

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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THE EARTH, NOT HEAVEN, IS THE FUTURE HOME OF GOD'S REDEEMED

This is what I believe. It is a belief that is not based upon tradition, upon emotion, or upon wishful thinking. It is not a conclusion that I have arrived at hurriedly. It is the result of all the years that I have devoted to the study of the Word of God. The things I have learned have forced this belief upon me. If I did not now believe this, I would be forced to admit within my heart that having found truth through study, I have not accepted it. If I refused this truth I would be like a man who has written ten, ten, and five upon a paper, then turns pale and tears up the page when he discovers they add up to twenty-five.

I

Of course, I could be wrong. It may be that I hit a derail in my thinking while going full speed ahead. However, my own knowledge of how this conviction came to me tells me that I have been slow in accepting it, that at times, I strongly resisted it. No man in my position wants to accept an idea that will demand that he rethink his whole life. Nevertheless, much practice has given me a degree of capability along these- lines. The Word of God is powerful when it comes to "casting down imaginations," and every imaginary idea about heaven is sure to fall if one persists in searching the Scriptures to see what the Bible reveals about it.

However, if it should turn out that I am wrong, and later we discover that "heaven" or the "heaven of heavens" is the future abode of God's redeemed, then I will have made the mistake of taking too low a place. This will not be too serious a mistake, for if I am in the wrong room in God's great universe, the Lord can invite me to come up higher.

The articles printed in the previous issue of THE WORD OF TRUTH sent many people to the Bible in the hope that they could turn up hundreds of passages which would give support to the idea that heaven or the super-heaven is our future home. Some were amazed at what they found, and have reported their experiences to me. They now wonder how an idea can be so widely held and yet have nothing in the Word to support it. This is not hard to explain.

The Egyptian and Greek ideas of "the immortality of the soul" with all the related errors that make up the Platonic philosophy of man's nature, made it necessary to have some place for these souls to go when they leave the body. The Greeks had their Elysium, the American Indian had his "happy hunting grounds," the Hindus had their Nirvana, and the Norse had their Valhalla; but Christendom took the Biblical word "heaven" to describe the place where they imagined that souls went at death.

The Bible-taught believer who knows that death is the end of this life and that resurrection is the beginning of the life to come has no need for an imaginary place for "souls" to go between the time of death and resurrection. However, there are many honest Bible students who feel that in resurrection the destiny of some will be heaven, and that the destiny of God's present calling will be the heavens of heavens.

I am not finding fault with any who hold these views. I held them and taught them at one time myself, as my earliest writings will show. However, at that time I was only one step removed from the traditional idea that the dead go to heaven at the moment of death, and I was trying to view God's masterpiece with my nose pressed against the painting. Later, as I stood farther away, I was able to get a better perspective. Honesty forced me to say, "I see it differently now," but I cannot be bitter against those who still see it as I once did.

If anyone who disagrees with me wants to get bitter about it, he cannot expect me to join him in his bitterness. Anger and resentment burn up an enormous amount of energy, and I prefer to use my energy in more important pursuits. If I am wrong, it should not be too difficult to marshal a great army of Scripture and prove me wrong. In fact, I would like to see this subject opened up for discussion and study by all students and teachers. I would encourage a full and honest examination of all passages which seem to indicate that the future home of the redeemed is in a realm wholly apart from the earth. When these passages are brought into the witness box and allowed freely to give their testimony, it will be found that they do not say what some are insisting they say.

God's Family in Heaven and Earth

Paul's statement in Ephesians 3:15 has been called upon to give testimony against my teaching. Weymouth translates this "from whom the whole family in Heaven and on earth derives its name." The word *name* here signifies nature or character. The cherubim, seraphim, and angels get their character from God for they are called sons of God. Adam got his nature from God for he was called a son of God. These two (angelic beings and human beings) make up the whole family in heaven and earth. There is no teaching in this passage that the destiny of any man is to be heaven or the super-heavens.

Our Conversation is in Heaven

Philippians 3:20 has been rushed in as a reinforcement in a futile attempt to hold the line against the teaching that earth is the future home of the redeemed. The statement, "for our conversation is in heaven" is supposed to prove that Paul expected to be in the super-heavens. Just how it can do this, I do not know, but by some sleight-of-hand "heaven" is supposed to mean a place far above all heavens.

This passage has been faithfully interpreted by many expositors. Philippi was a Roman colony. Its citizens were Romans who enjoyed all the rights of such. It was a part of Rome at some distance from Rome. A Philippian would never have said, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." The one rule of his life was, "When in Philippi, do as the Romans do." Paul uses this in his argument

concerning how the believers should walk. He tells them: "Our manner of life already exists (is inherent) among the heavens." This is in harmony with the words of Christ when He said, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." The angels always behold the face of the Father, they do His commandments, they hearken to the voice of His word, they do his pleasure. May we ever do the same.

Those who use this passage to teach that the destiny of these Philippians was heaven are guilty of expunging its real message in order to read into it some idea of their own.

Abraham's Better Country

Another passage that is confidently brought forth is **Hebrews 11:8-10** and **11:13-16**. The message of these passages is so important that they will be quoted in full.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.

In any attempt faithfully to expound this portion I am faced with somewhat the same difficulty that confronted me when I purchased the house which is now our home and headquarters. The electric wires coming into it were far too small to carry the load that our equipment would place upon them. When wires are overloaded, they get hot and a fire may be started. A fuse is sure to blowout. There was nothing we could do but bring in heavier wires to carry the load.

Even so, I find it with many people. They have no real familiarity with the Word of God, the very wires that bring truth into our lives. When a burden of truth is laid upon them, they get hot and blow a fuse or start a fire. Therefore, I must take time at this point to bring in some heavier wires. We must become familiar with certain passages of Scripture. We need to be acquainted with every passage in Scripture in which the future of Jerusalem and Zion are mentioned. We cannot examine all of these here, but a few will be quoted.

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Psalm 122:1-4.

The whole of this short Psalm should be read. It is a prophecy. It speaks of a future Jerusalem. A reading of this Psalm in the Rotherham Version will confirm this. "**Jerusalem that hath been builded, A true city, all joined together as one.** ." . For there are set-Thrones for justice, Thrones for the house of David." These words could not have been true of the Jerusalem that existed in David's day when the Psalm was written. This is seen more dearly when we read **Psalm 147:2**.

The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

This is also a prophecy. It should read: "Jehovah is building Jerusalem." We can rest assured that when Jehovah builds Jerusalem it will be a city that has foundations, and that it will measure up in every detail to the city to which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob looked forward. Now, let the reader examine carefully the five passages which follow:

Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. Isaiah 33:20-21.

And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity. Isaiah 33:24.

Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem. Isaiah 52:9.

But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. Isaiah 65:18-19.

Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. Zechariah 8:3-4.

A careful reading of these passages in their contexts will show that they do not concern the Jerusalem that existed when the Psalms were written, neither do they concern the Jerusalem "which is now," as Paul so aptly states it. Neither do they have to do with that new Jerusalem that is to be created in heaven and descends into the new earth. All these passages have to do with Jerusalem that is to be upon this earth in the day that God governs. With the truth of these passages fixed in our minds we can now return to our examination of Hebrews 11:8-16.

The claim is made that this passage sets aside all that we ever learned in the Old Testament concerning the promises made to Abraham. In Genesis it is crystal clear that every promise God made to Abraham had to do with this earth, but we are told by many that Abraham never really expected God to fulfill these promises, and that what he hoped for and looked forward to was a place in heaven. Thus we are asked to believe that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah all knew perfectly well that even though God promised them an earthly country, what He really was going to give them was a home in heaven. And we are asked to believe that there is no record of this larger and higher expectation of Abraham until Paul made it known in Hebrews, chapter eleven.

I am not ridiculing this idea. I once taught it myself. However, the time came when I realized that Hebrews 11 should not- be interpreted in a manner that made it repugnant to the words of our Lord in **Matthew 8:11.**

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of the heavens.

Any interpretation of Hebrews 11:8-16 that does not line up with this statement cannot be the right one. Our Lord places Abraham in the kingdom of the heavens, and there is no word in the writings of Paul which contradicts this.

Paul begins his message concerning Abraham by stating the historical facts. It was by faith that Abraham obeyed God's call to go forth to a land which he should later receive as his portion. Through faith he sojourned in the land that had been promised to him, as if he were in a foreign country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob who were fellow-heirs with him of this same promise. He did not become an established citizen of any city in that land, for he was waiting for the city that has the foundations whose architect and builder is God. This is the very city which we read about in the Old Testament passages previously quoted. It meets every specification set forth in this passage. It is called both Jerusalem and Zion. See Isa. 2:3. If all the passages that speak of God building Zion were added to those already quoted, it would result in a greater conviction as to God building a city on earth. However, I hesitate to add these passages. Most dispensationalists have long ago ceased to sing, "We are marching to Zion," but they have never yet been delivered from the idea that Zion is a place in heaven. Nevertheless, a reading of Psalm 102:16 is advised.

Of one thing we can be certain. When these men looked for the city that has the foundations whose architect and builder is God, they were looking for that which had been promised to them. All these men died in faith. They had not received that which had been promised to them, but they did see the fulfillment of these promises in the future, embraced them and avowed that they were strangers and expatriates on the earth. They avowed this because they were dwelling in a land that had only been promised to them. Until it was actually given to them, they could be nothing else but aliens in it.

The words of Stephen concerning this needs to be considered here.

Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. Acts 7:4-5.

Paul declares that men who say they are "strangers and pilgrims" are indicating that they seek a country. They could have returned to the country from whence they came. This was their "fatherland," but they did not even entertain the thought of going back to it. They were aspiring to a better country, that is, a super-heavenly country. This is what the land promised to Abraham will be in the day when God governs the world. Moses anticipated this blessed condition when he spoke of "the days of heaven upon the earth" (Deuteronomy 11:21). When this blessed condition is a reality, then the country which Abraham waited for will be upon this earth.

In view of these facts I will continue to interpret Hebrews 11:8-16 in the light of Matthew 8:11. I am forced by the words of Christ to believe that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be upon this earth in the day when heaven's government is a reality.

The Heavenly Calling

Hebrews 3:1 is pointed to as proof that the destiny of some men is heaven. However, if, this passage proves anything along this line it would prove that the destiny of some is the super-heaven. The word translated "heavenly" here is *epouraniou*. This describes the character of their calling, and has nothing to do with their destiny.

In Conclusion

A cry has arisen in some places that seems to say, "Close your ears to this teaching. Do not even consider that it might be the truth." I would faithfully warn all who profess to love the truth against any step such as this. My own "ears are not closed to any arguments against it. However, I have too much "respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb.11:26) to fail vigorously to set forth anything that I believe to be the truth.

The End.

GOD'S GOVERNMENT

It is the revealed purpose of our God that some day He will govern the world. This is one of the great themes of the Word of God. It is summed up and declared in the words of Paul spoken to the men of Athens upon Mars hill:

Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead. Acts 17:31.

This verse is usually taken to mean that a day will come in which there will be a court session in which God will determine the rewards or punishments of each and every man. It is sometimes interpreted as referring to the trial of the nations at the second coming of Christ (Matt. 25:31-46), or it is taken to mean the trial at the great white throne set forth in Revelation 20:11-15. Paul's statement has nothing to do with either one of these events, and it belittles the passage to so apply it. Interpretations such as these are based upon a misunderstanding of the word *judge*.

To *judge* is to rule or to govern. A single honest reading of the book of Judges would bring this conviction, and end forever the false idea that to *judge* is to punish. When the twelve apostles sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, they will be ruling or governing. To rule or to govern was what the elders of Israel had in mind when they insisted of Samuel that he "make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (I Sam. 8:5). To judge means to determine the order, to fix the order, and to maintain the order. All the various functions of government are inherent in the Hebrew and Greek words translated "judge." To make the word *judge* mean to punish, and to make the word *judgment* mean *punishment* is one of the worst interpretations that has ever been inflicted upon God's people. See I Kings 3:9.

The word "day" in Acts 17:31 does not mean a twenty-four hour period. This same word is translated "while" in Acts 18: 18 which is sufficient proof that it can mean a period of *time*. See also Luke 2:36 where it is translated "age" and II Corinthians 6:2 where it is translated "day," but could not possibly mean a twenty-four hour period.

When all the facts that are pertinent to a correct understanding of Acts 17:31 have been assembled we will know that it tells us that our God has set a period of time during which He will govern the world in righteousness by that man whom He has appointed. Thus we have the most positive declaration that the inhabited earth is to be governed by God. When this promise is fulfilled, the kingdom of God upon earth will be a reality.

Another bold statement concerning the government of the earth by God is made by Paul in **Romans 15:12**. There, quoting from Isaiah he declares:

There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the nations (not "the Gentiles"); in Him shall the nations trust.

This statement is one of four quotations made by Paul in proof of his contention that God's government embraces and includes the nations and that it is not peculiar to the nation of Israel. There are many who need carefully to study this portion. On every hand we find those who want to limit God's government to the nation of Israel. This is an idea that Paul refutes in this passage.

The thinking of some men has certainly become muddled when we see them trying to limit the coming government to Israel, then trying to spread out the great tribulation to embrace the entire world. The very opposite is true. Jesus Christ is to reign over the nations, but the tribulation is the time of Jacob's trouble. The answer to the question, "Will we go through the great tribulation?" should be, "Not unless you are in the land of Palestine."

In his great pronouncement (Romans 15:8-12) Paul recognizes the peculiar place and portion of Israel. He declares that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. One of these promises was made through Ezekiel. In it God promised that He would rule over Israel, bring them out from the peoples, gather them out of the countries wherein they were scattered, and bring them into the land of Israel. Ezekiel 20:33-44. All of the Old Testament prophecies of God's government emphasized the unique place of Israel under it, however, all the prophets made it plain that God's government was to embrace all nations. This is the truth that Paul is emphasizing in the passage we are considering. But he goes far beyond the simple truth that God will reign over the nations. He declares, in harmony with Isaiah, that the nations will trust in Him.

A stickler for accuracy might insist here that the Greek word *elpis* means hope. This is correct, but since our English word *hope* has degenerated into a desire for something which we have no real reason to expect, it no longer serves as a true rendering of *elpis*. The Greek word *elpis* means to rely on a person or thing. Since our word *trust* expresses this idea, the translation found in the *King James Version* is a good one.

The great truth of the nations trusting in Christ is one that has been overlooked and ignored far too long. Many think it is being fulfilled as long as a few individuals out of the nations are willing to put their trust in Christ. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that Paul, and the writers from whom he quotes, are not dealing with individuals. This "trust" is not the act of a few or of many individuals. It is a national act, a national policy, a principle of the constitution of the nations.

The phrase "In God We Trust" appears on all United States coins. This is a traditional phrase and great sentimental value is attached to it. However, every thinking American knows that it is not true. The fact is that we as a nation do not trust in God. We put our trust in such things as atomic weapons, in military strength, and in the striking and defensive power of our air command. We would not dare under present conditions to beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks. We cannot disarm and then rely upon God to defend us from the hatred and might of unfriendly nations that would rejoice if we were destroyed. The reason we cannot do this is that Jesus Christ is not now reigning over the nations. This world is not being governed by God. It is being governed by men. Some who govern are incapable, irresponsible, and unworthy. In a drunken moment they could speak the word that would send planes toward our cities with the deadliest load of missiles that have ever been known to man. There is nothing in God's present program or purpose that would stop them. We live in a day when our God is permitting all nations to walk after their own ways (Acts 14:16). Nations can start wars and nations can stop wars. They sometimes find it much easier to start them than to stop them, but God does not hinder a nation from doing either.

When nations fight, God does not take sides. God cannot take sides as long as His method of dealing with nations is gracious. However, the time will come when God will deal with the world under government and not in grace. When He governs, the nations can and will put their trust in Jesus Christ. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. No nation will make a study of war. No nation will learn war any more.

The idea of nations trusting in Jesus Christ is almost unbelievable. Paul recognized the difficulty men would have in believing this so he calls upon them to do it and promises a reward of joy and peace if they will.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13.

An important passage in connection with the nations trusting in Christ is found in Matthew 12:18-21. There are three great promises in this passage that need to be carefully considered.

1. Jesus Christ will shew judgment to the nations.
2. He will send forth judgment unto victory.
3. In His name shall the nations trust.

In the first of these promises we see Jesus Christ giving intelligence to the nations in regard to the judgments of God. When He does this every nation on earth will know what God wants, what God expects, and what God's will is in regard to any act or movement of a nation. We can rest assured that among these judgments which Jesus Christ will make known is that God would have every nation to turn their implements of war into instruments of peace and to cease to make a study or business of war. If the nations will submit and conform to God's judgments, they will be preserved as nations, but if they refuse, they as nations will be destroyed.

At the present time no nation in their national acts can say that they are doing God's will or are performing and observing God's judgments. We cannot say that it is God's judgment that we should go ahead and make more terrible nuclear weapons or that we should destroy those which we have. We cannot say that God would have us to appease our enemies or to fight a preventive war. We cannot say these things, for God has not yet made known his judgment to the nations. He has promised to do this and it will yet be done through Jesus Christ.

The statement that He will "send forth judgment unto victory" is a figure of speech that means literally, He shall bring order out of chaos, or, He will bring God's order to replace man's chaos. This will be the first great step in God's government. He must disentangle and set in order all the complicated results of sin in human relationships. No man or union of men are equal to such a tremendous task. There is no work that God is doing today that will ever bring order out of chaos. However, the time will come when Jesus Christ will undertake this work and He will not fail nor be discouraged until He has set judgment in the earth (Isaiah 42:4).

He will do a work that will cause the nations to trust in Him. When He begins His reign the nations will realize that they are under a Sovereign that can be trusted. They will not hesitate to accept His decisions in regard to all national claims and territorial rights.

These are the three things that Isaiah promised Jesus Christ would accomplish. This promise was confirmed by the appearance and ministry of Jesus Christ to Israel. He will shew judgment to the nations. He will bring order out of chaos. He will cause the nations to trust in Him. These are the glorious results which He will accomplish, and they will be accomplished wholly apart from two things.

First, in doing all this **He will not "strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets" (Matt. 12:19).**

Second, in accomplishing all this He does not hurt anyone. No one will be damaged in the process of working all this out, for He will not break a bruised reed and He will not quench a smoking wick. Let us now examine these two things in more detail.

During the three years of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, He did strive with the Pharisees on several occasions, coming out the victor each time. Furthermore, He did cry (John 7:37), and His voice was most certainly heard in the streets (Matthew 4:17). Therefore, it is plain that the three great things which Isaiah and Matthew declared that Jesus Christ would bring to pass were not related to His three years upon the earth. And it is most evident that they have not been realized since that time. He has not yet shown judgment to the nations, He has not brought order out of chaos, and the nations are not yet trusting in Him.

On every hand we are told that all this will be accomplished by the second coming of Christ. But this cannot be for the second coming begins with the Lord descending from heaven with a *shout*. Therefore, all these things must and will be accomplished during the present session of Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father's throne.

Then, we have noted that no one will be damaged or hurt as the Lord accomplishes these three great goals. This does not mean that He will never hurt anyone, but it does mean that no one will get hurt until He has established His order. Then if men refuse or fail to conform they will surely get hurt.

It should be apparent to any thinking person that if the next great event is the rapture of all living believers, as so many insist, and if this is followed by the great tribulation, after which the Lord brings order out of chaos and causes the nations to trust in Him, it is most evident that many will be hurt in the process. Who can read of the trumpets, seals, and bowls; who can read of the Son of man coming in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all who know not God, and assure us that no one will get hurt, that no bruised reeds will be broken, that no smoking wicks will be quenched? If this is the method or process by which God establishes justice and judgment in the earth, then we might just as well write off the words of Isaiah and Matthew as being so much wishful thinking. All that Isaiah predicted must be fulfilled before the catastrophic punishments which precede and which attend the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of God's government is to bless mankind. Under it He will deliver men from bondage, from darkness, from disease, and from death. It will not begin by crushing those who are in bondage and darkness.

Take for example the harlot that walks the streets, offering her body to any who will pay the price. Here is a bruised reed if there ever were one, a smoking wick about to go out. There is no place for one such as she under God's government. Many governments license and regulate such women, but not God's government. However, if God's government were to begin tonight a bruised reed such as this would not be broken. A smoking wick such as this would not be snuffed out. She would be given every opportunity to submit and to conform to the great moral principles of God's government. If this is her earnest desire and she is too weak to do it, strength will be given. Under God's government all who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled.

If there be any who object to harlots finding a place under God's government, then they need to read carefully the words of Christ in Matthew 21:31-32.

We boldly declare without any fear that before Jesus Christ comes again God's order will be revealed to and will be established among the nations, that His divine order will have replaced man's chaos, that the nations will be found trusting in Christ, and that God's justice and judgment will be established in the earth. God will not tolerate any lack of submission or insubordination. Once He makes the facts known to the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment, men will have to walk in the light of what they know.

These great truths cannot be denied by the fact that after men have lived long under these conditions, and God tests them by again permitting them to walk after their own ways, there is an uprising against God's government. Some men will never learn righteousness, no matter how long they are trained in it. However, God's government will be equal to any uprising against it. If those who have learned righteousness from God want to forget and cast aside all they have learned, they can expect nothing but the wrath that will be the portion of those who revolt against the manifest truth of God.

The prophet Isaiah declares that when God's judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness (Isaiah 26:9). God's judgments will be in the earth and the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness before the second coming of Jesus Christ. This will be accomplished in the day of Christ. However, the day of Christ will be followed by the day of the Lord, and Paul declares that the day of the Lord will never come except there be a falling away (Greek, *apostasia* meaning, a revolt, a forsaking, a turning away from) first, and that man of sin be revealed. This one takes his position in the temple of God, a temple that has been rebuilt and accepted by God in the day of Christ.

Isaiah also declares that if favor (grace) is shown to the wicked, they will not learn righteousness. This is what God has been doing for 1900 years-showing favor to the wicked. Every act of His has been an act of grace. When He cannot act in grace toward men, then He does not act at all. This favor that God has showed has not resulted in the world learning righteousness. Nevertheless, God has done it in order to write into the history of His long dealings with mankind a record of the graciousness of His character. When He has finished this to His own satisfaction this administration of pure grace will give way to one of pure government. May God speed the day.

The End.

EPHESIAN TRUTH

My personal studies in Paul's letter to the Ephesians are perpetual. There are other portions of the Word that I study for a few months and then cease for a time, but my studies in this portion are never suspended. Those who regularly attend my classes and who hear my conference messages will know something about my labors in this epistle. Those whose contact with me is solely through my writings will not know of these, for I have been very hesitant to write anything about this portion of Paul's writings. My detractors have made capital of this, but this bothers me not at all. I do not study to show myself approved unto men, and I can treat their scorn in the same way I would treat their compliments.

My studies in Ephesians have brought me one solid conviction. *This epistle is not yet understood.* In spite of all the commentaries and expositions written upon it, *the message of this letter still remains an enigma.* In spite of pompous boasting of many who teach upon it, *nothing is known about this epistle as it should be known.* Men may parade their supposed understanding of this epistle, but this impresses only those who have never made a study of this book. Their explanations of the book are more involved than the book itself.

If anyone should ask me if I understand Ephesians, my answer would have to be that I do not. I fully and freely admit that I do not understand it. This confession puts me in the position of a beginner, a learner, a student. I do not believe that any week passes but that I do not do some definite work on this book. As a result I have found and verified thousands of facts, but have not been able to develop an interpretation of this epistle which will incorporate all these facts. I have found many links of a great chain, but have not yet found the truth that will weld all these links together.

I refuse to become emotional about this epistle-to speak of its "glorious truths" as if I possessed full understanding of them. I refuse to put forth silly little statements about its majestic passages as if I were giving the true interpretation. Little squibs of material are continually being published which profess to explain its verses, but the shallowness of these remarks is manifest to all who have actually tried to explore some of the heights and depths of Ephesians.

There is far too much hypocrisy among dispensationalists in regard to Ephesians. Some are putting on a show as if they had full understanding of its message. However, they would not dare to allow their teachings to be openly examined and honestly criticized by men who are exceedingly anxious to understand the true message of this portion of God's inspired Word. This book is the Mount Everest of all truth. There are lowlands and foothills of truth that must be traversed before we can even stand at the foot of this mountain. I refuse to pose as one who has scaled its heights, while standing on the foothills that lead to its summit.

Let us honestly face the fact. Ephesians is not yet understood. Present interpretations of it are harder to understand than the epistle itself. Let us further face the fact that if it is ever understood in advance of that time when faith becomes sight, it will be because free men have broken away from certain fixed traditions concerning this epistle which are now in vogue among dispensationalists.

My own studies in Ephesians have led me to certain tentative interpretations which I would like to set forth for the help and guidance of other students. These interpretations have already been presented to many classes. They have been analyzed, scrutinized, and criticized by my fellow-laborers, and this has greatly helped in their development. My readers can now give them the same scrutiny. They will be presented as succinctly as possible, and will be spread out over many issues. Here is the first.

The Key to Ephesians

I grow weary of all the talk about keys to the various books of the Bible, especially if such talk holds out the vain hope that the simple process of having a key will open up the entire book. The best a key can do is give us access which makes further exploration possible. Once we hold the key we no longer need stand banging our heads against the door.

It is my conviction that **the real key to Ephesians is found in chapter 1:7-10**. However, there is very little in the *King James Version* that helps in finding this key. Richard Francis Weymouth in his idiomatic translation has hit upon and revealed this key. Here is his paraphrase of this portion:

It is in Him, and through the shedding of His blood, that we have our deliverance - the forgiveness of our offences - so abundant was God's grace, the grace which He, the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, lavished upon us, when He made known to us the secret of His will. And this is in harmony with God's merciful purpose for the government of the world when the times are ripe for it the purpose which He has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one Head in Christ; yes, things in Heaven and things on earth, to find their one Head in Him.

It needs to be carefully noted that this is not put forth as being a literal translation of the Greek of Ephesians 1:7-10. If anyone desires to attack the accuracy of this paraphrase, he will have to shadow box with himself. I refuse to defend this as a literal translation. It is Dr. Weymouth's understanding of what the Greek says set forth in his own words. His opinions are worthy of great respect. He saw that all the wonderful work that God is now doing as revealed in Ephesians is in harmony with God's purpose for the government of the world when the times are ripe for it. The work that God is now doing will have its place and fulfill its purpose in the day when He governs this earth. This is the key to Ephesians. Give this epistle its place in God's eonian purpose and its truths can then be explored. Separate it from this great purpose and it will forever remain an enigma. It becomes a text without a context, a part of the Bible that has no relation to any other part.

It has long been said that Ephesians belongs to a parenthesis, an intercalary period that is not a part of God's prophetic revelation. This is entirely true, and we will never need to back down one inch in regard to this. It sets forth a calling of believers which are distinct and unique from that calling which is seen in the Acts period. Paul's first six epistles deal with men who had been called in connection with God's purposes to bring His government into, upon, and over the world. *See I Thess. 2:12; II Thess. 1:5; I Cor. 6:2, 3.* Paul's last seven epistles deal with men who had been called in connection with God's purpose in grace. *See II Timothy 1:9.* Nevertheless, this grace calling is in harmony with God's great purpose to govern the world.

A parenthesis has no meaning, makes no sense, and cannot be understood apart from the sentence into which it is inserted. The present parenthesis of grace can never be understood apart from an understanding of God's government. This was in the "blade" stage during the period covered by the book of Acts. It will be in the "ear" stage when God resumes His prophetic program. During this administration of grace all of God's purposes in government are suspended.

I heard C. H. Welch quote the familiar words, "What do they know of England who only England know?" and then go on from this to say, "What do they know of Ephesians who only Ephesians know?" I said "Amen" to this. And I would go on to say that men know nothing of the grace of God who seek to know grace alone. He is the God of every grace, but He is also the God of government. We cannot know God until we know both poles of His character.

The End

HEAD, JOINTS AND BANDS

Paul's exhortation in Colossians 2:19 has long been a problem of interpretation. This problem has arisen from forcing into this passage the idea that the human body is the basis of the figures that are used here. This makes an honest exposition of this passage impossible. No man can stand before an audience and say, "Just as our bodies hold our heads, so we should hold Christ, for it is from our head that our bodies receive nourishment by means of our joints and ligaments." And yet this is what we will have to say if we try to understand Colossians 2:19 by likening the truth here to the human body. If this is the figure here, then we have Paul saying that the body is nourished by the head by means of the joints and ligaments. This is so contrary to every fact known concerning human nourishment and development that one would not dare present such ideas to a class of thinking students, then open up the meeting for question and discussion. But, let us get this passage before us.

\And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Colossians 2:19.

There can be no question here but that Paul is using highly figurative language. However it is most evident that his metaphors are not based upon the human body. This becomes all the more evident when we consider the exact meaning of the leading words in this passage.

The word translated "holding" means to *lay hold* or to *take hold*. An examination of all the occurrences of the Greek word *krateo* will show that this is the true meaning.

The word translated "Head" is *kephale*. The basic meaning of this word is *sum*. It comes from mathematics and not from anatomy. It has been so long applied to the top part of the body that its original meaning is almost lost. We do not seem to be able to read or hear the word *head* today without thinking of the upper division of the human body, and this in spite of the fact that it has twenty seven definitions in the dictionary. In Greek the word *kephale* meant sum, capital, or source. It is equivalent to the Hebrew word *rosh* which is translated head, sum, chief, top, beginning, and seventeen other ways in the Old Testament.

The word translated body (*soma*) means *substance*. This is also what the word *body* means in English. The student should refer back to Colossians 2:17 where another occurrence of "body" will be found in this same paragraph. If we will just remember that substance means the essence, that which makes a thing what it is, or gives it its essential nature, it will help us greatly in understanding Paul's message in Colossians 2:16-19.

The word translated "joints," is the Greek word *aphe*. This does not mean "joint," and the rendering here seems to be a translator's attempt to make the word harmonious with the figure of the human body. The Greek word means *touch* or *contact*. It is the word used for *plague*- throughout the Septuagint Version. This is probably due to the fact that communicable diseases are spread by contact.

The word "bands" is *sundesmos*. It can be used of anything that ties two or more things together. It is often translated *ligaments* in versions of this passage, but this also seems to be an attempt to work into this passage the figure of the human body.

The words "nourishment ministered" is one word in the Greek. It means *supplied*, and has in it the idea of addition. It is translated "add" in II Peter 1:5.

The words "knit together" are also one word in the Greek and should read *united*.

These facts reveal that in **Colossians 2:19** we have a translation that hardly resembles the original. A resultant paraphrase of this passage would read as follows:

And not laying hold of the Source, out of Whom the entire substance by means of contacts and connections being supplied and being united is increasing with a divine increase.

Already in this chapter Paul has declared to these Colossians that Jesus Christ is the Sum of the substance of the out-called. This is the literal and true meaning of the Greek of Colossians 1:18. When a sum begins to flow out, it at once becomes a source.

He further declared that in Jesus Christ dwells the entire fullness of the Deity in essence. Colossians 2:9. Following this he states that the substance is Christ.

This was said to those who were seeking to establish contacts with and partake of God by observing dietary laws or by observing days. Some were accepting the decision of men in regard to

that which constituted humility, and were being led to worship angels. They were failing to lay hold of the true Sum and Source of the substance of God.

If we would partake of God we must lay hold of the Source. Our contacts and connections with Him must be divine creations and not a batch of man-made ceremonies. Faith in Jesus Christ is the first and greatest contact. Redemption and forgiveness are connections. It is from the Source that the entire substance flows by means of contacts and connections. Our lives must be supplied from Him. The result will be a divine increase as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With all these facts before us we are now able to suggest where Paul got his figures. The answer is so simple that some will reject it because it is so obvious. They come from the process of storing water-a process well known and familiar to all who read his letter. He does not press the figures too far. They come easy and natural.

In all water systems there must be a source, fountain, spring, or beginning. Notice this in Genesis 2:10 where the river parted and became four *heads*, watering four different territories. Read also Psalm 1:2 where the blessed man is likened to a tree planted by the streams of water. Water mains at that time were open, not under ground as they are today. Solomon speaks of his own vast water system in Ecclesiastes 2:5, 6.

In all water systems, whether for irrigation or personal use there must be a source, a canal, mains, and connections. It is from this that Paul drew his metaphors in Colossians 2:19. He did the same in Ephesians 4:16. To attempt to read the figure of a human body into these portions is to make them ridiculous. Just try to imagine a human body trying to grow up into the human head. Try to imagine the human body being supplied by the head. That is what you will have if you try to read the figure of the human body into Ephesians 4:15 or Colossians 2:19.

It is the writer's prayer that this study will cause us more and more to reckon Jesus Christ as being the Sum and Source of all that we are or ever expect to be.

The End.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****Believers in full dispensational truth in the United States have been made glad by the visit of Mr. Charles H. Welch of London, England. It hardly needs to be said that Mr. Welch is the Editor of *The Beran Expositor*, a publication which has championed since 1909 the Acts 28:28 dispensational boundary line. Although he has reached the ripe age of seventy-five years, all who have met and heard him were delighted to find him in a physical and mental alertness that is usually associated with middle-age.

It was my privilege to hear every message which Mr. Welch gave in Los Angeles, also the two given in Riverside, California. The esteem in which I have always held him has greatly increased as I observed his perfect Christian conduct in the face of a very difficult situation. He visited with us in our home for several hours on Saturday afternoon and spoke at our regular meeting on Sunday morning. The attendance was very good in spite of the fact that it had been widely announced that there would be no Sunday morning meeting in Los Angeles.

It was also my privilege to drive Mr. Welch to Fresno after he finished his ministry in Southern California, and this gave us five hours of enjoyable fellowship together.

Mr. Welch was happily surprised at the great interest he found in this country in all themes related to full dispensational truth. He spoke of this many times and contrasted the interest here with the lack of interest in his own country. If he had opened up his meetings for questions and discussion, he would have been further amazed at the keen personal interest of those in attendance in the recovery and uncovering of the truths of God's Word.

The intense hunger for truth found in many believers in this country is cause for rejoicing. I remember quite well that twenty-one years ago when I took the position that Acts 28:28 was the dispensational boundary line, there was not a group anywhere in the United States that held this truth where a man could go and teach if he also declared any truth concerning the nature and destiny of man. Today there are many groups and thousands of individuals who are holding all these truths.

Those who hold the Acts 28:28 dispensational division of Scripture are glad indeed that they have had the opportunity of meeting and knowing Mr. Welch personally. He championed this great truth for many years, even though at times his voice and pen were alone in upholding it. We pray that Mr. Welch will enjoy many more years of active service in the ministry of the Book which we all hold to be the inspired Word of God.

****As I review the Spring Conference tour which I made between March 22 and May 12, I can honestly say that it was the best ever. Lack of space makes impossible a detailed report. I visited thirteen places and gave sixty-one studies. A period for questions and discussion followed each message. Hundreds of questions were asked, and most of them were answered. I find intense interest everywhere in the truth I present related to the government of God. This doctrine is being carefully considered, examined, questioned and criticized by many honest students whose sole desire is the truth of God, whatever it might be. Inasmuch as I believe that God is about to bring some great segment of His prophetic program to pass, and since I believe that this is to be His benevolent government of this earth and its inhabitants, this theme is given a major place in my messages. Many who have considered these great truths are strong in their insistence that it magnifies and explains the present administration of grace.

Another tour is already being planned for this Fall. I will go again to all places which I visited on the Spring tour, and a few other cities will be added to the schedule.

****There are many who want to know how these Conferences are arranged and conducted. Some have asked if a visit to their city is possible. I trust that the following information will answer both these questions.

If a half-dozen or more people in a given locality are interested in hearing the messages I have to give and in conferring about Biblical matters, it may be possible for me to plan a personal visit, providing it is not too far removed from the places where I regularly go. Someone in such a locality will have to take a lead and locate a place for the meeting. This can be a hotel meeting room, a lodge hall, a room in the Y.M. or Y.W.C.A., or any other suitable place. I assume every obligation in connection with any meeting I hold, such as hall rental, travel expenses, and my own entertainment. I stay in a hotel or motel so as not to be burdensome to anyone. An offering is taken in each meeting held. If this should amount to more than the expenses involved, the balance is a gift to me. If it amounts to less, I take care of the deficit.

The meetings consist of a message and a question and answer period. I limit my ministry to those who are actually interested in the Word of God. I find no pleasure in those who attend my meetings just to kill time, then become restless and critical because so much time is given to the Scriptures.

There are many who insist that a meeting is not a conference unless there are four or five speakers. I insist that any meeting is a conference as long as people come together and have an opportunity to confer about the Word of God. I do all in my power to make every meeting I hold a true conference. If you would like for me to consider a visit to your city, let me know. I can make no promises in advance, but will carefully consider all possibilities.

****We take pleasure in announcing the marriage of Mr. Herbert H. Baudistel, Jr. to Miss Hazel Welshans on Saturday, June 25. Their new address will be 201 South Irving Blvd., Los Angeles 4, California.

****At the moment this issue goes to press, Mrs. Sellers is spending two weeks in Victorville, California, with our daughter, Mrs. Fred R. Hancock. The occasion that requires her presence there is the birth of our second grandson on July 25. He is a very fine boy who has been given the name of Robert Sellers Hancock.

****Under the general title of THIS I BELIEVE, Mr. Carl E. Elleby has been publishing some very interesting and thought-provoking material. This is a series of studies in "Things that Differ." Five issues have been sent out, and I understand that the back numbers are available to any who would like the complete series. Mr. Elleby ministers the Word every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. at the Muskegon Bible Fellowship, corner of Catherine and William Street in Muskegon, Michigan. He has been a close personal friend of mine for many years. Address him at 319 W. Vine Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan if you would like his writings.

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