

THE WORD OF TRUTH

OTIS Q. SELLERS, Editor February, 1955

VOL. XIV, NO. 2

Table of Contents

- * Advancing in Truth
- * God's Earth
- * The Believer's Destiny
- * The Editor To His Friends

ADVANCING IN TRUTH

There is a saying among men that if a man has money he can make money. I cannot vouch for the truth of this out of my own experience, but I do know that if a man has *some* truth it makes it easy to get more, and the more truth he has, the more he can get. If we can lay hold of a few actual facts from the Word of God and treasure them until such time as they can be properly used, we will find them to be of infinite value so far as getting more truth " is concerned.

Most people would like to get truth in one great panoramic view. But even if such a picture were presented to them they would not have the divine facts with which to possess it. They are somewhat like the student of arithmetic who says to the teacher, "Skip the addition, subtraction, and multiplication -let's get at once to the calculus." The teacher might be glad to do this, since it would greatly simplify his task, but it cannot be done this way.

At the present time truth seems to come to us like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle, coming to us one piece at a time. The unrelated pieces of such a puzzle would seem to be of no value, and since there is nothing to which we could relate them, we would be inclined to throw them away as useless. The one thing that would cause me to treasure the single, unrelated pieces of such a puzzle would be my love and regard for a friend whom I knew was sending them. And I would treasure them all the more if I knew my friend was seeking to communicate with me through these seemingly unrelated pieces.

Even so it is with the Word of God. The study of God's Word is nothing more than diligently seeking the facts that He has placed there, and once these facts have been found and verified to hold them until they can be placed together in an honest theory of the truth. However, when men get a single fact from the Word they are inclined to disregard and ignore it as being useless. This is especially true if the fact seems to conflict with some theory already held. Nevertheless, if when we get a single fact from the Word of God we will cling to it and treasure it because of the source from whence it came, we will in time find it to be of untold value in constructing some great vista of truth.

The statements above will probably make no appeal to those who are sure they have all the pieces of God's great puzzle, and who have already constructed them into great pictures of truth.

For a great many years much of my life has been spent in getting facts from the Word of God. I have also sought to test and verify every thing that has been found which I supposed was a fact from holy writ. I have seasoned and clarified these facts in my own mind by the process of presenting them to others. Some discoveries, which at first made me very happy, had to be discarded when they turned out to be "fool's gold" and of no real value. When this has occurred, I have been able to acknowledge my misunderstanding and misinterpretation, cast the worthless stuff to one side and go on in search for the real gold of truth. I feel no need of "saving face" as many men do. It seems to me that there was a time in my experience when I beheld my face in the mirror of God's Word. I cannot forget the manner of man that I saw there, and since then have not considered my face as worth saving. I would like to suggest that all men who seek to follow God's leading should lose their faces once and for all so that our real task of uncovering the truth might not be confused and hindered by any need for saving face.

Some of the most valuable facts I have gotten from my studies in the Word have been the true meaning of some of the words that God has used. This has been founded upon a principle that the meaning of words is based upon the way in which they are used in the Bible. I do not claim originality here, for most of the meanings which I have discovered and verified were set forth by some of the most reverent scholars of the Christian era. However, it seems that these scholars having found the key threw it away unused.

For example, a decade ago I did not know what the word *judgment* meant. I could have told you that the Hebrew word was *mishpat* and that the Greek word was *krisis*, but I had no understanding of the divine value of these words. And worst of all, I had a false conception of this word which I was reading into every passage where the word occurs. This fouled up the passages and darkened my understanding of the portions in which the passages were found. To me, *judgment* seemed primarily to mean punishment. This idea is built upon a part truth, since judgment can result in punishment, but the meaning of punishment is not inherent in the word. The context must clearly show that it is an *adverse* judgment before this meaning can be given to it.

A crisis in my thinking came when I was making a study of Isaiah 26:9 in which the prophet declares that when God's judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. If this meant "punishments," then it was contradicted by the record in Revelation 16:8-11 where the most frightful punishments caused men to blaspheme all the more. I decided then and there to get the facts concerning the Hebrew word *mishpat*.

This word occurs 414 times in the Old Testament and I had not examined the first 14 occurrences before I had the conviction that it did not, that it could not mean punishment or wrath. As I studied on, the conviction grew that it had to do with arrangement, order, system; and that in its various contexts and forms it could mean to set the order, to determine the order, and to maintain the order. Its occurrence in 1 Chronicles 15:13 where it is translated "after the due order" is crystal clear as to its meaning.

When I tried this key upon every passage in which the Hebrew word *mishpat* occurred and every passage in which the Greek word *krino* or *krisis* occurred, truth seemed to tumble out of them. Passages like Psalm 1:5, Psalm 25:9, Psalm 37:28, Isaiah 26:9, Isaiah 42:1-4, Matthew 12:18, and Matthew 23:23 began to glow with a new light, revealing truth that I had never seen in them before.

In fact the understanding of this one word, and the understanding it brought of the many passages in which it occurs, did much toward the development of that glorious truth which we have called "the pre-millennial kingdom," the truth that there is to be a period of time when God's order will be imposed upon this earth before the "second coming of Christ.

1. That the Greek and Hebrew words translated "kingdom" do not mean the territory or people over which a king rules. It means government. Many of the best commentators and expositors have recognized this but they have failed to follow it out to all its conclusions and accept all its consequences. Scofield taught that "the kingdom of the heavens" was "the rule of the heavens over the earth," but he backed down on this when he came to Matthew 13 and made it to mean "Christendom." (See Scofield Reference Bible notes on page 996 and 1014).

2. That the Greek word translated "repent" means *submit*, and that repentance is submission.

3. That the Greek word *elegcho*, translated "reprove" in John 14:8, means to make the facts known.

4. That the Greek word translated "baptism" does not mean a water ritual, and that wherever it is applied to a water ceremony it is a figure of speech.

5. That the Greek word *ouranos*, the Hebrew word *shamayim*, and the English word *heaven* all have reference to that which is lifted up, heaved, or exalted, that these words can refer to beings, as well as to places, and that the word *heaven* in the singular can and does mean God. Our word *heaven* is a contraction of "the heaved One."

6. That the Greek word *aion* does not mean an age, nor does it have primary reference to a period of time.

7. That the Greek word *soma*, translated "body" means substance - that "the body of Christ" has to do with the substance of Christ.

8. That the Greek term "**ta panta**" is a demonstrative term, idiomatic in character, and that it means "all this" or "all these" as the need may require, always referring to something in the immediate context.

9. That the Greek word *ecclesia* has no relationship or connection with the institutions that are commonly called churches. This relieves me of the necessity of reading some visible or invisible institution into every occurrence of this word.

10. That the Greek word *sozo* usually translated "save" signifies to bless. However, this word is applied only to such blessings as have in them the aspect of deliverance and preservation.

11. That the Greek word *kephale*, usually translated "head" is a mathematical term which means "sum." When the uppermost part of a man's body is called his *head* it is a figurative use of this mathematical term, based upon the idea that the head of a man sums him up and expresses him.

12. That the Greek word *epigeios* means super-earthly.

These dozen examples could easily be multiplied by fifty, since this is only a partial list. These are set forth as illustrations of some of the facts that I have learned, facts that have been of the greatest possible value in recovering and uncovering other truths.

However, let no one think that all this work has simply been that of getting the right meaning of certain words. It would be impossible to tell of the exercise of heart and mind that has arisen as the first intimations of these truths have come to me. As a rule they come as a shock, and the first attitude that arises is a tendency to ignore them when it is realized that they will touch many things which are regarded as being final truth. But the love of truth overcomes this initial attitude and the intimation of truth is followed out to all its conclusions. The real value in discovering the meaning of a word comes from tracing it out in all its occurrences, reinterpreting each passage in which it is found so as to incorporate it in the truth that has been discovered.

Thus it is that one truth leads to other truths. The understanding of the dozen examples set forth above have led to the discovery of many precious truths. In fact, the last ten years of my study in the Word have been so productive that if I were to try to set forth in written form the truths that I have found, it might take the next twenty-five years in which to do it.

This fact presents a real challenge. I write at a slow pace. Some who have access only to my written ministry do not know of the great advances that have been made. Those who hear the spoken ministry in its various forms (tape recordings, radio, and Bible classes) are well aware of the progress that has been made. Each step has been worked out in detail before them, and as a rule, after carefully considering the matter, they have taken the steps with me. But those who have only the written ministry do not yet know where the search for truth has led us. Therefore, in the hope of correcting this, it will be my purpose in this and future issues of **THE WORD OF TRUTH** to set forth some of the things most surely believed by this writer at the beginning of this year of our Lord, 1955.

In doing this it will be necessary to present conclusions. All the steps that led to these conclusions cannot be given. I ask my readers to believe for the time being that I do have sufficient Scriptural reasons for believing the things I do. From time to time studies will be given that will provide more detail and give the reasons for things believed.

Some things which to my readers may seem to be radical changes in views will upon more careful examination be seen to be nothing more than extensions and enlargements of things formerly held to be the truth.

In closing this article, three quotations from capable writers will be apropos.

Any discrepancy in our various works must be explained by the fact that we are learning as well as teaching; and shall never pose as having no more to learn. In this light, our readers must take our more recent utterances and editions as representing such advance in our learning, and kindly judge us by these. Dr. E. W. Bullinger, *Things to Come*, February 1905.

Many shrink from investigation when they find the things which they fondly believed, incorporated in their prayers and hopes, and portrayed with eloquence, are subject to the suspicion of being built upon a sandy foundation. It is a trite saying that "truth never dies," however great the opposition; and we may rest assured that any opinion that we may individually entertain, can never alter or seriously affect the truth of God. It is folly to shelter ourselves behind the fear that, peradventure, inquiry and scrutiny may lead to a revolution of our views. This may indeed be an amiable weakness, but it is one as fatal to the student as Delilah's hands were to Samson. If in earnest search after the truth, such a result, should it occur under clear apprehension and decided

conviction of Scriptural authority, must be accepted as alone honorable. It is to the credit of some of the greatest writers, that opinions once strongly advocated were subsequently discarded under the persuasion that truth, honesty, and integrity required the change. George N. H. Peters, A.M., *The Theocratic Kingdom*, Volume 1, page 46. Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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

The End

GOD'S EARTH

. If a man were to stand upon the moon and look out through space toward the earth, he could say as he gazes upon this planet, "Glorious things of thee are spoken." If he were asked what authority he has for such a statement, he could point to the revelation contained in the book we call the Bible, the book we believe to be the Word of God. If he looked away from the earth to the other planets, he could make no such authoritative assertion as to Mercury, Venus, Mars, or Jupiter, for, as far as present understanding is concerned, the Bible does not reveal the future of these planets. But of the planet called earth he could say, "Concerning this planet, God has spoken, and its future is glorious."

For many centuries men have been guilty of ignoring and discounting every declaration that God has made concerning the glorious future of this earth. This has caused the earth to be despised. To many, the earth has no future. They think that a day is coming when this planet will cease to exist, and then there will be nothing but a place called heaven or a place called hell. They insist that a man's future must be found in one or the other of these two places. Therefore, they have staked everything upon an indefinite and an imaginary "heaven," and they have ignored the earth concerning which there is a great fullness of revelation.

The faithful study of the Word of God is sure to bring the conviction that every one of God's revealed purposes in relationship to man is in some manner related to the earth. Many glorious promises in the Bible have the earth as their subject. If we are ready and willing to accept what God has revealed, we will know and believe that this earth has a glorious future.

My own studies in the Word have brought the conviction that the first great stage of earth's future glory will be under heaven's government. This earth and its inhabitants are yet to see and know what it is like to live upon an earth that is governed by God. John the Baptist proclaimed the nearness of this government, the Lord Jesus gave the same message, and certain features of it were seen while He was upon earth. All that God did in the thirty-three years of the Acts period was related to His purpose to bring His government upon this earth in all its fullness, but this purpose was suspended at the close of that period of time of which the book of the Acts gives the record.

The second great stage of earth's future glory will follow the second coming of Christ to the earth. This period of blessing will be a thousand years in length, and it is commonly called the millennium.

The third and greatest stage of earth's future glory will follow the millennium. This is called the new earth in Isaiah 65:17,66:18, 2 Peter 3:13; and Revelation 21:1.

The most glorious promise concerning this earth is the final one. This is found in Revelation 21:1-5. In the Scripture we read of three heavens and of three earths. The third of these three is seen by John in this vision.

The first heaven and earth is set forth in the opening verse of the Old Testament. This was the original creation. It was not created the waste which it later became. Compare Genesis 1:2 with Isaiah 45:18. A great cataclysm is set forth in the second verse of Genesis. Here the earth is seen, not as God created it, but waste and empty. Then there is a restoration of the heaven and earth. This is the second one, the one with which the greater part of revelation is concerned. It is the same planet; nevertheless, Peter makes a distinction between the earth that was of old and the earth that is now (2 Peter 3:5,7). In Revelation 21:1 we read of the earth that is to be. The planet will be the same, but it is called a new earth. There is nothing in logic or Scripture that requires the annihilation or extinction of this present planet in order for God to bring in a new earth.

The greatest and most glorious feature of the new earth is that the tabernacle of God is to be with mankind. The real glory of this statement can never be realized apart from a right understanding of the Greek word translated "tabernacle" in this passage. This word has a history and it is interesting to trace its development.

The Greek word translated "tabernacle" is *skene* (pronounced skay-NA Yo). The basic meaning of *skene* is a tent, a booth, a temporary shelter. In Hebrews 11:9 we are told that Abraham "sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles." This means that they lived in tents. Paul and his companions were *skenopoios*, that is, tentmakers (Acts 18:3). Therefore, basically this word means nothing more than a tent. However, in due time this word became intimately associated with the Greek theatre. These theatres were in the open, and would be comparable to the "bowls" that are seen in many places in this country. Those who have seen the Hollywood Bowl will have a good conception of the open air theatres of the Greeks. However, in place of the band-shell or stage there would be a large tent. The spectators sat facing this tent, which when the sides were dropped became the stage or scene for the acting out of a drama, comedy, or tragedy. If it rained during the performance, the spectators got wet, but the actors being under the tent (*skene*) remained dry. In the process of time by a figure of speech the setting for a play was given the name of that which enclosed it, the *skene*. It is from this that we derive our familiar word *scene*. At times when the tent was too small to contain the action, the actors would play some of their parts in front of the tent or *skene*, and from this comes the word *proscenium*. This word means nothing more than "before the tent," but in the modern theatre it means that part of the stage which is in front of the curtain.

Thus it was that *skene* came to be applied to that on which a play is exhibited, that is, the part of a theatre in which the acting is done. From this the word came to mean any place or circumstances in which a thing occurs, as if we would say, "Western Europe became a vast scene of war." These facts will shed fresh light upon many passages in the Bible.

The verb form of this word occurs in John 1:14 where it is translated "dwelt." Here it would better express the truth if we were to paraphrase this: "The Word was made flesh and the scene of His activities was among the men of Israel."

The noun and verb both appear in Revelation 21:3, and if we were to make an extended translation of this passage in order to better express the truth of the Greek it would read somewhat as follows: Behold, the center of God's activities is now with mankind, and He will be centering His activities with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them.

To the best of my knowledge **the English word that best expresses this concept of the Greek word *skene* is *headquarters***. Therefore, from this we learn that the day is coming when God's headquarters will be this earth. True, it will have to be made ready, before it is fit for this, but the time is surely coming when the earth will be His office, the center of all His activities. All that God will be doing will emanate from this earth. It will be the center from which all His activities will go forth, and mankind will be the ones through whom He works. Yes, this earth is going to be the center of the universe, both in a physical and spiritual sense. God has spoken concerning the earth and its future is glorious.

The Earth Made Fit

Before God will ever dwell upon this earth it must be made ready as His headquarters. This would be a simple matter so far as the earth is concerned, for all God needs to do is speak the word and all things will be made new. But it is not so simple so far as men are concerned for it needs to be carefully noted that God is to center His activities among men. Of course He could create these men new overnight, but that would result in a lot of created robots. God's long dealing with mankind shows that this is not to be, for this is not to happen overnight. Redeemed men are to be brought to the place where they are fit to be the center of God's operations, but this will be the result of many centuries of divine activities. The supreme condition into which all men must be brought who in the end find their place in the new earth, is probably best set forth by God's words through Jeremiah (chapter 9:23,24):

**THUS SAITH THE LORD,
Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
Neither let the mighty man glory in his might,
Let not the rich man glory in his riches
But let him that glorieth, glory in this,**

THAT HE UNDERSTANDETH AND KNOWETH ME

In the new earth, those who make up that mankind with whom God will dwell, all these will understand and know God. This understanding will be the result of training, experience, and observation of the works and ways of, God. All who reach the new earth will have to pass through two great terms of divine schooling. The first term will be under God's government in the next dispensation. At the close of this term a divine testing takes place. Some fail to make the grade, and these are eliminated. (See an article on *The Revolt Against the Kingdom*, Volume XIII of *The Word of Truth*.)

The second great term is the millennium. This also ends in a divine testing and again some are eliminated. However, our study here is not the peoples of the earth, but the earth itself. It must first be made fit for the personal presence of Christ. His personal presence throughout the millennium will result in the world being made ready for the dwelling place of God.

If we consider the earth at the present time we realize that from the physical standpoint and from the climatic standpoint much of the earth is hardly fit as a dwelling place for man. One needs only to mention such places as the Antarctic, Siberia, and the Sahara to illustrate places where life is either impossible or so difficult that only a few live there. Man has always sought out the most favorable places, but even in these places the struggle for existence is difficult. This demonstrates the truth of God's declaration that man must constantly strive in order to exist upon this earth (Genesis 3:17-19).

If we consider the world from the moral standpoint the earth is today unfit for man. Every child born into it is born into a situation characterized by sin and iniquity. He must swim against a great

floating mass of false thoughts, opinions, maxims, principles, hopes, and purposes. These make up the corrupt moral atmosphere which he must inhale every moment of his life.

This is not the way that it should be, but it is a reality to be faced, and nothing is to be gained by denying it. This condition has come about from many factors, the greatest factor being an adverse judgment (a curse) that came upon the earth and upon mankind when Adam sinned. Certain additions were made to this adverse judgment after the flood of Noah's day, and a further addition which came at the tower of Babel. All this has been further complicated by man's determination to walk after his own way (Romans 1:21-32), and God's determination to let him do it (Acts 14:16).

When the incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and seating of Christ became accomplished facts, everything was done the needed to be done in order to reverse everyone of these adverse judgments and to remove these curses from the earth. And even though their removal has been long delayed, they are going to be removed in the day when our God governs this earth, the day when the kingdom of God is a reality upon this earth. All that this earth needs is the living government of its God. Jesus Christ, the One to whom all government has been given, is in the proper place to best conduct that government. He is now seated on "the right hand of power" (Mark 14:62). He is now in readiness for God to impose His government upon the earth.

The first great stage of this government is called by many names, but it seems that the two most prominent designations are the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the heavens. (See the article on *The Kingdom Appellatives, The Word of Truth, Volume XIII- Number 2.*)

These two terms are identical, they both designate the same thing, their only difference being that each one emphasizes a certain aspect of the divine order in that day when God governs the earth.

There are very few today who can appreciate the truth of God's government coming upon this earth, since the average man, both in and out of the church, believes that the kingdom of, God is a present reality and that God is governing the earth now. This false idea creates a mental block that makes appreciation of God's government an impossibility. It would be much better if men would face the fact that there is nothing on earth today that can be called the kingdom of God, that there is nothing upon earth that anyone can point to and say, "That is God's government."

On this earth today we see every evidence of human government. Some of it is terrible, and some of it is truly frightful, but much of it is good. We can point to presidents, kings, governors, mayors, and policemen - we can point to capitols, courthouses, hospitals, schools and jails and say of them all, "That is human government." But there is nothing on earth today that we can point to and say in any sense that it is God's government. There is no man on earth who holds any position in connection with God's government. There is no act of God that can be characterized as an act of divine government. All of God's acts are now acts of grace, and God's government and His governmental purposes are suspended.

However, it is entirely possible that before another day passes men will discover that God has injected Himself into the affairs of men and that He is ruling the world. All that delays this is that God must complete the record of His grace that He is now writing into the history of His long dealings with mankind. This record is essential to His purpose to govern the world, for apart from such a record redeemed men could never come to the place where it could be said of them that they understand and know God. When God's present purpose to display His grace is complete, His administration of grace will come to an end, and an administration of divine government will begin. God's government was not suspended when He left the earth. The most positive evidences of His rule are seen throughout the Acts period. And God's government will not be reinstated by Jesus Christ coming again. The world and the earth are not ready for His personal presence. Many centuries of divine activity must take place before He comes again.

If God's government of the earth should begin today, it would result in the most startling demonstrations on every hand. Jesus Christ would be unveiled. The *apokalupsin* would be a reality. Jesus Christ would be made plain, He would shine forth. His *epiphaneia* would be a reality. Those who have believed on Him during this dispensation of grace would also shine forth with Him. The glory of our calling would be made known. The curse of death and disease that came through Adam's sin would be removed. The inhabitants of the earth would be "alive and living," instead of being "alive and dying" as they are now. Life would work in men instead of death, for sickness, disease, and death would come upon men only because of their own sins, never again because Adam sinned. There would be the most startling demonstrations on every hand that men could point to and say, "That is God's government, that is an act of the judge of all the earth."

Under God's government the curse which now rests upon the earth is to be lifted. The creation is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption. This will result in the earth becoming an ideal place for man to live. Every spot upon the earth will become habitable. Climatic conditions will become ideal. As long as men give due reverence to God, each square mile of land will receive the sun and the rain at the exact times and in the exact amounts in which they are needed. The sun will not scorch and the rains will not become a flood. In that day the earth will be ideal for men, an ideal place for family life, an ideal place to rear children. In that day the thoughts, opinions, maxims, hopes, and purposes of men will be generated by the Spirit of truth.

These blessings will be world wide, but they will be manifest in their greatest extent in the land of Israel. In that day the conditions that are seen in the land God promised to Abraham will be a picture and a prophecy of the conditions that will prevail throughout the whole earth in the next great period that follows, the thousand year personal presence of Christ. For even as the earth under God's government, that rule of God which precedes the millennium, will be an ideal place for mankind, even so the earth during the millennium will be ideal for the personal presence of Jesus Christ.

The earth today is not fit for His presence. It will require all the divine activities that take place under God's government to get it ready for His coming. He will remain at the right hand of the Father until His enemies are made His footstool. It is from this place that He reigns (governs) until He has put all enemies under His feet. When this is accomplished He will come again to receive the homage of the earth and its peoples, for whom He has done so much.

The long period of God's government before the second coming of Christ is the reign of Christ which results in His enemies being put under His feet. To reign is to govern. He is not governing the earth now, but His government may be resumed at any time. Such a time is vital to the outworking of God's prophecies and purposes. It will be during this time that God will disentangle all the complicated results of sin in human relationships. Men have spent many centuries involving themselves in a hopeless snarl of international, social, economic, and marital relationships. Many centuries of time is needed to set things in order. The earth must be made ready for the personal presence of Jesus Christ before He comes again. God alone can get it ready.

Thus we see that preceding the time of the new earth, there will be two great transitional periods. These are called "transitional" because they are steps toward a goal. The first of these can be called the pre-millennial kingdom or the pre-advent kingdom since it comes before the second coming of Christ. During this time the Lord Jesus is governing the earth and the nations of the earth from His seat of government in the heavens. In this time Israel will enjoy a greater measure of blessing than any other nation, to the end that she might serve God as a mediatorial nation.

This is followed by the second coming of Christ and the millennial kingdom. During this time Jesus Christ is personally present and the seat of His government will be upon the earth. Israel will continue to be a mediatorial nation.

This is followed by the new earth. There is no government in the new earth. All sovereignty, power, and authority is abrogated (1 Cor. 15:24). The earth then becomes the center of God's activities. Israel's mediatorial place is abolished, and the earth becomes a mediatorial planet. All distinctions upon earth are abolished. The order of the new earth will be an egalitarian society that is absolute in, every detail.

When, from the Word of God, one has learned of all the majesty and glory of the works of God in connection with this earth when His government is resumed, it is bound to create a desire in the heart to see it, to experience it, to be a part of it, to grow in knowledge with it, and as a result to come to know and to understand God. My own studies in the Word of God have led me to the conviction that this is to be the portion of all who have put their faith in Jesus Christ in this the dispensation of the grace of God. If God's government should begin while we are living we would at once enter into possession of eternal life, the gift of immortality, and the gift of incorruptibility. If we should die before this takes place, we will be raised from the dead to live again upon this earth.

This earth is my home. It is the only home I have ever known. It is the only home I ever will know. There are times when I do not feel at home in it, but this is because of my present relationship with God. But when He governs this earth, I will be perfectly at home in it.

Before the reader enters into any judgment concerning this study, let him go on to read the one that follows.

The End.

THE BELIEVER'S DESTINY

The word *heaven* will be found to be a very complex word once we seek to get all the fact revealed concerning it in the Word of God. However, in spite of this complexity it can be declared with assurance that the Bible reveals a place called *heaven* which is the abode of angels. This is not the heaven in which the birds fly, neither is it the heaven of the planets. This heaven is the present location of the New Jerusalem. It is inhabited by an innumerable company of angels.

Over and above this there is yet another realm called in the Old Testament "the heaven of heavens." Both of these realms are mentioned in 1 Kings 8:27. In the New Testament we do not find a noun that can be used as a name for the Old Testament "heavens of heavens," but we do find an adjective which can refer to nothing else but highest and greatest realm. This is the word *epouranios* (pronounced ep-oo-RAN-ee-os). It is not simply *ouranos* which means heaven, nor is it *ouranios* which means heavenly. It is *ouranios* with the little particle *e pi* preceding it. The value expressed by this word can best be declared in English by the word *superheavenly*. However, since this word is an adjective it can have I reference to beings as well as to places, so we must not fix the single idea of realm or place upon it.

There are many who reject the idea of a super-heavenly realm just because they have never heard of it. To these people nothing can ever be true unless it is familiar to them. They have always thought of heaven as being the highest possible place. However, to the truth lover the only reason he believes there is a realm called *heaven* is because it is taught in the Word of God, and this is also his reason for believing in a realm called the super-heavens.

In the Western world, where Christendom holds sway, it is generally believed by the church and the world that when one dies he goes at once to heaven, unless it should be that his life has been of such nature that he is consigned at once to a place of torment popularly called "hell." Some who have been better taught by the Word of God do not believe that death will usher any man into either bliss or punishment. They hold that these things must await upon resurrection.

The company of believers with whom the writer finds his fellowship holds to the latter idea set forth above. We believe that no blessing is to be found in death, and that whatever our portion, place, and destiny may be it will come to us in resurrection. This, of course, is based upon the possibility that death may overtake us before the advent of God's government upon the earth.

However, among those who read these lines, there are some who believe that in resurrection we will leave this earth and go to heaven, and there are many more who believe that when we live again our place and portion will be found in the super-heavens. It is this belief that requires that they find or read into the writings of Paul a rapture of all living believers at the close of God's present administration.

The writer feels no hesitation in saying that he has passed through and tested all the various phases of belief upon this subject. His original belief was that the believer would be ushered into heaven at the moment of death, and this advanced through various stages until he came to the place where it was his belief that at the moment of resurrection the believer would enter into the super-heavens. However, the realization came to him that this belief was based solely upon the idea that there is a super-heavenly realm set forth in the Word, and not upon any direct statement that said the super-heavens is to be our final abode. This mistaken conception grew out of the positive truth that God's present calling of believers has standing, credentials, and a service that is related to the super-heavens. As a result of the most careful and exhaustive study of the subject, it has been my conviction and teaching during the past five years that our destiny is this earth, and that the purpose of our unique calling is the super-heavenly service we will perform to the inhabitants of the earth in the day that God governs.

This subject is one of far-reaching importance. It must be settled logically. The task of recovering and establishing the truth of God can never be done by emotionalists. This work is not for the dreamers and wishful thinkers. We must reject ill help from the "inner light" and "I saw a vision" men. To the law and to the testimony must ever be our marching cry. "What saith the Lord" must ever be our goal. To this end, it will be my purpose to set forth certain facts from the Word of God. The reader is asked to give them his t prayerful consideration.

What God Has Promised

If the Bible is carefully examined from Genesis to Malachi there will not be found one single hint, suggestion, or intimation that anyone ever expected or desired to go to heaven. The word *heaven* will be found over 400 times in the Old Testament, but even in all this wealth of references there cannot be found a hint that heaven was the expectation of any man. God never promised "a home in heaven" to anyone from Adam to Christ. In fact a distinctly opposite truth is stated. In Psalm 37:9, the Spirit of God declared through David:

**For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.
Psalm 37:9.**

Again he declared:

But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Psalm 37:11.

And, as if to settle the matter beyond all dispute, the Psalmist further declares:

For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. Psalm 37:22.

Nothing can be found in the Old Testament which in any manner contradicts this hope which God held out to the righteous. The experiences of Enoch and Elijah have no bearing upon this subject. The expectation of just men from Adam to Christ was that when they were raised from the dead they would live upon and enjoy the earth under the government of God.

When we come to the New Testament and examine the words of Christ in the four gospels we find that He maintained the same testimony and held out the same hope. "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). These were His words, spoken in the sermon on the mount. This was not a new revelation. It was a restatement and confirmation of the words spoken by David in Psalm 37. True, He told His disciples not to lay up treasures upon earth, but to lay up treasures in heaven; but this cannot mean that He was promising them heaven as their destiny. These words were spoken to the same men to whom he had already said they would inherit the earth. If we examine every word in the four gospels we will not find a single word that would lead anyone to think that their future life was to be lived in heaven and not upon the earth.

The Testimony in John 14

Some will dispute this and point to John 14:1-6 as positive testimony that heaven was the hope of these men. This will be in spite of the obvious fact that heaven is not the subject of this passage and no mention is made of it. Nevertheless, I am able to sympathize with all who think that this is the first mention of "a hope of heaven," for there was a time when I insisted upon this myself. However, the time came when I made an objective study of John 14 and discovered that ideas which I had read into it were not there. This passage has become so tangled up in the emotions of men that logical thought concerning it is almost impossible. This is probably due to it having been used in so many funeral messages.

There are certain facts concerning this passage that need to be fearlessly faced. These words were spoken to the men who were destined to sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And while every believer can read them and learn much truth from them, the promises contained in these words belong solely to the twelve apostles. If we read on in this chapter to verses 12, 13, and 14 we will find other promises that were made only to the twelve. If we attempt to claim these we are doomed to disappointment. We cannot do the works that Christ did -let alone the still greater works. We have no blanket promise that He will do anything which we ask in His name. We may as well claim one of the twelve thrones as our possession as to try to claim the promise made in John 14:1-6.

It should be recognized that the Lord did not say to these men, "I go to prepare a place *in heaven* for you," This idea is arrived at by taking it for granted that "the Father's house" is heaven, a gratuitous assumption to say the least.

Those who have learned to interpret Scripture by Scripture will know that this principle of interpretation consists in finding an identical term in some place where its meaning is crystal clear, then carrying this meaning to the place where the meaning is not clear or in dispute.

The term "my Father's house" appears only two times in the New Testament, both occurrences are in the gospel of John, and both of them came from the lips of our Lord. In John 2:16 He said, "make not my Father's house an house of merchandise," Here the phrase can mean nothing else but the temple in Jerusalem. This temple will be rebuilt under heaven's government, it will be reconstructed" in the millennium, and it will be replaced by the New Jerusalem in the new earth.

Since the meaning of this term is clear in John 2:16, it cannot mean heaven in John 14:2. Since this is a prophecy, it is evident that it refers to the future temple as described in Ezekiel 40 to 44. If these chapters are read it will be seen that the temple in Israel is to be a place where men live and work, as well as worship. This temple is to be the center of God's works upon the earth. In it will be many "abodes" for those who officiate within its precincts. The twelve apostles will have their residences and offices within the walls of this temple.

The Greek word *mone* which is translated "mansion" here is difficult to express in English. We lack a word that corresponds to this. This word appears only twice in the New Testament, both occurrences being in this same chapter. It is translated "mansion" in verse 2 and "abode" in verse 23. Neither of these words is satisfactory.

I would like to suggest that our word *establishment* comes the nearest to expressing the Greek word, but am somewhat hesitant to do so. Our word *establishment* has several meanings and not all of them will fit the word *mone*. However, take for example the case of a man who went from place to place and house to house doing business. Such a man has no fixed place for his activities. His customers do not come to him, he goes to them. But let us suppose that this man prospers, buys a building, increases his stock, and no longer goes from place to place. He now has a fixed place where he both lives and does his business. He is now established. It seems that the Greeks would call this fixed place of life and business a *mone*. In old French it would be called a *mansion* and in modern French a *maison*. It is from the word *maison* that we get our word *mansion*. It is only in the United States that *mansion* means a large, imposing residence. As stated before, no word in English is equivalent to the Greek word *mone*.

How glorious it must have been for these disciples to have heard from their Lord that in His Father's house were many establishments, that He was going to prepare a place for them, and that if He did go and prepare a place for them, He would come again and receive them to Himself. Yes, the place needed to be made ready for them and they needed to be made ready for the place. Only His work on the cross could do this. He made peace by the blood of His cross.

A few moments later He declared if a man loved Him he would keep His words and that the Father would love him and they would come unto him and make their place of doing business with that man. A clear example of this is seen in the life of Moses.

In view of these facts it is plain that "the Father's house" is not heaven; the "mansions" are not monstrous houses in heaven; the words "I go" do not mean that He was going to heaven, but to the cross to do the work that was accomplished in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

The words "I will come again," do not refer to His second coming. The Lord would not have consoled His disciples by promising an event which none of them ever saw and which is still future after 2000 years. This coming refers to that which is spoken of in John 14:18 and 14:23. He had said, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." Thus, only two alternatives are possible. He either broke His word and left them comfortless, or He made good His promise and came to them. It is my conviction that He came to them and received them to Himself on the day of Pentecost. No men were ever more publicly identified with the Lord than were the Apostles throughout the Acts period.

There is nothing in John 14:1-6 or in any other part of John that would rightfully lead anyone to think that the destiny of the twelve disciples was heaven. The destiny of these disciples was to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. These thrones are upon the earth - not in heaven. Nevertheless, the calling, standing, credentials, and authority of these men will be heavenly. That which they bind upon the earth will be bound in heaven.

Later Testimony

As it is in the four gospels, so it is also in Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians. There is no hint in any of these writings that heaven is the destiny of any man. This statement is made after careful consideration has been given to Acts 7:59; 1 Corinthians 15:40-50; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; and Galatians 4:26. If any insist that these reveal a heavenly destiny for those to whom these writings are addressed, then they are forcing the idea into the passages.

This brings us in the canonical order of: the books of the Bible to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It has been claimed by full dispensationalists (of which I am one) that a super-heavenly destiny is here revealed and promised to those believers who make up God's present calling. This is supposed to be set forth in the passages where the phrase *en tois pouraniois* is found. This is translated "in heavenly places" in Ephesians 1:3, 1:20, 2:6, and 3:10 and "in high places" in 6:12. It should be noted that the word *places* is in italics in all occurrences. This means that it was supplied by the translators.

We cannot object to any translator supplying a word where it is needed to complete the sense of the statement, but we reserve the right to question whether the right word was supplied or not. Most translators and commentators would concur that the reference here is to "places," although there are some notable exceptions. The form of the Greek words (*en tois epouraniois*) are such that they can be either masculine or neuter. Since the Bible gives testimony to a super-heavenly *place*, I do not believe we have any right to force the idea of *places* into these passages. However, the form is plural and we have no right to change it to a singular.

After the most careful study of this phrase in its various contexts it has become my conviction that the phrase has reference to beings and not to places. It should be translated "among the super-heavenly beings" or "among the super-heavenly ones," whichever may be preferred.

This would make the message of Ephesians 1:3 to be that God has spoken well concerning us in regard to every spiritual blessing among the super-heavenly ones in Christ. The time will come when every knowledge, privilege, and opportunity that are now open to cherubim and seraphim will be open also to certain men upon this earth.

This would make Ephesians 1:20-21 to declare that God has, set Christ at His own right hand among the super-heavenly ones in a position that is far above all principality and power.

This would make Ephesians 2:6 to say that we too have been exalted with Christ and given a position among the super-heavenly ones.

This would make Ephesians 3:10 to speak of "the principalities and powers" among the super-heavenly ones. They have the privilege of knowing the manifold wisdom of God. Some day this privilege will be open to us.

This would make Ephesians 6:12 declare that our wrestling is with the hosts of spiritual wickedness among the super-heavenly ones. Satan himself is a super-heavenly being. He at one time was in the super-heavenly place. One does not need to be in a superheavenly place to be a super-heavenly being. This conception of *en tois epouraniois* clears up the difficulty that has been created in this passage when this phrase is made to mean places.

Volumes could be written upon each one of the five passages in Ephesians where *en tois epouraniois* appears. We have erred in reading into these passages a promise that our destiny is the super-heavenly realm. What these passages really teach is that there will be a super-heavenly people serving God upon this earth. If we will keep in mind that "to heave" is to lift up or exalt, and that "heaven" is a contraction of the heaved one or ones as the number may require, we will have no difficulty in understanding that our place is to be among the super-exalted ones.

The Testimony of Colossians

The exhortation in **Colossians 3:1** to **'seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God'** is not a promise that we will go where He is when we are raised from the dead. The further exhortation to set our "affections on things above, not on things on the earth" is of the same character as the exhortation given by our Lord to his disciples. He urged them not to lay up for themselves treasures upon earth, but to lay up treasures in heaven. However, these words are found in the same message where He declared that the meek would inherit the earth.

It is certainly true that we should be seeking those things which are above. We should set our affections on things above, not on things of the earth. An example of this is found in seeking the honor that comes from God rather than the honor that comes from men. John 5:44.

The promise in Colossians 3:4 has been taken to be a promise that when Christ shall appear (*phaneroo*) that we will appear (*phaneroo*) with Him in the super-heaven. In order to arrive at this, "glory" must be made to mean a place. I adopted this interpretation myself at one time, but when I put it into writing a dozen faithful friends pointed out to me that if I made "glory" to mean the super-heavenly realm in this passage, I would have to do the same in Matthew 6:29, Matthew 16:27, Matthew 25:31, Mark 8:38, Mark 10:37, Luke 9:31 and a dozen more places where the same word in the same construction appears. Since this was impossible, I abandoned the interpretation.

To avoid any misunderstanding I will sum up and close this study by saying: There is a realm called earth. There is a realm called heaven. There is a realm called the super-heaven. There are earthly beings, heavenly beings, and super-heavenly beings. But since these words can have to do with exaltation as well as with location, it is possible for men on earth to achieve the stature of heavenly beings and yet be men in every sense of the word. And it is also possible for men to achieve the stature of the super-heavenly ones. This is the promise and hope held out to God's present calling.

The End.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****It is a long way from June to February. That sounds a little bit like one line from a popular song, but it has reference to the time that has elapsed between this issue and the previous issue of *THE WORD OF TRUTH*. The Editor found himself snowed under a pile of activities that made writing impossible. We will try to do better in the future, as we are revising our work and making some changes which will make it possible for more work *to* be done.

****Our new address is 647 South June Street, *Los Angeles 5*, California. We are delighted with our new location.

****Our Spring Conference Tour will be made between March 23 and May 8. The work here during my absence will be carried on by Mr. Herbert H. Baudistel, Mrs. Sellers, and our new Associate, Mr. Harold Smeal.

****The expense of establishing our work and ministry in a new location has been very heavy. The help of our friends in meeting this need will be deeply appreciated at this time.

End Vol. XIV, No. 2