true after this dispensation has completed its course. Abraham recognized Him as "the Judge of all the earth", and he appealed to Him in this character. He could not have then appealed to Him as "the Savior of all mankind" for God was not then acting in any such capacity.

Thus we see that wholly apart from divine intervention to wipe out corrupt spots, wholly apart from God intervening to remove the rotten apples that would spoil the barrel, mankind has been preserved because of God's gracious activities. We see the result of this today. Mankind has been preserved, mankind is being preserved, and it is because God does it as part of His great display of grace. The world does not know this, but we know it. Therefore, let us heed the admonition of Paul and give thanks unto God on behalf of all mankind. I Timothy 2:1.

A Further Work

That mankind should be preserved is not all that God has willed. He has also willed that mankind shall come into the knowledge of truth. In I Timothy 2:4 there is no definite article before the word *truth* as we find it in other passages such as John 8:32. We must be careful not to add to God's words here. It is not said to be the will of God that all mankind shall come into "the truth." It is simply "truth", and that which is meant by this word has to be established from other portions of Scripture.

While mankind has been preserved without change for 1900 years, he is no nearer to truth than he was at the beginning. God's work of preservation has gone on every day, but nothing has been done by God in regard to His declared will that mankind shall come to the realization of truth. Nevertheless, this is the will of God, and the time will yet come when God will decree that there shall be light. When He does, mankind will be face to face with absolute truth in relationship to God.

Therefore, I repudiate the idea that mankind is going to go deeper and deeper into darkness until the time will come when he plunges into the final error of worshipping the man of sin. I do not believe that God's present dispensation of grace is going to end or be followed by a great Satanic counterfeit dominating the whole earth. This is not the declared will of God. It is the will of God that mankind shall come into the realization of truth. This is the purpose for which man has been preserved. He has not been preserved for Satan's great counterfeit.

At this point a word of warning must be sounded. The knowledge of truth does not mean that a man is forgiven, redeemed, or justified. Truth has to be acted on before it brings any benefit. There was a time when men knew God, but they glorified Him not as God. Romans 1:21. There were men who had the knowledge of God but refused to retain God in their knowledge. Romans 1:28. The gift of truth to mankind guarantees that every man on earth shall know truth, nothing more. This gift will place every man under a new responsibility, making him accountable to God for what He does with the truth that God has given him.

The gift of truth to mankind will be one of the divine acts, which will usher in the next dispensation or administration. It is the possession of this light, which will make the nations receptive to the truth that will come from the still greater light given to Israel. See Isaiah 2:2-4 and 60:1-5. Once the knowledge of truth is given to mankind, grace will no longer characterize God's dealings with men. The coming dispensation is one of divine government. God will then be dealing with men on the basis of light, truth, righteousness, and justice.

All human governments are forced to operate upon the principle that ignorance of the law is no excuse. Under God's government ignorance would be a proper excuse, but God will see to it that none is ignorant. The future enlightenment of mankind is taught in many places in Scripture. It is positively taught by the Apostle Paul in I Timothy 2:4.

Man's Folly Manifested

Another testimony to the future enlightenment of mankind is found in Paul's second letter to Timothy. In the third chapter Paul sets forth the outcome of God's long display of grace so far as man's conduct is concerned. The sequel of the dispensation of grace will be that the evils, which have characterized it throughout are greatly intensified. The evils that will characterize the resultant days of this administration are found to be mostly spiritual evils. Self-lovers, money lovers, empty pretenders, proud, stubborn, unthankful, unholy, lovers of that which is pleasant, having a form of godliness, - these are some of the evils that will be present. The conditions are most favorable to the work of many religious leaders. These men of corrupt minds creep into houses and lead into captivity great numbers of simple women who are easily led because of certain desires which they seek to gratify. There are thousands of these religious leaders who do nothing but minister to the desires of these simple-minded women. Southern California is literally overrun by them.

However, according to the Spirit - inspired message of Paul the time is coming when something will happen which will stop all such men dead in their tracks. Never again will they take another step in their works of deception. "They shall proceed no further", is Paul's emphatic word concerning them. And that which stops them dead in their tracks is declared to be "their folly shall be manifest unto all." II Timothy 3:9. The word "all" here includes these false religious leaders, who are as deceived themselves as those whom they deceive. Think what this will do to the whole Roman Catholic system. Think what it will do to such men as self-styled "Father Divine."

This being God's declaration, it must happen just as He has said. And the only way it can ever take place is for all mankind to come to the knowledge of truth, for God to speak the word and enlighten every member of the human race. This He will most certainly do. And when this takes place the dispensation of grace will be at an end and a dispensation of divine government will have begun.

Upon All Flesh

The truth contained in the two passages we have already considered is in complete harmony with Peter's testimony in Acts 2:17. There he quotes from the prophet Joel showing that God had said that the day would come when He would "pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh."

There was a time in my experience when I was very slow in heart to believe this, which the prophet Joel had spoken. In view of this I can extend sympathy to those who still have difficulty in believing it. Some of this difficulty rests in forcing ideas into this passage that are not there. It does not say here that God is going to give His Spirit "without measure" to all flesh. That which God will give to all flesh is to be very carefully measured. He is to pour out of His Spirit. The difference is the same as if I would say, "He gave me his money", or "He gave me of his money." The first statement signifies all of it, while the second can mean as little as one cent. In understanding this passage we must get this straight and keep it straight.

The next thing to get clear is the fact that if God, apart from His written word, should give a man even one grain of positive, absolute truth, then to that extent, God has given that man of His Spirit. If you, apart from any effort on my part, could put into my mind some intelligence, which you possess you would be giving me of your spirit. When God puts into a man's mind any intelligence, which He possesses, He is giving that man of His Spirit. However, it needs to be added that God is not operating in this manner in this dispensation. He has shut us up to His word, and for 1900 years not one grain of truth or light has come to any man save from the pages of God's book. But in times past God did give men of His Spirit, and the time will come when He will do so again.

Some stumble at the truth of God giving of His Spirit to all flesh because they have erroneously concluded that if God poured out of His Spirit upon any man it would result in that man being forgiven, redeemed, and justified. Let us consider some truths from God's Word, which have a bearing upon this.

Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit of God in order that he might become a skilled craftsman. Exodus 31:1-4.

The heart of Balaam was set to curse Israel, but the Spirit of God came upon him and he could do nothing but bless. Numbers 24:2.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Sampson giving him great physical strength. Judges 14:6.

King Saul prophesied when the Spirit of God came upon him.. I Samuel 10:10.

Later the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul. I Samuel 16:14.

When Saul sent messengers to arrest David the Spirit of God came upon them and they were stopped in their tracks. I Samuel 19:20.

When Saul sent other messengers the same thing happened to them. I Samuel 19:21.

When Saul went himself the Spirit of God came upon him also and defeated his purpose. I Samuel 19:23.

These incidents reveal how the Spirit has worked in times past, and they should teach us that God is not bound by some little rule of our own making in regard to the work of His Spirit. A recent critic of my teachings (their number increases daily) has said:

So Peter, when he quotes Joel's prophecy, says "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh", and he adds "YOUR sons and YOUR daughters" knowing that he was addressing "Ye men of Judea and all that dwell at Jerusalem." Peter would never have quoted that "all flesh" of Gentiles, because he had not had the vision of the "sheet" up till then. The idea that God would pour out of His Spirit upon the unclean Gentile world would have been absolutely incredible to him, - he would have thought it blasphemous. I mention this because this word "all" has been made to mean everybody in the world in the writing on one expositor.

It is indeed wonderful that we have men who can tell us exactly what Peter would have done or would not have done, what would have been incredible to him and what he would have thought blasphemous.. I am lacking in such ability. However, it is my conviction that on the day of Pentecost Peter would have said anything the Spirit of God put upon His lips. He would not have considered its credibility, he would not have held back because it jarred against his national prejudice. He would have said what the Spirit led him to say even if he had considered it blasphemous. If there were some hesitation upon his part to speak such wonderful truth about "all flesh", he could have thought back upon Jonah who felt that it could just not be right for God to offer a Gentile city the chance to repent. Furthermore, Peter would have been familiar with the Old Testament record of the work of the Spirit, and would not have thought it strange for God to pour out OF His Spirit upon the so-called "unclean Gentile world." And did not the prophetic Psalms set forth such truth as:

His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw and trembled. Psalm 97:4.

The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples (meaning nations or Gentile nations) see His glory. Psalm 97:6.

The Lord hath made known His salvation, His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen (nations or Gentiles). Psalm 98.2.

So the heathen (nations or Gentiles) shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. Psalm 102:15.

God reigneth over the heathen (nations or Gentiles): God sitteth upon the throne of His holiness. Psalm 47:8.

In view of these passages it seems to me that Peter would have thought it strange for God NOT to pour out of His Spirit upon the Gentile world. How else would God bring them under His government? How else could they be held accountable and responsible?

Bible exposition has indeed taken a strange turn when God's great promise that He would pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh can be made to mean the people of Israel. There is no question here but that these words were addressed to Israel. When Peter spoke on that memorable day of Pentecost he opened His message by saying "Ye men of Judea, and all ye that reside in Jerusalem." Acts 2:14. His opening sentences were limited to these, but later he enlarges the scope of his message to "Ye men of Israel" (Acts 2:22). In speaking to these he quotes from a prophecy by Joel and states a truth about "all flesh." I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh. Now since His message was addressed to Israel, if by "all flesh" He had meant Israel he would have used the pronoun "you." He would have said "God will pour out of His Spirit upon YOU" and then have gone on to speak of YOUR sons and YOUR daughters. But he did not do this. He brought in the subject of which this was spoken, namely "all flesh." It violates every law of language to make the pronouns that follow refer back to "all flesh."

In the writings of Peter we find something, which is parallel to this in every point. In his first epistle he addresses "strangers scattered throughout Pontus" etc. These were dispersed Jews who have placed their faith in Christ. To these people he makes a statement about "all flesh" saying:

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. 1 Peter 1:24.

Following this he uses the pronouns you, and your. In view of this if we follow out the principles of my critic quoted above, then we must limit this statement about "all flesh" being as grass to Israel and all pronouns which follow must be referred back to "all flesh." This is so ridiculous that I simply point it out and leave it to the judgment of the reader.

The World Enlightened

The three passages already considered harmonize in truth with **John 16:7-11**.

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.

I cannot help but feel quite good about the hornets nest which I stirred up in regard to the meaning of the Greek word *elegcho* which is translated "reprove" in this passage. There is so much that I say that no one pays any attention to, that it is cause for joy when so many become stirred up over what I said about this one word. And now since the smoke of battle has cleared a bit and the dead and wounded have been removed from the battlefield, I still stand upon my original proposition. The word *elegcho* means to enlighten a person by making the facts known to him.

The controversy, which has raged around this word has brought numerous interesting facts to light. A friend sent me a clipping from a magazine published by a leading Bible Institute, and this contained a report of a missionary who is laboring in North Africa. This missionary is a little more honest and factual than most of them seem to be. As a rule they are setting the world on fire for the Lord, but this missionary freely admits that their labors are mixed with sorrow at the unconcern of men, and that in view of the fact that so few are really concerned about their sins that one is inclined to feel that John 16:7-11 is not in operation today.

I doubt if this missionary realizes how near she has come to the truth. John 16:7-11 is a promise made by Jesus Christ, which is related to God's great purpose to bring His government into the world. When that purpose was suspended at Acts 28:28, the fulfillment of this promise was suspended until that day when God resumes His purpose to bring His government into the world.

An interesting note concerning this word comes from the writing of Dr. E. W. Bullinger. In his book *The Church Epistles*, he deals with the noun form of this word and declares that it means *proof* rather than *reproof*. He further states that Josephus uses this word in the sense of *clear proof*, saying that Herod's slaves said he dyed his hair, so as to hide the *clear proof* of his age. Thus we can see that if the noun means *clear proof* then the verb must mean to *bring clear proof*, which is just another way of saying to enlighten by making the facts known.

In *The Berean Expositor*, Volume 37, Number 1, page 10, Mr. C. H. Welch has a pertinent note on *elegchos* in II Timothy 3:16 where it is translated "reproof." He states that, "Reproof, therefore, has the blessing of the one reproofed in view." This is confirmed by the fact that God gave the Bible for "reproof" (*elegchos*) II Tim. 3:16; and it is also confirmed by its use in Titus 1:13 where he is told to

"rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." Therefore, when the Spirit of truth "reproves" the world in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment, we can rest assured that it will be done with the blessing of the world in view.

Much to my amazement and sorrow this discussion has brought forth the tragic fact that today the average professing Christian will quickly and greedily believe anything he hears about God showing His indignation, pouring out His wrath, or punishing the world for its iniquity; but the moment we suggest that God is going to do something great, good, and beneficial for this sin cursed world, they raise their hands in horror as if we have spoken blasphemy. They go to the prophets of doom with this question upon their lips, "What is the BAD news for the world today, preacher?" And these dispensers of frightfulness satisfy their sadistic cravings by setting forth all manner of terror, tragedy, wrath, indignation, and disaster which God is about to unloose upon the world.

I disclaim all fellowship with these prophets of fear, with these dispensers of doom. I proclaim a Savior who "has compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." He will never pour out His indignation upon the world until He has done all that He can do about the ignorance and waywardness of man. The best thing He can do, the greatest thing He can do, the thing He will do is to bring all mankind to the knowledge of truth. The next great, divine action in regard to this world will be that God by His Spirit will enlighten mankind by making the facts known concerning sin, righteousness and judgment. May this day soon be a reality.

The End.

ACTS Chapter 9:32-43

This portion is one of great importance. It is far more than the simple record of the healing of Aeneas and the resurrection of Dorcas. It contains hidden truths which we need to discover and to add to our intelligence concerning divine things.

9:32-33. And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

Lydda was a city on the road between Jerusalem and Joppa. There Peter's path crossed that of a certain man named Aeneas who was sick. This man is not called either a believer or a disciple. Neither of these designations could be applied to him. Compare the designation "certain man" with the term "certain disciple" used of Dorcas in Acts 9:36. If this man could have been called either a believer or a disciple, the writer would have done so. Nevertheless, healing fell into this man's lap just as it came to the beggar in the Temple gate, recorded in Acts 3:1-11.

At about the time the Lord Jesus began his public ministry this man had suffered a severe paralytic stroke. This caused him to suffer for eight years from *paralysis agitans*, or as it is commonly called, the palsy. He had been afflicted at about the time that God's government had begun to be proclaimed, and had been in bed for three years when the government of God came in power on the day of Pentecost. Now, five years later this sick man lay before an accredited representative of heavens' government who had full power to act. The result is just what one should expect when

God's government is working in the earth. It reaches out, takes men into and under it by acts of mercy, making them from that time forth responsible and accountable to it. This is a sample of going out into the highways and compelling men to come in. Men have no choice in regard to God's kingdom purposes when He determines to bring them into it.

9:34. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

It is to be noted that Peter did not require all the trappings that are so essential to modern healers and healing cults. We do not find any record of anyone in the New Testament claiming they could heal or that they had the gift of healing. They simply healed, and their works spoke in behalf of the power of Jesus Christ. Peter did not need a great crowd in a tent or tabernacle. He did not need song-leader, choir, or close harmony quartet. He did not need to gather together great groups of sick, blind, deaf, and lame in the hope of finding among them a few who would profess to be healed, and thus support his claims to miraculous power. Furthermore, he dared to work in small towns where the sick person would be known to every inhabitant, and his professed healing could be checked by all who cared to do so. All Peter needed was one sick man. He found this in Aeneas, and restored him to health by simply saying, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."

9:35. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saran saw him, and turned to the Lord.

The effect produced by this miracle spread from this town to the next. Many who knew this man saw him. They knew his past and recognized the true significance of the miracle performed by Peter. This brought them under responsibility to God's government. If Peter had never gone to Lydda it could have been said of these people the words spoken by our Lord in **John 15: 22, 24.**

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.

9:36,37. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

The problem of Tabitha is that she is the only disciple in the Acts period who was sick and who died what we would call a natural death. Stephen had died, but he died at the hands of men. Ananias and Sapphira died, but they died at the hands of the Lord because of their sin. Many in Corinth were sick and many were dead, but they died because of failure to conform to the divine order. The sickness and death of Tabitha imposes a real problem.

This woman was a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, and she was full of good works. Under the divine conditions that existed in the Acts period she should not have been sick and she should not have died. Even though the government of God was only present in a stage comparable to blade stage of growing grain, freedom from illness and freedom from Adamic death was the privilege of everyone who was related to Jesus Christ. Therefore, this woman's illness and her subsequent death cannot be explained by saying that these were the outflow of Adam's sin. The believers of the Acts period were cut off from Adam and were free from the results of his sin, so far as sickness and death were concerned.

A careful examination of all the facts will show that this woman's illness and death were the result of failing to conform to God's order. She was "full of good works and alms deeds which she did." These things filled her life. Her time, means, and strength were devoted to these things. **This was her mistake. This violated God's established order and He could not ignore her violation**

In Matthew 4:4 the Lord had declared that under His government men could not live by bread alone. They could live only by feeding upon every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. The life of Dorcas was so full of good works and alms deeds that there was no place for the Word of God. Her time and strength were given to feeding and clothing others, and she had no time or strength left to feed herself upon the Word of God.

The importance of feeding upon God's Word was emphasized by the Lord Jesus in His dealings with Mary and Martha. Martha chose to serve Him, but Mary chose to sit at His feet and hear His word. Luke 10:38-42. Dorcas had chosen to emulate Martha, and this choice could not be passed over lightly by the Lord.

The twelve disciples realized the truth of this when they declared, "**It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables.**" Acts 6:2.

In spite of all this Dorcas felt that her service to men would make up for her neglect of the Word of God. However, God would not alter His clearly established order to suit the program of any woman, no matter how good her works may be. The outcome of this "service in self-will" was that she took sick and died. Both of these were from the hand of the Lord.

It was a strict custom in Palestine to bury a person as soon as possible after death, but in the case of Dorcas her body was kept until Peter could arrive. It is evident that her friends felt that something had gone wrong somewhere. Had not Jesus Christ said, "Because I live, ye shall live also"? John 14:19. Had He not said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die"? But in spite of these words of promise, here was a woman who had died, and she had died in a time when these promises were in full force. There is no doubt but that her fellow disciples are greatly puzzled. However, a man who may have all the answers is only nine miles away.

9:38-39. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

It is well for us to get the whole picture of the situation that existed the moment that Peter stood in that upper chamber.

1. Above all was the Lord Jesus, Christ, the King of the kingdom that was then in the earth. He was the highest of the heavens who were associated with Him in this rule.

2. Under Him were the heavens, those beings who served Him in relationship to the government that had been established in the earth.

3. Under these was Peter, an authorized and accredited representative of heavens' government who had full power to bind a matter on earth and have it bound in heaven or to loose a matter on earth and have it loosed in heaven.

4. Finally there was Dorcas, a subject of the kingdom of the heavens, one who had cast her lot with it even before it spread out to encompass the earth. She was dead, and it is evident that she was dead because of an imbalance in her life. There had been too much of the work of God and too little of the Word of God in her life. This condition could not be tolerated under heavens' government.

However, Peter was a man under authority, and he could not act in this case apart from direction from his superiors. And, thank God, there is no "red tape" under heavens' government.

9:40,41. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he

gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

It is most evident that this woman was deserving of mercy, and under a just government mercy will always be shown when it is deserved. Mercy is a favor shown to those who have some claim upon the divine pity. Grace is a favor that is wholly underserved. The resurrection of Dorcas is a clear act of mercy under God's government.

While Peter has full power to raise the dead, he would not undo what the heavens above him had done until he cleared it with those above and over him. . This was the reason for his prayer. Having prayed, he turned to the body and spoke the words that brought this woman back to life. He sought the will of the Lord in regard to this dead woman, and once His will was known, he restored her to life. In the fifth chapter he spoke the words that sent two disciples into the state of death. Here he speaks the word that brings one disciple out.

What clearer proof do we need that death is not "departing to be with Christ," that it is not "going to be with the Lord." Peter did not send Ananias and Sapphira to be with Christ. He did not take Dorcas from the presence of the Lord.

9:42, 43. And it was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

When Peter accepted the hospitality of Simon the tanner, he was lodging with a man who was considered unclean from the Jewish standpoint. His break with these Jewish scruples, which had no real foundation in the Word is a step in the right direction. This break with tradition will prepare him for an advance in truth, as will be seen in the next chapter.

(To Be Continued)

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

In the course of developing the truths in regard to that period of blessing which is to be the portion of this earth before the second coming of Christ, I have sought to consider every honest argument that might be brought against it. If time and strength were available, I would write out and publish a full answer to every objection to the truth which I am declaring; for I know that without exception these objections are points which I and my fellow workers carefully considered and cleared up before I ever began to publish in writing this great message.

One of these objections is based upon that which is called in Scripture "the times of the Gentiles." The chief New Testament passage which deals with this is found in **Luke 21:24**:

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

The argument against my teaching, which is based upon this passage is as follows: The times of the Gentiles began with the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in about 600 B.C, and they continue until the personal return of Jesus Christ to the earth. Since Jerusalem is to be "trodden down" of the Gentiles until the second coming of Christ, how can there be a long period of blessing for Jerusalem, for Israel and for the world before the Lord returns to the earth?

This objection is based upon bad translation, wrong interpretation, erroneous ideas, and failure to consider all the facts in the matter.

As to translation, the Greek word *ethnos* occurs three times in this passage. It is translated "nations" once and "Gentiles" twice. It should be translated *nations* in all three occurrences. The word translated "trodden down" means to tread, but it does not mean trodden down, and there is no reason for so translating it in this passage. In view of these positive facts this passage should read;

And they shall be falling by the edge of the sword and shall be led into captivity into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden of the nations until the times of the nations be fulfilled.

As to the charge of wrong interpretation it is most evident that these words of our Lord are a prophecy, that they tell of events, which are to take place, and not of something which happened 600 years before. Then, it is only as nations act in concert that it could be said that Jerusalem is being trodden of the nations. By no stretch of the imagination could control over Jerusalem by one nation (such as Turkey) be made to mean that Jerusalem is trodden by the nations or that it is the times of the nations. One nation cannot mean the nations.

It is an erroneous idea to say that "the times of the nations" began with Nebuchadnezzar. There is no foundation for this idea except that someone said it long ago and men have been parroting it ever since. As noted before these words of our Lord are a prophecy, which is yet to be fulfilled. The "times of the nations" were entirely future when our Lord spoke these words.

The facts that men have failed to consider are the other passages in Scripture, which have a bearing upon this truth. The first of these is **Ezekiel 30: 3.**

For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen (nations).

This passage locates the time of the nations as being in the day of the Lord. And while I do not go so far as to say that this passage actually places "the times" spoken of in Luke 21:24 in the day of the Lord, yet there is another passage that does place it there. This is Revelation 11:1-2.

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles (nations); and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

The word translated "tread under foot" here is *pateo*, the same word as is translated "trodden down" in Luke 21:24. It is not *katapatoe*, which means to tread down or to tread under foot. It is so translated in Luke 8:5 and Hebrews 10:29.

If the entire portion of Luke 21:7 - 28 is read it will be found that it is a condensed version of the truth revealed in detail in Revelation. Many expositors have pointed this out. The treading of Jerusalem in Luke 21: 24 is identical with the treading of the holy city in Revelation 11:2. The passage in Revelation gives clear proof that the treading of Jerusalem by the nations acting in concert is a future event, and that once it begins it will continue for just forty-three months.

Therefore in view of these facts it is my conviction that "the times of the nations" is yet future, that it is related to the revolt against the kingdom, and that it will last just three and a half years.

The End.

THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES

The subject of this brief study comes from the *King James Version* of **Romans 11:25**. In this passage Paul declares:

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery (secret), lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES be come in.

This phrase is in no way related to "the times of the Gentiles." The fullness of the nations and the times of the nations are two entirely different matters. This "fullness" is that company from among the nations, which God began to call out when He sent Peter to the house of Cornelius in Acts 10. At that time God began what is fittingly called a visit to the Gentiles for the purpose of taking out of them a people for His name. See Acts 15:14. This company from the nations were called in relationship to God's kingdom purposes, as Paul emphatically declares in I Thessalonians 2:12. This was a work that God was doing in the Acts period, and the partial blindness of Israel at that time was related to this purpose. This work of taking a people from among the nations to serve God in the next stage of His kingdom was complete when Paul reached Rome. God was then ready to lift Israel's partial blindness, unveil the Lord Jesus Christ, and bring in the next great stage of His government. But this was all suspended in order to make way the present demonstration of God's grace.

There is no partial blindness upon Israel today. Her blindness is total, and it has been total ever since the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles, as declared in Acts 28:28. When God takes up His dealings with her again, it will not be to restore her to the condition of partial blindness. The purpose for which a blindness in part came upon her has been fulfilled. God has His complement (fullness) from the nations. God's next word to Israel will be: **Arise, shine (be enlightened); 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 peoples: 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. Isaiah 60:1-3.**

The truth declared in Romans 11:25 does not explain Israel's present blindness, but it does explain her blindness in the Acts period.

The End.

HE ALONE HAS IMMORTALITY

Among the special glories of the Lord Jesus Christ is the fact that at the present time He is the only one who has immortality. He is the only being who could die and who did die that is now beyond the reach of death. That He alone has immortality is the positive declaration of the Spirit of God in I Timothy 6:16. It is strange indeed that there are so many today who are willing to give Him every honor except this one. They steadfastly refuse to ascribe immortality to Jesus Christ as his sole prerogative. A false creed forces them to constantly deny Him this one glory. They ascribe to every man that which belongs only to Jesus Christ.

In view of this it is most evident that the idea of the natural immortality of man is a wicked doctrine. Many men have realized this, but they have not followed it out to all its conclusions and accepted all its consequences. The late Dr. Lewis Sperry Chaffer in his *Systematic Theology* states: "Immortality is something related to the material part of man rather than the immaterial. The commonly used phrase *immortality of the soul* is most unscriptural. The soul is never considered mortal by Scripture."

In the day when God enlightens mankind in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment as promised in John 16:7-11 one of the first truths that is to be forced upon him is that Jesus Christ is the only one who has immortality. This is the truth declared in I Timothy 6:14-16. God is going to make it plain to all mankind that immortality is the exclusive possession of the Lord Jesus Christ. This will completely counteract and reverse the first lie ever told. Satan said, "Ye shall not surely die." Genesis 3:2. This lie has had universal acceptance ever since it was told. But the *time* will yet come when God will brand it for the lie that it is and shew to all mankind that Jesus Christ alone possesses immortality. What a day of rejoicing that will be for those who believed God's truth before it was forced upon them.

The End.

A NOTE ON DISPENSATIONS

In the study and understanding of the Word of God it is always profitable to divide sacred history into clearly defined periods of time. However it is of no profit whatsoever to designate these periods as dispensations. A period of time is not a dispensation. If a certain dispensation is in effect during a period of time then we can label it by that name, but *it* will lead only to confusion if we try to call epochs of sacred history dispensations.

Over and over we have declared in these pages that a dispensation is not a period of time. This was stated in the first issue sent out, and it will be stated many times again. A dispensation is an administration, and, to further clarify it, an administration is a method or manner of dealing. We know that God's present method of dealing is gracious, for He has said this in Ephesians 3:2; therefore, we have every right to designate the time in which we live as the dispensation or the administration of the grace of God. At present God's sale method of dealing with the human race is to show mankind a love and favor that he does not deserve.

The Greek word for dispensation is *oikonomia*. This is composed of two words, *oikos* meaning house and, *nemo* which means to dispense or to deal out. From *nemo* we get the Greek word *nomos* which means law. When these two words are brought together they would seem to mean "house-law" or "house-dealing," Or to state it more simply, the method of dealing with a household. These facts have led some to think that God's dispensations are limited to His household and, out of this reasoning, has come the idea that only those who are vitally related to Jesus Christ come under the dispensation of grace.

Those who teach along these lines are guilty of reasoning apart from all the facts. The elements which make up a word are often a very poor guide to its meaning. Usage alone determines the meaning of any word, and the meaning of *oikonomia* must be gotten from its usage by the Holy Spirit. One passage is enough to destroy this whole idea.

In Romans 16:23 we find the cognate word *oikonomos*, composed of the same elements, and which means literally "houseruler". From this we might expect this rule to be limited to a house, but the facts deny this. Erastus was "the chamberlain (oikonomos) of the city." If we take all other words, the first element of which is *oikos* we will find that this word cannot be limited to a household.

It is now, for the first time in human history, that mankind is under one, absolute, announced method of dealing. This is the first absolute dispensation or administration. This method of dealing began when the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles at Acts 28:28. It will end when God has completed His purpose in grace and the salvation of God returns to His people Israel.

The next dispensation will also be absolute in its character. It will be an administration of divine government. It will begin with a great act of universal mercy in which God will give positive light and truth to every member of the human race, He will let them taste of the heavenly gift, they will become partakers of the Holy Spirit, they will taste the good Word of God, and witness the powers of the coming eon. In that day the message of Hebrews 6:4-6 will be in full force and operation.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

It is strange indeed that so many give so much time and effort to denying the absolute grace that God is showing to mankind now. Then when they tire of this they seek to deny the absolute government, which God is going to bring upon mankind in the future. The truth can be expressed in very simple fashion. No divine government now! No divine grace then! Grace now! Government then!

The End.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****There has been a slight change in our status since we sent forth the previous issue. It is now Grandfather and Grandmother Sellers. Richard Penn Hancock was born to Fred and Jane Hancock on February 3, 1953. He is a very fine boy of whom we are quite proud.

****The reception of our tape-recorded ministry has brought us much satisfaction. This means of teaching fits in very well with the character of our ministry. The work of teaching the truth must always be done to "one here or two there," as it is rare to find enough interested people in one locality who will come together for a regular class. Heretofore our only means of reaching these isolated individuals and groups has been by means of the printed page. Now, if they will secure a tape recorder, we can furnish them with a fifty minute spoken message on the average at one each week. There are now twenty-one outlets for these messages. Some of these are small classes. This greatly increases the scope of this ministry. Why don't you watch the want ad pages for a used recorder? Mr. Baudistel just purchased one in perfect condition for \$90.00, which sells at \$187.50. Just make sure that it will play a seven inch reel and that it operates at three and three-quarter speed. If you get the recorder, we will furnish the tape-recorded messages at no cost to you.

****Our latest publishing effort is a small booklet of thirty-two pages under title of "God's Present Purpose." A copy of this has been sent to every reader of THE WORD OF TRUTH, and many more are being mailed to a list of names, which are not on our regular readers' list. It is our desire that the friends of this ministry will help us in the distribution of this message. Prices are 1 copy .15; 2 copies .25; 10 copies \$1.00; and 50 copies \$4.00.

****From April 6 to May 20 the Editor will be on tour for the purpose of ministering the Word of God in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Rockford, Peoria, and Chicago, Illinois; Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, and Muskegon, Michigan; Buffalo and Greenwich, New York; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This trip is being made by plane and train, and due to the limited time available some places could not be visited. The trip next September and October will be made by automobile and this will make possible stops for one meeting in places that had to be passed by this time. The itinerary is already being arranged for this, so if any are interested they should correspond as soon as possible.

****Friends of this ministry who plan to visit us in California should always check in advance to make sure we will be at home. Many take it for granted that we will most certainly be here, but that is taking too much for granted as some have discovered to their disappointment and our disappointment. We are not in Los Angeles for at least four months each year. The spring trip for ministry takes seven weeks and the fall trip usually occupies ten weeks. Even though a regular teaching ministry is carried on when we are in Los Angeles, there is no obligation to any group that requires my presence here. In this connection friends will please note that we will not be in Los Angeles this fall from August 31 to November 14.

****The greatest problem a ministry such as this faces is the diminishing company of those who are instructed in the simple facts of the Bible. I do not believe that the Lord has called me to teach adults the names of the New Testament or the story of David and Goliath. It is increasingly evident that a new generation has arisen that does not know these things. Many believe that more Sunday Schools is the answer. I believe that those who have a working knowledge of the Bible got it from their own parents, or else they obtained it in later life by their own efforts.

End, Vol. XVIII, No. 4