

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Examining Some Facts and Fallacies

"Say among the nations, the Lord reigneth." Psalm 96:10 R. V.

I wish very much that we could say this, that this were true today, that we could proclaim among the nations that "the Lord reigneth", or, as Rotherham translates it, that "Jehovah has become King." However, this Psalm is a prophecy. In it God is heard speaking of "those things which be not as though they were." (Rom. 4:17). God is not reigning today. He is not judging (ruling) the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained (Acts 17:31). This is a time when He suffers all nations to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16.)

As our eyes survey the earth today we see nothing but fallible human governments, and there is no evidence anywhere of that infallible divine rule which God has promised the earth will someday experience and enjoy. This was the expectation held out to men when Christ announced and proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God. "Kingdom" means "government", but there is nothing upon this earth today that can be called "the government of God." His "kingdom" is nowhere to be seen.

It is divine rule, it is God's own government that is today more sorely needed than anything else. Man has reached the end of his rope, and the governments he has established now devote the major part of their strength, skills, and wealth to plans for destroying one another. Any honest facing up to the facts forces the admission that human governments are not equal to the problems they face. Man's technical and material knowledge has advanced so far and so fast that now all men stand in fear of the discoveries that have been made.

All the evidence of history up to the present moment shows that human governments do not bring peace to the people, and that destruction and misery are in their ways. Divine government is man's greatest need. God must intervene and impose His moral law upon all men. There needs to be an especial assumption of sovereignty by God over all men and all nations. There needs to be the divine institution of the kingdom of God upon the earth, for there is no hope for mankind except the advent upon earth of that divine government which is of such power that it will bring swift retribution to all who rise up or even stiffen themselves against it. We should hail the coming of this, and we should bid it welcome as the great hope of this mis-governed world.

In the past decade I have given much study and thought to the conditions that will certainly prevail when God governs the earth. Some truths concerning these conditions can be based upon direct statements of Scripture, such as "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa.2:4). From this direct statement we go on to logically deduce some of the further results that will come from this great change, and the mind staggers at the exceeding weight of glory this one change will bring.

I am convinced that the advent of God's government upon the earth will result in the immediate lifting of the curse that came upon both earth and mankind when Adam sinned. One act of Adam brought in sin and death, and one act of Jesus Christ has made possible the coming in of righteousness and life. There is not one thing more that needs to be done before this curse is lifted. Christ does not need to come again for this to be true. He came once. He suffered and died in relationship to the curse that came through sin. All that is needed now is for God to speak the word and the reign of sin and death will be ended and a reign of righteousness and life will begin. When this takes place, never again will death work in man because Adam sinned. Adamic death and all the processes that precede it will be abolished with the advent of God's government. Even the sickest will marvel as his illness is suddenly arrested. And as the doctor listens with his stethoscope to the last wavering heartbeat of one who is at death's door, he will get the surprise of his life as death is abolished and life takes over to begin its healing processes. This, I believe, will come upon all men alike, whether saints or sinners, and since everyone will be touched in some manner by this miracle, all will be under responsibility to give God His proper glory.

It must never be forgotten that when God's government makes its advent it will come bringing a blessing of deliverance, healing, and health for every man upon the earth. It does not make demands before it gives. It gives first and then makes its demands, as was always the case when Christ proclaimed it, and as it will be when it next comes to man as "the full grain in the ear."

In the day that God governs the earth, anyone that is sick will be sick because God is visiting him in punishment for sins he has personally committed, and if any die it will be for the same reason. Never again will death work in men because of the sin of Adam; never again will anyone die because Adam sinned.

When one considers the tremendous revolution in the affairs of men that this will bring about, the mind staggers at its magnitude. Consider for a moment all the sorrow, degradation, and misery that is upon the earth because of sin, sickness, and death; and then try to grasp what it would be like if the reign of sin and death could be replaced by the reign of God, under which Adamic death is abolished. In such an earth sin and sickness would be rarities. If any were sick, the cause of the illness and the way of relief would be perfectly manifest. To all who walk and live in harmony with God's government there will be no sickness, no pain, no decay.

It can be seen at once that such a change would bring about a tremendous revolution in our present economy, much of which is based upon the presence of sin and death in the world. It is hard for us to conceive of a world in which there are no hospitals, no doctors, no drugs, and no need for remedies; in which there are no military establishments, no arms, and no conflicts; in which there is no insurance since there is nothing to insure against. Yet that is exactly what it is going to be. Since God's government will be beneficent and benevolent, no man engaged in any honest pursuit will ever be harmed by any change that God brings about. I like the way that Seiss has so magnificently described it:

I think of the coming in of that power, - of the havoc it must needs make in the whole order of things, - of the confusion it will cause in the depraved cabinets, and courts, and legislatures of the world, - of the revolution it must work in business customs, in corporation managements, in political manipulations, in mercantile and manufacturing frauds, in the lies and hollowesses which pervade social life, - of the changes it must bring into churches, into pulpits, into pews, into worship, into schools, into the newspapers, into book-making and book-reading, into thinking and philosophy, and into all the schemes, enterprises, judgments, pursuits, and doings of men, - how it will affect literature, art, science, architecture, eating, drinking, sleeping, working, recreating, - of what it must do concerning playhouses and rum shops, and gambling hells, and the unhallowed gains by which great masses of people have their living and keep themselves up in the world. And as I thus begin to realize in imagination what the irresistible enforcement of a true and righteous administration in all these directions and relations necessarily implies, I can see why the Book of God describes it as a shepherdizing *with a rod of iron*, and calls it a breaking like the dashing to pieces of an article of pottery. Think of the sudden collapse of all the haunts of sin, the rooting out of the nests and nurseries of iniquity, the clearing away of the marshes and bogs *of crime*, where every style of damning pestilence is bred, and the changes that must hence come: - think of the summary abolition of all infamous cliques, combinations, and rings, political rings, whiskey rings, municipal rings, state rings, railroad rings, mercantile rings, communistic rings, oath-bound society rings, and a thousand kinds of other rings, - all the children of wickedness, hindering just law, suppressing moral right, crippling honest industry, subsidizing legislation, corrupting the press, robbing the public treasuries, eating up the gains of honorable occupation, perverting public sentiment, spotting and exorcising men who cannot be made the tools of party, transmuting selfish greed and expediency into principle, razing the dominion of virtue and intelligence, subordinating the commonweal to individual aggrandizement, and setting all righteous administration at defiance: - think of the universal and invincible dragging forth to divine justice of every blatant infidel, perjurer, liar, profane swearer, drunkard, drunkard-maker, whoremonger, hypocrite, slanderer, trickster, cheat, thief, murderer, trader in uncleanness, truce-breaker, traitor, miser, oppressor of the poor, bribe-taking legislator, time-serving preacher, mal-practitioner, babe-destroyer, friend-robber, office-usurper, peace-disturber, and life-embitterer; - think of the instantaneous going forth into all the world of a divine and unerring force, which cannot be turned or avoided, but which hews down every fruitless tree, purges away all chaff from every floor, negatives all unrighteous laws, overwhelms all unrighteous traffic, destroys all unrighteous coalitions, burns up every nest of infamy and sin, ferrets out all concealed wickedness, exposes and punishes all empty pretence, makes an end of all unholy business, and puts an effectual stop to all base fashions, all silly conceits, all questionable customs, and all the hollow shams and corrupt show and fastidiousness of what calls itself society, transferring the dominion of the almighty dollar to Almighty Right, and reducing everything in human life, pursuits, manners, and professions to the standard of rigid truth and justice; - think of the tremendous revolution, in all that the eye can see, the ear hear, the hand touch, the heart feel, or earthly being realize, that must needs attend the putting into living practical force of such an administration, - the high it must make low, the famous it must make infamous, the rich it must

make poor, the mighty it must make powerless, the loud it must sink to oblivion, the admired and worshipped it must turn to disgrace and abhorrence, and the despised and contemned poor it must lift into place and respectability, - the different impulse under which every wheel must then turn, every shuttle move, every hammer strike, every foot step, every mind calculate, and every heart beat; - the change that must come over the houses we enter, over the streets we walk, over the people we meet, over the words we pronounce, over the food we eat, over the air we breathe, over the sunlight of the day, over the repose of the night, over the spirit of our waking hours and the very dreams of our slumbers, and over all the elements, relations, activities, and experiences which go to make up what we call *life*; - think, I say, of all this tremendous revolution, and conceive it going into invincible effect, unchangeably, without compromise, at once, and forever; and you may begin to have some idea of the alteration which the first resurrection is to introduce into the history of our earth. For this, and nothing less than this, is the meaning of this sitting upon thrones, receiving power of judgment, shepherding the nations, and reigning on the earth, on the part of these blessed and holy immortals. *Lectures on the Apocalypse, by Joseph A. Seiss, Volume 3, pages 328 to 331.*

The reader must ever keep in mind that this glorious prospect is one that is to come upon this earth and not some other planet. It is to come upon the human race, not some other order of beings. This is to happen to man. The earth is not to be wiped clean before God imposes His government upon it. He will speak from heaven and men will at once begin to know what it is to live upon an earth over which God has assumed complete control. It comes upon the earth as it is, upon men as they are. Any alterations and changes that are made will result from it.

This glorious prospect is one that fills the pages of God's Word, revealing benevolent changes that will alter the climate, the fruitfulness, and the habitability of the earth.

That this blessed condition will some day be a reality, that God will intervene and govern the earth and its inhabitants, is a truth that is generally believed by most men who know and believe the Bible. However, almost without exception it is held that this blessed condition can never be until there has been a divine outpouring of wrath which will eclipse anything that man has ever experienced before. This is declared to be a time of fierce anger. In it God is expected to display what amounts to a fiendish and foolish cruelty which will exceed all the cruel and unusual punishments that men have ever devised in the long and sorry record of man's inhumanity to man.

This time of God's wrath is usually called "the great tribulation," a term which has been lifted from the Word of God, embellished with many crude ideas of sadistic torture, then used in a mystical manner in support of every wild statement made by certain prophets of doom. This is all illogical and unreasonable.

The teaching that this is the first work of God when He resumes His prophetic program is one that does not make sense. A consideration of the prophecies concerning the future of Israel will clearly show this.

If a study is made of all prophecies related to the future of Israel, it will be seen that the seed of Abraham is to be blessed, not punished. True, certain individuals will need to be purged, but this will be because of their actions in regard to the blessings of God. The divine record concerning Israel tells of a dispersal followed by a regathering, of punishment followed by blessing. Today, we can review the history of Israel and say: Israel has been scattered; the next thing for Israel is to be regathered. Israel has been punished; the next thing for Israel is to be blessed. Israel has long been out of her land; the next thing for Israel is to be restored to her land. This is made clear by many great prophecies. Consider the one in Ezekiel 34.

For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. Ezekiel 34:11-15.

From this passage it can be seen that Israel is in a state of complete dispersion and disorder when the great work of God begins in their behalf. He does not first tear them to pieces as a wolf would do when among the sheep. A divine order is established by this prophecy. Note the key words,- searching, seeking, delivering, gathering, bringing, feeding, binding, and strengthening..

The same truth is seen in Ezekiel 20 where, after describing the five great rebellions of Israel, God declares that because of His determination to rule over them, He will bring them out, plead with them, cause them to pass under the rod, bring them into the bond of the covenant, and purge out the rebels from among them. These passages demonstrate that the next thing in view for Israel from God's hand is regathering, restoration, and blessing.

. In spite of this the average preacher of prophecy will not hear to any of this. He sees no immediate future good for the descendants of Abraham. According to the present popular interpretations of prophecy all that Israel can expect from God is a frightful and fiendish torture, more cruel and unusual than anything that Satan or man has ever devised. This time of torture is usually summed up in and expressed by the term "the great tribulation."

This is described by one teacher as being, "a time of unprecedented suffering that is to come upon the world." Another calls it, "the hour of earth's matchless agony," and yet another describes it as being, "In character it is absolutely without parallel as to its destructive and terrifying effects, and it is world wide."

The sixth to the eighteenth chapters of the book of Revelation are held by these men to describe this time of divine torture in exquisite detail, and it is to this position that they go for proof of the fruitful character and nature of this time. From these chapters they gather such terms as famine, earthquakes, blood, hail, fire, locusts, scordetail, and it is to this portion that they go for proof of the frightful potpourri which is screamed out at audiences in the hope that some one will be frightened into coming to Christ. In fact, vivid descriptions of the great tribulation have become stock-in-trade of many so-called evangelists.

It is a well known fact that once men are committed to a certain position they will not give consideration to any facts that may contradict it. This is certainly true of those who through public declarations have become committed to the idea that the next great work of God will be to remove all believers from the earth, then pour out upon those who remain all the pent up wrath that He is supposed to have accumulated over nineteen centuries. And yet, if men would only thoroughly consider it they would soon realize that such a display of wrath does not make sense. It would accomplish no good purpose, and it would not even be just as a punishment for sins, inasmuch as most sinners who are now dead have escaped it.

The idea that God is going to accomplish His declared purposes for Israel by plunging them into a time of unprecedented torture, torment, and suffering, is an idea that God Himself has declared does not make sense.

In the opening words of Isaiah's prophecy he begins by describing the sins of Israel, sins for which they were then experiencing the anger of God. Their condition was deplorable, but God's punishment had not turned them back to Him. In despair as to the value of any further punishment He says:

Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. Isaiah 1:5.

Thus, God Himself has declared that any further punishment of Israel would accomplish nothing so far as bringing Israel to Himself. True, it would satisfy the demands of divine justice, but in such case it would have to be strictly penal, it would not be remedial. Since Israel's trouble then was (and still is) a condition of the head and the heart, further punishment would result only in revolting more and more. To punish them more would be like scourging a sick man because of His sickness. Therefore, God must do more than exact a penalty for the sins they have committed if they are ever brought into harmonious relationship to Him. In the declarations that follow, He tells us what He is going to do.

And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin (alloy): And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Isa. 1:25, 26.

In view of these facts, I insist that we need to restudy, to rethink, and to reevaluate the entire subject of. "the great tribulation." As a help in doing this the following suggestions are offered.

The Time of Jacob's Trouble

Whatever "the great tribulation" may be we must never lose sight of the fact that it is "**the time of Jacob's trouble**" (Jer. 30:7). Because of this divine description we have reason to believe that it will be limited to the land of Palestine and to the nation of Israel at that time. In fact a further limitation might be found in the word "Jacob," signifying that this is the portion of those who have the "Jacob" character in the nation. Nevertheless it is declared in advance that "he shall be saved out of it" leaving no doubt as to the outcome.

It has been the practice of some interpreters to limit the kingdom to Israel, and to enlarge the great tribulation to take in the whole of mankind. The reverse is true. God's government will know no boundaries, but the great tribulation is the time of Jacob's trouble and it should be limited to Israel and to Israel's land.

A Wider Aspect

It must also be recognized that that which is called "the time of Jacob's trouble" is described as "**the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth**" (Revelation 3:10). Thus the things that happen to Israel also become a time of testing to the

whole inhabited earth to try them that dwell upon the earth. This statement provides a most definite clue to the meaning, the nature, and the purpose of the great tribulation.

It is a divine test for the nation of Israel, and the testing of Israel will become a test which will try every man that dwells upon the earth. However, it can be seen at once that there would be no value in God making any present test of Israel or of mankind. In Ezekiel 20, God records five failures or rebellions of the nation of Israel. Subsequent history records a still greater failure 600 years later at the time of Christ. The 1900 years that have passed since their failure to receive Christ has not changed their attitude in the least. Any further testing of these people would be the same as testing a spider web to see if it will hold the weight of a man. Furthermore, the idea of God bringing about an "hour of temptation to try every man that dwells upon the earth" as being His next great act is completely without logic. The failure of mankind is not only manifest, it is admitted by the majority of men. However, if a divine testing should follow a period of enlightenment, blessing, and instruction, it would be both proper and reasonable. This is the way it will be. The conditions set forth in the terms "the kingdom of heaven" and "the kingdom of God" will be the portion of Israel and the rest of mankind before the great tribulation takes place. Thus the subjects of the premillennial kingdom are tested in relationship to their entrance into the thousand year reign of Christ.

"Trouble" and "Tribulation"

If we insist on making the words *trouble* and *tribulation* to mean torture, torment, or persecution, as almost everyone seems to do, then there is no hope of ever coming to a true understanding of that which Christ called "the great tribulation." He described it as being "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21). Jumping at the conclusion that this describes a time of torture, torment, pain, anguish, and suffering such as he has never been before or will ever occur again, men have been forced to think of it and describe it in terms that have dishonored the character of the God of love and compassion.

An interesting illustration here is the derivation of the English word *tribulation*. It comes from the Latin *tribulum* which was a threshing tool. It was a heavy, wooden platform, and various means were used to make the under side rough. Oxen were yoked to this to drag it back and forth over the wheat to break the kernels from the straw and from the husk. Then with large shovels this mixture of wheat, straw, and chaff was flung into the air. The wind carried the straw and chaff to one side, while the grain fell by itself into a golden pile.

It can be seen that the purpose in all this was not to hurt the wheat, but to separate it from the chaff and straw. Thus it is also with "the great tribulation." While it is true that Israel will be afflicted in it, yet in all their afflictions God will be with them.

The Greek words that have to do with this time are the words *thlibo* (trouble) and *thlipsis* (tribulation). An interesting occurrence of *thlibo* is found in Matthew 7:14 where it is translated "narrow" in the Lord's declaration "narrow is the way."

When God's government of mankind begins, it will embrace all living men. Men will be compelled to come under it, and once it is in operation it will deal severely with all who resist or stiffen themselves against it. Then after many years of blessing under it the world faces the time of the personal presence of Christ and His thousand year reign. At this point everything begins to narrow, for none are going to pass from God's premillennial government into the millennial reign of Christ unless they are worthy of it. Israel must go under the "tribulum" that the chaff might be

separated from the wheat. This period seems to be seven years in length, and it will be unique above all other times inasmuch as Satan will have been cast out of heaven and be upon the earth. He has great wrath knowing that his time is short. Never in all history will men have faced a time of testing such as this. Those who have learned well the lessons taught by day-to-day experience in the Kingdom of God will have nothing to fear from this time of testing. Furthermore, it has nothing to do with those who already have been described "holy and without blame before Him" (Eph. 1:4). We have met the supreme test by believing now. There will be no further testing of those who have reached the position of sons of God.

The passages of God's Word which have a bearing upon the great tribulation reveal that the outstanding feature of this time is the presence in it of a restored, converted, redeemed, God-fearing nation of Israel. This great drama can never be played out as written without the presence of this principal actor. To make this possible men have developed the idea that the sufferings of that time will produce such a nation, but this is a vain hope in view of God's declaration in Isaiah 1:5. Revelation 7:14 has been appealed to as teaching that a great multitude are saved during the great tribulation, but there is no such teaching there. This passages describes the faithful of God who have gone into the great tribulation and have come out of it with great honor and glory as their reward.

The great tribulation has to do with the threshing that takes place at the harvest which concludes the eon of the premillennial kingdom. It is the time when the Son of, man gathers out of His kingdom all things that offend. However before this is done the Son of man must plant the world with the sons of the kingdom. Among these the enemy will then sow his tares. These must grow together until the time of the harvest, then the process will take place which will make the wheat manifest, and bring about the removal and destruction of all chaff.

We must keep the divine order straight: The threshing and harvest cannot precede the planting. There must be "the kingdom" first and this will be followed by the great tribulation.

The End.

THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION

A challenge has been issued to those who believe that Paul's words recorded in Acts 28:28 mark a definite dispensational boundary line. We have been asked to state just what change or changes took place after Paul announced, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God was sent unto the nations, and they will hear." In the present state of the recovery of truth, no man can fully say just what these words mean, neither can we comprehend all the changes that took place. The idea that these words indicate a dispensational or administrative change is not one that can be supported by appeals to tradition or to its antiquity, or to the "church fathers," so-called. If anyone truly believes in the Acts 28:28 boundary line, he will have to believe it because of something that is written in the Word of God, and for no other reason. If this teaching had a long and honorable history, if great names could be cited in support of it, many more people might give it consideration. But its history to date has all been experienced within the lifetime of men who are still alive.

It is my understanding that the idea that Acts 28: 28 marks a dispensational boundary line was first suggested by J. J. B. Coles, a Baptist minister. His writings show him to have been a zealous student of the Word of God, and like all careful students he noted and sought an explanation for the great

disparity in conditions that exist between the Acts period and the time in which we now live. In time he came forth with the suggestion that the real dispensational change was not to be found at Pentecost (Acts 2), but at that point marked by Paul's declaration in Acts 28:28.

This idea made an immediate appeal to Dr. E. W. Bullinger, a man who had long recognized and insisted upon the unique character of the Acts period. His unquestioned scholarship and humble love for the Word of God caused many to consider and to fully accept the theory that Paul's words in Acts 28: 28 do mark a dispensational boundary line. Further steps in the recovery and development of this truth have been taken by Mr. C. H. Welch. His findings in regard to it can be found in the pages of his publication *The Berean Expositor*.

In the beginning of my own written ministry, I received letters of commendation and encouragement from Mrs. Coles, a fact that impressed upon me the short time that this message has been before men for their consideration.

My own acceptance of this truth came in 1934, when after fifteen years of Bible study and Bible teaching ministry, I was eager to test any logical theory which would help clear up a great multitude of questions, problems, and difficulties that had piled up through these years. These were honest matters which the penetrating study and public teaching of Scripture had imposed upon me. My acceptance of this truth began a new day with my Bible; and in the twenty-three years of study and teaching that have followed, my conviction has deepened daily that Acts 28:28 is a dispensational boundary line.

This truth has been embraced, held, loved, and proclaimed; it has closed many doors; it has resulted in many mistaken misrepresentations by careless and unskilled critics; and it has limited my opportunities for service. Nevertheless, I accept all this without complaint and continue to firmly hold and proclaim vigorously the truth of. Acts 28:28 with all means at my disposal.

My only regret in connection with this great truth is that I too readily accepted some of the conclusions of others who held it. These conclusions have turned out to be nothing more than the natural mistakes that men are inclined to make in the process of uncovering and recovering a truth. These erroneous conclusions are tenaciously held, and my rejection of them has resulted in further disfellowshipping on the part of some. Such words as *shun*, *depart*, *flee*, and *avoid* are used in relationship to my witness, all because I cannot go along with certain interpretations and ideas that I now see as mistakes. This too is accepted cheerfully as being the natural consequences that come when we challenge the teachings of others.

I have set forth this bit of personal history in order to emphasize that my conclusions as to the change or the changes that took place at Acts 28:28 are the result of my own independent studies. These conclusions must not be attributed to others who hold the Acts 28:28 dispensational boundary line, and their conclusions must not be attributed to me. It would be pleasant if we all agreed, and such agreement might help some timid souls to take their stand with us. This would increase our "following," but there are times when a man must choose between his "following" and God's leading.

Believing as I do that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, I would say at once that before Acts 28:28, the salvation of God was with and among the nation of Israel; after Acts 28:28 it is with and among the nations. The one who has learned the Old Testament truth as to the difference between "the nation" and "the nations" will recognize at once the importance of this.

When God called Abraham and developed from him a great and mighty nation, that people became "the nation." Their position in the sight of God was declared in the words which He gave to Balaam concerning them: "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9). The thing that made this nation unique among all nations was that the salvation of God was among them. If this is taken from them it puts them back among the nations, which is their position today. The present dispensation began when the salvation of God was taken from Israel and sent to the nations. It will end when the salvation of God is taken from the nations and restored to Israel. This will again give them their unique, distinct, and separate place in the sight of God. Therefore if we ask just when the salvation of God was sent to the nations there is only one possible answer. This took place when Paul reached Rome and in Acts 28:26,27 made his great pronouncement from Isaiah's prophecy. This had been quoted before, but never with the significant addition of these words: "the salvation of God is sent to the nations."

I refuse to be moved in any way by the unskillful criticism of those who would make "the salvation of God" and "the gospel of God" to be one and the same, then show that the gospel was preached to some among the nations as recorded in Acts 13:46 and 18:6. The simple reading of Romans 1:16 is sufficient to inform any child of God that the "gospel" and "salvation" are two different things. God has told us to distinguish between things that differ, and it is wrong to take things that differ and seek to prove they are the same.

In times past the nation of Israel enjoyed a very special place and a special portion in the works of God. Moses declared this truth in Deuteronomy 4, and this truth was just as evident when the Lord declared, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). Before the declaration found in Ephesians 3:6 could have been made, a great change had to have taken place. While it is not easy to render the Greek here into English, it is easy to see that what the *King James Version* speaks of, as "fellowheirs" is really telling us "that the nations are to enjoy a portion together," or "that the nations are to be joint enjoyers of a portion." Today God does not favor anyone nation above another. Whatever He does for one nation, He does for all. He will not be drawn into their conflicts, neither will He take sides in them. His salvation was sent to the nations, and all nations are partakers on the basis of absolute equality. Even Israel today is one of the nations, and is in no way favored above others. If we ask when this change took place, there is only one answer. God began to deal with the nations as one unit or body after Acts 28:28.

Again I refuse to be moved by those critics who point out that according to the Greek Acts 28:28 should read "was sent." This is not an indisputable fact, but even if we allow it we still must face this question. How else would Paul announce an accomplished fact? He was not sending God's salvation to the nations. He was announcing what God had done. The verb here points to a finished matter, and not back to Acts 2 or Acts 13 as some would like to have it.

The Nations - - Joint Partakers

Another great truth revealed in Eph. 3:6 when properly translated, is that the nations are now "joint-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus of the gospel" of which Paul was dispenser. One needs only to travel back less than a decade to the time when Romans was written to discover a time when this was not true. In Romans 1:16 Paul declares that the gospel is to the Jews first, and in 3:2 he states that the Jew has an advantage. Thus a definite change has taken place between the writing of Romans and the writing of Ephesians. If we seek to find the time when this change occurred, we are forced to settle upon one point, Acts 28:28.

The Signs That Followed

Another proof of the change and the time of the change is found in the words of the Lord Jesus recorded in **Mark 16:17, 18**.

And these signs shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

It is impossible for me to go along a single step with those who ignore this passage, or with those who cast doubt upon its authenticity. These are words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ and due heed must be given to them.

I claim to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe the record God has given of His Son, and it is my full confidence that I will enter into possession of all the blessings God has promised to those who believe now. Yet, no signs have ever followed my belief. Nevertheless, this does not trouble me in the least. I long ago learned the great principle of "rightly dividing the word of truth," and from this, I know that such signs cannot be expected now.

However, there was a time in history when the conditions set forth by these words of Christ were quite normal and to be expected. At one time the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ would expect nothing else than that these evidences would follow their belief. If they did not, it would be proof that they had believed in vain. There would be no exceptions to this. If they believed, then these signs followed. Demons would be exorcised by them; they would speak in foreign languages which they had never heard; they would have complete control over serpents; they would drink poison without harm; and by the simple process of laying hands on the sick, the sick would recover. These experiences were common to all believers. God dealt with believers on this basis, that these signs would follow their belief.

Every honest thinker and observer knows that these things are not normal today. These signs do not follow those who believe. God is not dealing with believers on this basis today.

This is declared in spite of the claims of those who say they have cast out demons, yet become either embarrassed or angry when they are asked just what demon possession is, what its symptoms are, and how they diagnose it. It is declared in spite of those who fall into ecstatic conditions and utter meaningless gibberish, then claim they have spoken in tongues. Yes, it is declared in spite of all the grandiose claims of the self-styled healers who pray for the sick, then take personal credit for all who get well or claim to get well. These men have many imaginary healings of real illnesses, and many real healings of imaginary illnesses, but the truth of Mark 16:17, 18 is in no manner the normal experience in their lives. However, this was the normal experience of all believers at one time as **Mark 16:20** declares:

And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

If we ask when God ceased to deal with believers on this basis, when this ceased to be a normal condition among those who believe, there is only one possible answer. It did not end at Pentecost, as it was really beginning at that point. It did not end at Acts 13, since there is every evidence that it was just as normal after this as it was before. It did not end when Paul began his ministry, for these signs were characteristic of his service for God. Even though a detailed record is not given, he summed up his ministry by saying:

For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and by deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God so that from Jerusalem, and round about Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Romans 15:18, 19.

The reasonable and logical place for locating this great change is **Acts 28:28**. This method of divine dealing ended when the salvation of God was sent to the nations. There is positive evidence in the life of Paul that it did not continue after that point was passed as letters written after the Acts period will show. See Philippians 2:26, 27. 1 Timothy 5:23.2 Timothy 4:20. The signs and wonders were a part of God's kingdom program, and they came to an end when God suspended that program.

The Kingdom Suspended

One of the major changes that took place at Acts 28:28 was the suspension of God's kingdom program. An absolute "must" in the development of the kingdom program is that the salvation of God must be among His people Israel. To take it from them and send it to the nations means that all progress is at an end and that the program is suspended.

When the Lord Jesus began His ministry He was heard heralding the good news of the kingdom of God. His message was:

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Mark 1:15.

The word "kingdom" (*basileia*) means government, sovereignty, rule. Without doubt, our God has always held the reins of, government and always will, for He has never been dethroned and never will be, but it is most evident from this statement and many others that His government, His sovereignty, His rule was to be manifested in a more special way than ever before. As a part of human history it was to be fully set up over men upon the earth, a government for men but not of men, a moral government of divine origin and character upon the earth. The Lord declared that this had drawn nigh and He called upon men to take the position of complete submissiveness toward it. This began what can best be called God's kingdom program.

A little later the Lord made it plain how the kingdom of God should come and develop.

And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. Mark 4:26-29.

It is my conviction that this is one of the most important statements to be found in regard to the kingdom of God. All who study this subject should have the truth it declares firmly fixed in their minds. It sets forth, by means of illustrative terms, five great stages of the kingdom of God: (1) the blade stage, (2) the ear, (3) the full grain in the ear, (4) ripened grain, (5) the harvest. Therefore, since the Lord planted the seed, it has either moved on to its final great climax or else it was suspended at some point along the line. That it did have a manifest beginning can be seen when three parallel passages are considered.

Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom. Matt. 16:28.

The glorious truth in this passage has been lost due to the stultifying interpretation wherein it is said this refers to the second coming of Christ. The error of this is seen in the two parallel passages where the same truth is stated in other words.

And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. Mark 9:1.

But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God. Luke 9:27.

Thus we see what Matthew calls "the Son of Man coming in His kingdom," Mark calls "the kingdom of God coming with power," and Luke simplifying it still further calls it "the kingdom of God." Therefore as to the correct understanding of Matt. 16:28 we can say "God is His own interpreter, and He has made it plain." The kingdom of God which was "at hand" when the Lord began His ministry had to come and be manifested while some of the twelve disciples were still alive. Of course, if they believed *all* the words of the Lord Jesus, they would expect His promise to be fulfilled by the kingdom of, God coming first in a stage that is comparable to the blade stage of growing grain.

The kingdom of God which our Lord heralded had its actual beginning when Jesus Christ arose from the dead. It was at that point that divine government reversed the worst act of human government and raised the Lord Jesus. Men had judged that He should die, but God reversed them and judged that He should be restored to life. Many other graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, further evidence of what men could expect to take place under the kingdom of God. However, the real public manifestation of the kingdom of God took place fifty days later on the day of Pentecost. There God poured out "of His Spirit" upon 120 men. The curse that had been imposed at the tower of Babel was lifted for them. Five thousand were added to the number as the result of a brief message by one Spirit-filled man. Thus, the kingdom of God began in Israel, even though it was only in the blade stage.

The early stages of God's government were also the "night" period of the kingdom. In this period the willing subjects of the kingdom could expect to be persecuted. This is what led Paul to say:

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Rom. 13:12.

If I did not believe in: the Acts 28:28 dispensational boundary line, and could meet and talk with the Apostle Paul, one of the questions I would want to ask him would be: "What happened to the day that you said was at hand?"

That question does not trouble me. I am sure I know what happened to "the day" period of God's government. Its coming was postponed at Acts 28:28. That "day" can never come until the salvation of God is back among His people Israel.

It is the purpose of God to govern the earth, the nations upon the earth, and the individuals that walk upon it. The most definite movements in connection with that purpose began with the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. Without any interruption, great acts in relation to this purpose continued right up to the close of Acts. Even those who came to know Christ through the Acts ministry of Paul were called unto His kingdom (1 Thess. 2:12), and they were instructed that their persecutions and tribulations were that they might be "counted worthy of the kingdom of God" (2 Thess. 1:5).

All activity in connection with God's purpose to govern the earth and men upon it came to an end when the salvation of God was sent to the nations. The kingdom had advanced through the blade stage and the ear stage. These will never need to be repeated. When God resumes His kingdom activities it will be "the full grain in the ear." The night period is a matter of history. When God resumes it will be the day. I reject altogether the idea that when God's present administration of grace has fulfilled its purpose that "the man of sin will unite all mankind under the sovereignty of Satan," as so many teach. It was God's government that was suspended and it will be God's government that will be resumed. The next condition that men on earth will experience is not Satan's government; but God's government. This is what Paul confidently expected when he said, "the day it at hand."

God's Present Calling

It is my conviction that a unique and distinct calling of believers made its appearance upon this earth after the salvation of God was sent to the nations. We who qualify before God as "believers" today are a part of this distinct company. We are confounding the things that differ if we make God's present calling to be a continuation of that company who believed in the Acts period, or even of those who believed under the ministry of Paul at that time. Those who have believed since Acts 28:28 are the first and only company of whom it can be said without qualification, "blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

It is quite true that at all times men of God have been called upon to believe certain things without any concrete evidence or proof from God, but it has never been true except of God's present calling that men have believed without having a single shred of evidence or proof in regard to anything they believe. Paul recognized this unique faith as being that of the ones to whom he wrote his Ephesian epistle. These people believed, trusted, and hoped in Christ solely "upon hearing the word of truth" (Eph. 1:13). They were believers produced entirely by the action of the Word of God. They had nothing to lean upon except what they had heard.

They were quite different from those believers spoken of in John 2:23 who "believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did." They were also different from those converts of Paul who had become obedient as the result of signs, wonders, and mighty works which had been granted them for this purpose. These people addressed in Ephesians believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as an act of pure faith during the time of the silence of God. This explains why Paul speaks of "this faith of yours" in Eph. 1:15. Theirs was an unique faith, produced by God apart from any "signs of an apostle." In fact these were not even Paul's converts. He knew of them only by report. We do not know who took the word of truth to them, but it may have been Epaphras, "a faithful dispenser of Christ" (Col 1:7).

If we trace back through the history of men who have believed God, we will find a parallel record of signs, wonders, and evidential miracles that were positive proof of the word they had believed. Even Abraham, the great example of faith, had a direct communication from God which started him

out on his long walk with God (Gen. 12:4), and the promises which He believed were made to him in person. And even though he had to believe without evidence when he was promised a seed, nevertheless, the birth of Isaac was a definite confirmation of the word God had spoken.

As Sir Robert Anderson has well said:

Divine history of the favoured race for thousands of years teems with miracles by which God gave proof of His power with men, and yet we are confronted by the astounding fact that from the days of the apostles to the present hour the history of Christendom will be searched in vain for the record of a single public event to compel belief that there is a God at all. From *The Silence of God*.

The believer today has been called in a peculiar time. His lot is cast in a time when Heaven is silent. He belongs to a company whose faith has been produced solely by the Word of God. If we ask when this time began, if we ask when this peculiar company began, there is only one possible answer. It began when the salvation of God was sent to the nations as recorded in Acts 28:28.

God's Present Purpose

When all the facts are assembled and a logical deduction is made, it becomes clear that God's present purpose is to write within the history of mankind a demonstration and a permanent record of the grace that is inherent in His character. This He is now doing by means of an administration of grace, during which all His kingdom or government purposes are in abeyance.

The explanation of God's long toleration of evil, His present silence, His delay in fulfilling His promise to rule over Israel, His delay in bringing His government into the world can be satisfactorily explained only when we realize that God is fulfilling another purpose which is centered in the glorification and demonstration of His own character.

If we ask when this purpose began there is only one answer. It began when the salvation of God was sent to the nations.

All that God did in the Acts period was vitally related to His kingdom purposes. Even the message of grace that was given to Paul in that time was for the purpose of giving a place under God's government to men who otherwise would have been excluded from it. A reading of 1 Corinthians 6: 1-11 will show that those who had found Christ through Paul's message of grace had been given a place in God's kingdom from which their sins would have barred them. Peter had no message for men such as these, but Paul was given a message that brought them in. If we expect to comprehend God's present purpose, it is essential that we make a clear distinction between the purpose for which the gospel of grace was heralded by Paul in the Acts period and the purpose for which it is heralded now. Then it gave sinners an exalted place in the great theocracy which was coming upon the earth. Today it gives sinners an exalted place in the great theophany which will be manifest when God lays down His order upon this earth.

The kingdom message before Acts 28:28 was the kingdom in prospect or in development. The kingdom message after Acts 28:28 is the kingdom in suspension. There is nothing about the suspension of God's kingdom purposes that requires that men of God shall seal their lips concerning it. Any man who does not preach the past, present, and future truth concerning the kingdom of God is not obeying Paul's exhortation to "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2). We have a first-hand report

from Luke that Paul preached the kingdom of God for two years after Acts 28:28. See Acts 28:30, 31. It is still preached today by all men who give a complete witness to the Word of God.

This study deals with only a few of the changes that took place at Acts 28:28. The more we study, the more we will realize the far-reaching changes that took place when "the salvation of God was sent to the nations." This statement of Paul either means *something* or else it means *nothing*. Many who readily admit that it means *something* treat it as though it meant *nothing*. To me these words are of the utmost importance. They mean something-probably far more than men have ever realized. These words denote an interruption and a suspension of the divine program upon which God at that time was working, and they introduce the intercalary dispensation in which we now live.

The End.

A FORETASTE OF THE KINGDOM

What will the kingdom of God be like? What will it be like to live upon this earth when it is governed by God? These are questions which have exercised many. Believing as I do, that at any moment God may intervene, inject Himself into the affairs of men, and impose His government upon mankind, both living and dead, I find myself wondering what it will be like to live upon this earth when God governs. This questions has a basic and a special answer. Basic, so far as being a subject of the kingdom of God is concerned, and special so far as being a son of God and performing a special service is concerned. This study will deal only with the basic or foundational.

My interest in this has caused me to seek a new degree of familiarity with that part of the Old Testament from the Psalms to Malachi; for I believe that these books deal primarily with a time to come when God is going to lay down a new order or system upon the earth. This will be vastly different from anything that man has ever experienced in the past or is experiencing at present. It will be a new method of dealing with mankind, a new administration.

The world to come will be one in which absolute justice will prevail. In it, it will always be well for the good and ill for the wicked. Some would like to think that this is the case today, but the obvious facts tell us that we are not now living in a moral universe where sin always carries its own penalty and righteousness always brings its own reward. How is it possible to comprehend God's new order if we think that the present chaos is the result of God's rule?

In the order of things to come, mercy, love, and forgiveness will be available to men, but grace will no longer characterize God's dealings with men. Grace is not possible under a system that has as part of its constitution that every sin and disobedience will have its just recompense of reward. The coming order is to be a time of absolute government in contrast with the present time of absolute grace.

Under God's coming order no one will ever suffer except what they justly deserve to suffer. The innocent will never suffer, but the guilty certainly will.

In this new system, all that is good becomes permanent, and all that is evil will be only for the moment. Under such a system the good will ever increase in number, and the evil will decrease in number as men find that sin does not pay, not even a temporary gain. Truly, "in His days shall the righteous flourish" (Psalm 72:7).

Thus we realize how the advent of the kingdom of God will affect the morals of men, but we must also stand ready to believe how God's government will affect the physical aspect of men. A government that is not concerned about the health and physical welfare of its subjects is not fit to be called a government. God's government will be concerned about the health and welfare of every subject under it. A definite revelation concerning this can be found in a declaration made by our Lord.

The Pharisees had spoken grievous blasphemy against His miracles. They said that He performed them by the power of Beelzebub the prince of the demons. In His answer to them the Lord said in part:

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Matthew 12:28.

We know that He did cast out demons by the Spirit of God; therefore, we can do nothing else but accept the balance of His statement, that the kingdom of God had come to these blaspheming Pharisees. However, this creates numerous difficulties.

Not long after this the Lord said to His disciples:

But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God. Luke 9:27.

Furthermore, in connection with Joseph, the man who made the arrangements and provided a place for the burial of the Lord Jesus, we are told that he was one "who also himself waited for the kingdom of God (Luke 23:51).

The reader will note what seems to be a discrepancy in these statements. If the kingdom of God had come to the Pharisees, how then could it be described as coming before all the disciples had died, and why would Joseph still be waiting for it.

In all apparent discrepancies such as this, the student should always check the translation, inasmuch as hundreds of problems have been created by faulty renderings of the *King James translators*. When a check is made of Matthew 12:28, a difficulty in the rendering of the Greek is seen at once, and this is revealed by the efforts of the translators to express it. Here are some examples:

"the kingdom of God has burst out above you," Fenton

"the kingdom of God has overtaken you." Goodspeed

"the kingdom of God is already upon you." Montgomery

"the reign of God has reached you already." Moffatt

"hath come upon you unawares the kingdom of God." Rotherham

"the kingdom of God outstrips in time to you." Concordant

A variety of renderings such as these shows that the original must be checked before the student can come to any decision.

. The translators' problem here is in the Greek word translated "is come" in the *King James Version*. This is the Greek word *phthano*, the exact form here being *ephthasen*.

An interesting and illuminating occurrence of this word is found in 1 Thess. 4:15, where it is translated "prevent," which the reader will recognize at once as an old English word that has changed its meaning. In the days when the King James Version first made its appearance *prevent* meant to go before, that is, to precede. This occurrence in the light of its context gives us a good grip on the meaning of *phthano*. It means to "move ahead of," and a literal rendering of Matt. 12:28 would be "the kingdom of God moves ahead to you." This may sound awkward, but it is the truth, and it becomes our task to get its meaning, not to rewrite it. I believe that it means that the Pharisees had seen a preview of one aspect of the kingdom of God, or had a foretaste of it. An honest paraphrase of the Greek here would read, "You have a foretaste of the kingdom of God."

From this we learn that every miracle performed by the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry was a foretaste of the kingdom of God. Even if this understanding of the meaning of Matt. 12:28 is disputed, and I know it will be disputed, there is still the record that when the Lord sent forth His

twelve disciples to herald the nearness of the kingdom of the heavens, He commanded them in connection with this proclamation to "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils." Each one of these acts was a foretaste of the kingdom, a sample of what could be expected when that kingdom became a reality. Any such foretaste would be a savor of life or a savor of death. No man could witness or be the beneficiary of a miracle without becoming responsible and accountable to God to act upon it. This is what our Lord had reference to when He said:

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. John 15:22, 24.

If we examine this particular miracle which brought forth the statement, "you have a foretaste of the kingdom of God," we will find the following facts. They had brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb: and He healed him so that this demon possessed, blind, deaf-mute, both spoke and saw. In this man we see many of the results that came upon men because Adam sinned and brought sin and death into the world. Our Lord came to remove this curse and all its effects, and here we have a preview of how this will be done. Wholly apart from any act upon his part, the Lord made him whole. Thus it will be when the foretaste becomes a reality, when the kingdom of God becomes "the full grain in the ear."

I do not know what "demon possession" is. I know nothing of its symptoms or how to diagnose and identify it. But I do know that it is a frightful thing that laid hold of men and perverted them to the extent that they could hardly be called men any longer. Today on every hand we read of unbelievable forms of wickedness that have possessed men until they can only be called degenerates. I believe that the advent of the kingdom of God will bring immediate deliverance to all such. I do not believe that one case of blindness or deafness will be found upon the earth once the kingdom of God makes its advent in that stage described as "the full grain in the ear."

This will sound preposterous to those who believe that the Lord *demand*s first then *gives*. But to those who have examined all previews of the kingdom, they know that the Lord blesses first then expects a proper response. This is clearly seen in the case of the man to whom He said, "**Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee**" (John 5:14). A word such as this is going to be impressed upon all mankind in that day when the blessings of God's government have been made a reality to all of mankind.

The kingdom of God will be ushered in by bringing blessings to all mankind. In the previews of the kingdom we find words such as these: "healed all that were sick" (Matt. 8:16); "healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matt. 9:35); "great multitudes followed Him and He healed them all" (Matt. 12:15). He made no exceptions or distinctions, and thus He provided a preview of the healing, health and wholeness that will be the immediate portion of all mankind when the kingdom of God comes upon the earth. If we consider all the foretastes, if we study it in the blade and ear stages, then we know what it will be like in the full grain in the ear.

The kingdom of God will come in with a tidal wave of physical blessing which will touch every member of the human race. Christ died to lift the curse of sickness, disease, and death from the human race, and it will surely be removed. God's long display of grace will not culminate in a tidal wave of wrath. That would spoil the record of His grace. It will end in a sweep of grace such as man has never experienced before. Mankind does not deserve it, but the day will come when God will give light, health, and peace to the inhabitants of this earth.

The End.

THE TRADITION OF HEAVEN

It has now been well over two years since I published the study on *The Earth, Not Heaven, is the Future Home of God's Redeemed*. In this article I denied the popular tradition which is generally believed by both "the church and the world" that a place called heaven is our future home. My position in regard to this has caused numerous reactions. It has been denied, ridiculed, and misrepresented. However, at no time has anyone brought forth any Scripture to show that I am wrong and that the popular view is right.

Several correspondents who pitied my ignorance wrote at length to prove that there is a place called "heaven" and that it is the dwelling place of angels and the present location of the Lord Jesus. There was no need for this since I believe in a place called "heaven" as firmly as any man who has ever lived. The fact that heaven exists as a place does not prove that it is to be our future home. Those who think along these lines should realize that the earth also exists, as a definite place, but this is no proof that it will be the future home of angels.

It has long been my conviction that the orthodox teaching concerning heaven is just as unscriptural as the orthodox teaching concerning hell. Both of these ideas belong to human traditions and they can be no part of the faith held by men who have given up tradition for the truth of the Word of God.

Support for the orthodox teaching concerning heaven and hell can be manufactured from mistranslations, and by texts removed from contexts; but there is no support for them in the Word of God when it is correctly translated, honestly interpreted, and rightly divided. Many people believe that the fact that the word "hell" is found in the *King James Version* is sufficient to prove all that anyone may ever think, say, or teach about hell. This same idea persists as to the word "heaven." The fact that it is found in the Bible is supposed to be proof positive that it is our future home. The logical mind will see at once the fallacy of this.

Future punishment is a fact, a truth that is taught in the Word of God, but the orthodox conception of "hell" is a fantastic fallacy. The future bliss of God's redeemed is a fact, a truth that is taught in

the Word of God, but the orthodox, popular idea about heaven is a foolish and childish fantasy that is nowhere taught in the Bible. If so, then where is the Scripture for it?

Since publishing my study I have received from many sources books and pamphlets that purport to deal with heaven. These make great promise in their titles which is not fulfilled in the reading of them. One friend had in former days determined to fully investigate the subject and had made a large collection of these. He sent them all to me. They bear such titles as "Heaven, A Home, A Place, a City:" "Heaven Our Future Home", and "What the Bible Teaches About Heaven." It is amazing to *see* how they handle, or mishandle, the Scripture dealing with this subject. An assertion is made, a passage is quoted, but the passage could not possibly be saying what these men make it to say. The great D. L. Moody, in seeking to make heaven attractive and desirable, sets forth the idea that there will be no sickness among the inhabitants of that place. In proof of this he quotes Isaiah 33:24: "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick. The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." A reading of the context of this passage will reveal at once that it refers to Jerusalem.

I have noticed practices such as these in most of these books. Passages that have nothing to do with heaven are taken from their context and applied to it. Quite often these passages have to do with the earth, but they are taken and interpreted as if they spoke of heaven. Every attempt to describe heaven is either based upon sheer imagination or else upon passages that describe the new Jerusalem.

One would think that a belief that is so popular would have a great mountain of Scripture to support it, but the criticisms of my article have shown anew that there is not one line in God's Word to support the commonly accepted teaching about heaven. Those who have differed with me have offered ridicule and abuse, but no Scripture. One brother even goes so far as to give us a complete reading of Satan's mind, telling us about Satan's worries, plans, and fears, revealing that Satan "gleefully concludes that the earth is the future home of all the redeemed", thus intimating that my teaching harmonizes with that of Satan. He is able to do all this, yet he is not able to bring forth a single passage from Holy Writ which honestly interpreted and correctly translated tells us that the ultimate future home of anyone is anywhere else but on the earth. If he can, then let him do it. The challenge is before him.

Another brother has pointed out that Ephesians 3:15 speaks of "the whole family in heaven and earth," and, presto, this is supposed to give full witness to the idea that part of the family of God will be in heaven and part upon the earth. His use of this passage reveals how bankrupt he is for proof of this contention. He knows as well as anyone that there is no definite article before *pas* (here translated "whole"), therefore it cannot mean "the whole family" but it must mean "every family", if it deals with families at all. Rotherham translates this "from whom every fatherhood in the heavens and earth is named." In view of the debates that have raged for so many years in regard to the translation and interpretation of this passage, one must be quite lacking in proof when he calls upon this passage to give evidence that our future home is heaven.

Again I say that those who are now doing battle for the theory that heaven is the future home of God's redeemed are not being found armed with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Come, come, brethren, take us to the passages in the Word of God that teach this. I am free to make any correction in my views, but I will not budge an inch until I am given the Word of God.

There is no truth to be gained in simply pointing to Ephesians 1:3, as if it settled the matter. This verse does not tell us that we are going to heaven, or to "the heavenlies" as some insist it should be

translated. If it does deal with a place (which I do not believe) then it tells us that we are acclaimed or eulogized by the Father in that place. If it deals with beings (as I believe) then it tells us we are acclaimed among these beings.

It is a sad state of affairs indeed to see men who have in the past taken such a bold stand for "truth versus tradition" now contending for the traditions of men concerning heaven.

The End.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****It has been a long time between issues of THE WORD OF TRUTH, six months to be exact. After the Spring Conference Tour of 1957 I felt the imperative need for more physical and less mental activity. This proved very helpful and I was able to begin the Fall Conference Tour with renewed strength and vigor. My schedule is a heavy one. I taught 170 times in 1957, made eight tape-recorded messages, wrote two magazines, one pamphlet, two installments of the Ephesian Study Material, and spent 127 days away from home on Conference tours.

Mrs. Sellers made the Fall Conference Tour with me, and we were away from home from August 29 to November 9. Meetings were conducted in fifteen cities, and even though many of our friends were harassed by the epidemic of Asiatic flu that covered the eastern half of the country, the attendance in most places was a little better than usual. The flu caught up with me in Philadelphia, but I managed to keep going. Since there was a ten day interval between the Philadelphia and Houston meetings, I was able to take it easy while recuperating, even though we traveled several hundred miles each day. Mrs. Sellers enjoyed good health all the way and arrived home feeling fine. We both desire to express our thanks to our many devoted friends who made our trip such a pleasant one

****Just as this issue goes to press we are leaving for two days of meetings in San Francisco and two days in Fresno. The Spring Conference tour will begin on March 20. Plans are being made for the following places: Houston, Texas, March 20 to 23; Fort Worth, Texas, March 24 to 26; Springfield, Missouri, March 28 to 30; Peoria, Illinois, March 31 and April 1; Rockford, Illinois, April 3 to 6; Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 7 to 9; Chicago (Evanston) Illinois, April 10 to 13; Joliet, Illinois, April 15; Michigan City, Indiana, April 16; Muskegon, Michigan, April 17 to 20; Kalamazoo, Michigan, April 22 and 23; Grand Rapids, Michigan, April 24 to 27; Buffalo, New York, April 28 to 30; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May 1 to 5. Detailed information will be sent out later when all arrangements are complete.

****Our address is 647 SOUTH JUNE STREET, Los Angeles 5, California. The word "South" is just as important in our address as is the number or name. We have not lived on Kenmore Avenue for three years, and those who now live there have been quite patient in readdressing our mail that they receive, but there is evidence that their patience is about exhausted. The post office does not retain a forwarding address service after one year. If you have any of our return envelopes, go through them and throw out those that have the old address.

****The tape recorded ministry has sixty-eight outlets, including one in England and one in Australia.

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