



ADAM TO ZION

93 LESSONS FOR CHILDREN
COVERING THE BIBLE
STORY FROM A TO Z



God's Glory in the Heavens

"The reverence of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom"—Psalm 111:10 (Lamsa Translation)

Every day of our lives we can pray to "our Father which art in heaven" because we know he loves us dearly and cares for us tenderly. He is the Great Creator. He made the powerful sun and many more stars than we can see. He also made the little things—the soft petals of the flowers and the colorful birds, and each blade of grass, and many more things than we can count.

The earth seems very large to us, yet it is much smaller than Saturn or Jupiter. And those two planets are tiny compared to the sun. Imagine the sun's diameter as that of a large barrel: Jupiter would compare as a small orange, Earth and Venus as peas, and Mercury and Mars as raspberry seeds.

The sun is really a star, which means that it gives light and heat. Some heavenly bodies such as the planets and the moon can only reflect light that comes from the sun. There are billions of stars (suns) and possible planetary systems in the universe. How great is our God!

An earlier beginning (before the universe was created) is told about in John 1:1-3 (Diaglott). Jehovah had no beginning, which is impossible for us to understand as everything we know about has had a beginning. The Logos (Jesus) was the very first of God's creation and the last (Revelation 3:14 and Colossians 1:15).

God made the plans—we can say he was the architect—and the Logos was the builder of all creation. The Logos carried out all of God's instructions for the creation of the universe, including the earth, and all of the work was perfect.

Genesis means "beginning." Genesis 1:1 says: "God created the heavens and the earth in the very beginning" (Lamsa Translation). This is all we are told about the beginning of the universe. The rest of the chapter tells how our earth was prepared so that people could live on it.

We have day and night because of the earth turning on its axis. Earth's orbit (circle) around the sun marks our year.

The earth is much smaller than other planets like Saturn and Jupiter!

God was the architect and the Logos the builder of all creation!

Lesson 2

The First Day or Epoch

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. . . . And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.”—Genesis 1:3, 5

The Bible does not tell us how long ago the earth was created. It does not tell us exactly how the earth was made. Genesis 1:1 tells us that in the beginning the earth was. There were neither mountains nor valleys, trees nor shrubs, rivers nor oceans. The earth was empty and shapeless.

The Bible does tell us about the seven creative days in which God prepared the earth for mankind to live on (Isaiah 45:18). And it gives us the length of the seventh creative day: seven thousand years. It may be that each of the creative days was the same length of time, forming a creative week.

At first the earth did not have a definite shape—it was just a mass of material spinning round and round. As it spun, its water and minerals were thrown off as gases. They cooled and took the shape of rings around the earth. As the rings took shape, so did the earth. It began to look more like a ball than like a messy lump of formless elements. And as the mess took definite shape some light shone onto the earth, possibly similar to the aurora borealis (arched lights in the sky at night that are caused by electricity). The sunlight did not break through because that did not happen until the fourth day, but there was light. The earth began to look more like the globe we know.

Our universe is still developing, and scientists spend much time studying and trying to explain creation. Every time they learn a new fact we can usually find a scripture that also tells that fact. For example: Job 26:7 tells about earth traveling around the sun in a circle. This is called the earth's orbit.

Men do not understand all scripture, nor do they understand all about creation, but God gave us the Bible and planned the creation of the universe, and so of course, the Bible explains creation correctly when it speaks of it.

At first, the earth did not have a definite shape!

Our universe is still in the process of developing!

The Second Day or Epoch

“O LORD, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will give thanks in Thy name; For Thou hast worked wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.”—Isaiah 25:1 (New American Standard Bible)

How long is a day? We usually think of a day as being twenty-four hours long. But Psalm 95:8 speaks of the “day of temptation” in the wilderness, and we know that it is speaking of the forty years which the Israelites spent in the wilderness.

The Apostle Peter wrote that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). One of the definitions for “day” given in the dictionary says, “any particular amount of time.” We see then that many different amounts of time can be called a “day.” Thousands of years were needed for the work of each creative day.

During the second creative day God made the firmament—the air around the earth. Air would be needed in the future when humans and animals were created and they would need to be able to breathe. The earth had rings of water and minerals around it, some of which would fall to the earth and become oceans and lakes and rivers, etc. The remaining waters would become clouds. In between was the clearer, drier air (atmosphere or firmament).

Day Two ended with the earth prepared for lower forms of plant life. Step by step God was preparing the earth to be a home for creatures not yet created and for an immense number of plants and lower animals. His plans and purposes are intelligent and orderly and show a wonderful design.

It is interesting that of all the nine planets in our solar system only the earth has plenty of life-giving oxygen. If we go beyond about four miles up into the atmosphere, we will need another way to get oxygen or die. The astronauts always carry their own “atmosphere” with them.

Let us give thanks to our great Heavenly Father and his dear Son! How wisely and carefully they planned every detail of creation.

Each creative day was not just 24 hours, but 7,000 years long!

Of all the planets, only the earth has sufficient oxygen to sustain life!

The Third Day or Epoch

“Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”—Psalm 124:8 (New International Version)

Jif you go to the beach and pour a bucketful of water onto one place in the sand, the force of that water will make a big hole and the sand from that hole will get pushed to the side and make little mountains. You will have a tiny lake surrounded by hills.

This gives us an idea of the way God and the Logos created the oceans and the mountains. When the rings around the earth forced through the firmament, their strong power made the earth buckle and wrinkle, which made deep valleys and high mountains—like the lake and the hills you made at the seashore.

This was the work of the third creative day: the separation of the sea from the land and the growth of grasses and trees upon the land. The earth was cooling off considerably as it became prepared for people to live on it.

When the land dried out enough and fresh water supplies were able to maintain the plant world, many kinds of grasses, shrubs, trees, and plants of all kinds (vegetation) began to appear (Genesis 1:11, 12).

The seeds of this vegetation reproduced “after their kind.” God’s purpose in his creation of living things—from grasses and microbes (germs) to animals and man—is that each variety should reproduce “after its kind.”

During Day Three there was still an enormous amount of carbon in the air. It had not rained yet, but dense mists watered the newly formed land, which was still warm by its own heat. These conditions would cause the vegetation to grow very quickly to a giant size.

When we look at an ocean or a lake we are thrilled to know that in the kingdom “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). When we see the grand majesty of mountains, we, like David the Psalmist, would think, “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1, 2 Revised Standard Version).

The force of water may have formed the mountain ranges!

Vegetation grew quickly because of so much carbon in the air!

The Fourth Day or Epoch

“O thou Eternal One, our Lord, what majesty is thine o’er all the world! High in heaven thou hast set thy splendour.”—Psalm 8:1, 2 (Moffatt Translation)

The Bible story of creation was written 3,500 years ago in the Hebrew language (Hebrews were also called Israelites or Jews). Our English Bible (King James) was printed in the year 1611. The scholars who translated the Hebrew words into English tried to help the readers understand what was meant by the writers, but sometimes they made mistakes.

For instance: the English translators wrote in Genesis 1:16: “And God made two great lights . . . he made the stars also.” The Hebrew word translated “made” does not mean “to create,” but one of its meanings is “to appoint” or “cause to shine.”

We can now understand that the work of God on Day Four was causing the sun, moon, and stars to shine upon the earth. They had been in the heavens long before that, but their light could not get through the heavy fog and the carbon-laden air. But another ring of water and minerals had broken and fallen to the earth so that the earth’s atmosphere was clearer than ever before. Now the sunlight, moonlight, and the light of the stars could break through.

The rays of the sun and the moon began to prepare the earth for higher forms of plant and animal life. God was now going to use these great lights to rule (have an influence upon) the earth. The sun would some day mark time for man and beast. It would also begin to oxygenate the air to prepare it for breathing animals. The moon would influence the tides and be ready to mark time in the night for man. Long before there were calendars people regulated their ceremonies and seasons by the moon (Psalm 104:19).

The increased influence of the sun and moon brought many advances. Plant life progressed and many more varieties came into being. There were also insects, snails, crabs, fish, etc., abounding.

The creative days show the wonderful design and planning of our great God of the universe!

***The sun,
moon, and
stars,
created
earlier,
finally
shone upon
the earth!***

***The sun not
only marks
time, but
prepares
the air for
animals to
breathe!***

The Fifth Day or Epoch

“And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.”—Genesis 1:21

The atmosphere of the earth was now pure enough to permit life in breathing animals. Much of the carbon that was in the water and the air was absorbed into the chalky organisms of the sea. These eventually became beds of limestone. The huge forests sunk deep into the earth to form coal beds and this, too, took large amounts of carbon from the air, enabling animals to breathe.

The waters swarmed with fish and sea creatures. Reptiles and animals living partly in the water and partly on land (amphibians), belong to this period of time.

The English translation of Genesis 1:21 reads: “God created great whales,” but the Hebrew words were: “God created great monsters.” That is a good description of the dinosaurs. “Every winged fowl” includes flying reptiles—some of which measured twenty-five feet across the wings—as well as birds.

We marvel at God's wisdom and power when scientists tell us that cereals and grasses which would be needed for food began to grow *just before* these animals were created. This is one of the many facts which shows that God is a perfect timekeeper. When we learn that bees, wasps, and other insects were used to spread the seeds of the food plants we are thrilled with God's planning. How could these animals have lived without the proper food?

Modern plants need strong sunlight as well as moisture to grow and develop. We can see that God in his great wisdom waited for the cloudy, swampy, humid conditions of the previous creative days to pass and for the sun to shine onto the earth. Then he began creating plants with their sparkling colors and delightful perfumes.

How completely God prepared the earth for us! How lovingly he considered all our needs! “Great is our Lord, and of great power . . . Who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food . . .” (Psalm 147:5, 8, 9).

Only by the fifth day was the air pure enough for breathing!

The falling of the water rings allowed sunlight for modern plants!

The Sixth Day or Epoch

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”—Genesis 1:31

At last the earth was ready for man. As more and more carbon was used up, the air became pure enough for man to breathe. Vegetation became more normal. Animals changed. The heavy-boned monsters died and in their place came the animals we know today. Toward the close of the sixth creative day God created man.

And God said to the Logos, “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26). So man was made from the elements of the earth and given the breath of life—a wonderful, perfect being.

Because man was made in the “likeness” of God, he had the power to rule over the beasts of the field just as God has rulership over all of his creation. He was given the gift of speech and the ability to think and figure things out. He was given a conscience so he could know what was right and what was wrong. He could enjoy listening to music and could make music, too. Man was given a desire to worship and please the Creator. He was clever and kind, generous and inventive.

The prophet David said of himself that he was “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). The more we learn about the human body the more we realize what a true statement that was.

Adam and Eve were the only humans who were directly created and not born as babies like the rest of mankind.

As we begin our study of the history of man, we will also begin a study of the Chart of the Ages. It is a helpful way to learn and remember God’s plan for mankind. We can use this chart all our lives in our study of the Bible. It will help us place scriptures exactly where they belong (Habakkuk 2:2; Ephesians 3:11 Diaglott).

We can look at the chart and say, “This is when Adam and Eve lived in the garden of Eden.” “This is where Noah was saved from the great flood.” “Here is where Jesus died.” “There is the kingdom for which we pray.” Putting the scriptures in the right place (or time period) is called “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Man was created toward the close of the sixth day!

The history of man is illustrated in the Chart of the Ages!

Seventh Day or Epoch

“God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”—Genesis 2:3

Adam was created toward the end of the sixth creative day. Eve was really a part of Adam, separated for the purpose of being a mother to their children and a helpmate and companion to Adam. Then God rested from his work of creating.

The seventh creative day was set apart for the purpose of filling the earth with people and spreading the perfection of Eden to all the earth. For six thousand years people have been multiplying—every baby born is a result of God's command in Genesis 1:28.

Yes, God rested these past six thousand years. But did things work out as he had planned? No, for God did not plan sin and evil and wickedness.

If God did not plan sin, why couldn't he stop it, or leave his resting long enough to keep people from suffering? Well, it is like this: God has the ability to look ahead and know what will happen just as easily as you and I look back on yesterday and the day before and know what happened then. So God knew that Adam would sin (disobey), but he did not stop him. After all, there isn't much value in an obedient person if he *has* to be obedient and could not be disobedient even if he wanted to.

God's will shall be done even though Adam disobeyed. During the last thousand year day (the Millennial Age) mankind will be restored to perfect humanity and the earth shall become as perfect as Eden was so long ago. This is called *restitution*.

What a wonderful blessing it will be when all of mankind have returned from their graves in the resurrection. They will then learn the ways of righteousness and willingly follow the laws of God. Their experience with sin and evil will help them make right choices.

Then mankind will again be in the image and likeness of God. “In the image” means to have a mind and will to plan and reason. “In the likeness” means to have dominion over the earth as God has over the universe. This will all happen gradually.

We see God's love in the working out of his plan, as well as his power, wisdom and justice!

Eve was really a part of Adam, separated to be his helpmate!

Earth will be restored to what it was in Eden!

Mother Eve Created

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”—Genesis 2:24 (New International Version)

For a time Adam was alone in the Garden of Eden. He had some companionship with the animals and the birds, but he was lonely for someone like himself. Eve was made from one of Adam's ribs; she was a part of him (Genesis 2:21, 22).

Adam loved Eve. He helped her to learn about their wonderful Creator and the blessings he had given them. And Eve loved Adam and sharing his life in the garden. In her gentle way she would point out the beauties of God's handiwork which seemed even more beautiful because they could share them.

No wonder they were happy together! This was God's plan. He wanted men and women to marry and have children. He wanted them to love him and enjoy his blessings.

Many of the most beautiful stories in the Bible tell of brides and bridegrooms, marriages, parents, and children. Jesus is called a bridegroom in Matthew 25:1. The 144,000 saints are called a bride in Revelation 22:17.

In the kingdom there will be no weddings or newborn babies for the earth will be filled with people (Matthew 22:30). Then God's blessings will be for everyone on earth, fulfilling his plan just as he originally intended.

The saints are called children of God, joint-heirs with Christ, just as in a family arrangement (Romans 8:16, 17). In Isaiah 9:6 Jesus is given the name of Everlasting Father (life-giver) because his death and resurrection will make it possible for all people to live forever in the kingdom on earth.

The family arrangement is important to God and to mankind. Adam and Eve had many children, and because they were so near to being perfect, the brothers and sisters could marry and start their own families. And so the human family began to *multiply and fill the earth* (Genesis 1:28 New American Standard Bible).

*For a time
Adam was
alone in the
garden with
the animals!*

*It was
God's
design for
people to
live in
families!*

Mother Eve Beguiled

“And the serpent said unto the woman, ‘Ye shall not surely die.’”—Genesis 3:4

Eve wanted to know all about the LORD and the beautiful garden he had prepared for her and Adam. There were so many things she wanted to know about! Why was there one kind of tree from which they could not eat? Why did the beautiful intelligent serpent eat of the fruit of that tree and not die?

Satan was very cunning in his attempt to win this perfect pair. If he had said to Eve, “Come and worship me instead of God,” she would have been shocked and turned away from him. But Satan watched Eve and studied her ways: she was happy, she loved Adam, she loved God. What was there in her character to which he could appeal? Her great desire for knowledge!

Knowledge is good. God gives us as much knowledge as we can use wisely. He could have given Eve more knowledge as she continued to love and obey him. At that time the important thing in God’s plan was to teach Adam and Eve that obedience to his laws would be the best for them.

To eat of the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil* was forbidden for a while as a test of their loyalty and obedience to God. The penalty for disobedience was the death sentence. Death is the absence of life. One who is dead does not know anything, nor can he do anything (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10 New International Version).

Satan wanted to be like the Most High God and have the people worship him. He caused the clever serpent to eat the forbidden fruit. Eve saw that nothing happened to the serpent so she took a bite of the fruit. When Adam realized what she had done he chose to follow her into death (Genesis 2:17) rather than live without her.

Instead of trusting God, Adam disobeyed him and ate of the fruit just as Eve had done. The death penalty came upon him and Eve and all their children.

And so the first lie—“You shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4, Lamsa Translation)—caused mankind to start on a downward course of sin and death. We know what the terrible results have been!

***Satan
studied Eve
to see how
he could
tempt her!***

***Adam
willfully
chose to
follow Eve
into death!***

Expulsion From Eden

**"The soul that sins, it shall die."—Ezekiel
18:4 (Amplified Bible)**

The word of God must stand whether it is promising eternal life or the sentence of death. If God changed his mind we would not be able to trust him, but we know that he never changes and is always faithful to his word.

The sentence of death would be carried out. Adam did not die instantly from a thunderbolt from heaven, but began to die from the moment that he was sentenced. It was a slow process—Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years (Genesis 5:5). In the Hebrew Bible Genesis 2:17 says, "Dying thou shalt die." All of Adam and Eve's children would be born imperfect and under the sentence of death. Adam and Eve were sent away from the trees of life in Eden and into the part of the earth that was still a wilderness. For six thousand years their descendants would suffer and die. The death penalty brought with it much sorrow and pain and trouble to everyone.

So the disobedience of Adam and Eve caused them to lose their lovely garden home and their fellowship with God. The LORD then placed cherubim and a flaming sword at the entrance to the garden so Adam and Eve would be unable to eat of the perfect food that was there, especially that of the Tree of Life. As time passed, Eden would become full of weeds and thorns and thistles, etc., like the rest of the earth.

Now Adam and Eve had to work hard to get enough to eat. They worked long hours to make gardens and a new home to live in. It must have been a difficult time for them as they remembered how wonderful it had been when they lived in the garden God had prepared for them.

Eventually they would die and their children and their children's children would die also, as all were under the sentence of death through Adam.

But God had known that this would happen and had already planned how he would some day bring them all back to life on earth. It was for this cause that Jesus came to earth and died for mankind. His death and resurrection rescued mankind from the death sentence that had come upon Adam. He did this willingly and with love for all people.

***The death
sentence,
once
pronounced,
must stand!***

***Much toil
was
needed to
till the
ground
outside of
Eden!***

Pride, Jealousy, Anger, Murder

“Stop being mean, bad-tempered and angry. Quarreling, harsh words, and dislike of others should have no place in your lives. Instead, be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another . . . ”—Ephesians 4:31, 32 (The Living Bible)

Adam and Eve were sent away from Eden and they could not return. They had been busy in the beautiful garden and they had been happy and comfortable. Now things were different!

The wilderness outside was not beautiful to look at. There was no food such as they had eaten in Eden. Which of the plants of the field would taste good and nourish their bodies? They could no longer pick fruit from a tree or a bush every time they were hungry. Now they spent hours looking for food, and the thorns and thistles pricked their fingers and made them bleed. The perspiration ran down their faces as they tried to get rid of the weeds and help the plants for food grow better.

Perhaps Adam looked at Eve and thought, “Life was easier before she was created, when I lived alone with the animals.” Eve may have looked at Adam and thought, “Why didn’t he tell me this would be our punishment? He lived before I did and God talked to him. He should have helped me and not followed me into the sin of disobedience to God.”

When their first son was born, Eve looked at her child and felt happy and hopeful. She hugged him to her and said, “I have gotten a man from the LORD” (Genesis 4:1). The boy was called Cain. Adam and Eve thought he would be the “seed” or son whom God had promised would help them (Genesis 3:15). Adam and Eve had many more children.

Abel became a shepherd while Cain was a farmer. They approached the LORD with offerings to receive a blessing. God accepted Abel’s gift of a lamb, but did not accept Cain’s gift of fruits and vegetables. This made Cain very jealous and angry with Abel. Cain attacked and killed his brother.

Cain should have asked Abel for a lamb which he then could acceptably sacrifice to God. The lamb pictured the Lord Jesus and his sacrifice. Instead, Cain allowed anger and hatred to burn in his heart, and he became a murderer.

Leaving Eden was a great change for Adam and Eve!

Eve had hoped that Cain would be the promised “seed” of blessing!

Abel, the First Martyr

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you."—Psalm 32:8 (New International Version)

Cain did not think about killing Abel—he had never seen a human being die and he had never heard of murder. Adam and Eve had been so sure that this son would destroy Satan and restore their happiness. Cain had expected this too, and that he would be God's favorite. What a shock to see that Abel's sacrifice was accepted and not his.

Instead of looking to the LORD for guidance (Genesis 4:6, 7), Cain's pride was hurt. He lost control of his temper with terrible results. Abel was the first person who had ever died and when Cain saw that he did not get up or move, Cain became very afraid and tried to hide from God.

This same sin was later committed by other people with whom the LORD was dealing. The Jewish people killed Jesus because they wanted a great and mighty king who would deliver them from the Roman soldiers and the tax collectors. They wanted the Gentiles to admire their kingdom and its riches. But they did not follow the LORD's ways. They could not accept a carpenter's son even though he was performing miracles. Instead of looking to the scriptures for an explanation (Isaiah 53), Israel's pride was hurt. They became jealous and angry and killed the Messiah who had come to deliver them.

Long before Jesus' time Abel had become the first martyr. Over the years many more people were to become martyrs. It was not until four thousand years after Adam and Eve lived in the garden that God sent his Son into the world to become the Savior of all mankind (John 3:16).

At that time Jesus allowed himself to be taken captive and put to death. He did not need to die since he was perfect and had done nothing sinful. But he knew God's will was that he should take Adam's place in death—a ransom sacrifice—so that the death sentence on mankind could be done away with in due time.

Everyone will come back to life in the Millennial age and have an opportunity to live forever—a wonderful promise from God!

Cain thought that he, and not Abel, would be God's favorite!

Jesus knew that he was to take Adam's place in death!

Sorrow and Mourning Begun

"Even when walking through the dark valley of death I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me . . ."—Psalm 23:4 (The Living Bible)

The first death in Adam's family caused very deep sorrow. Not only was it a horrible shock to see human death for the first time, but all the years of their lives Adam and Eve would miss their beloved Abel. And what of Cain? He could hardly be the promised seed of Genesis 3:15.

What a difference from Eden where they had been God's friends! Now they did not know what to do—one of their sons was dead and the other son (with their daughter whom he had married) had left their home, shamed and punished by the LORD.

Who was there for Cain to fear? Many children were born to Adam and Eve. We do not know how many or what their names were. The Bible only says that they had sons and daughters (Genesis 5:4). The population was possibly sizeable at that time.

Cain and his wife went into the land of Nod where Cain built a city and named it after his firstborn son, Enoch. God protected Cain with a mark that would warn men that they must not kill him (Genesis 4:15).

When Adam was one hundred and thirty years old another son was born to him and Eve. They named him Seth. They hoped that he would be the man promised by the LORD.

Seth, of course, was not the great Deliverer (seed) who would one day destroy Satan. But Jesus, who was that seed, was born of the family of Seth, even though this happened thousands of years later.

Hope, joy, and peace come to us through God's promise that the time is coming when sorrow and dying, sin and pain shall all be gone forever. Messiah's kingdom shall conquer all the things that bring ill health and unhappiness to all people. And then God's will shall be done on earth as fully as it is now done in heaven (Matthew 6:10). The plan of God is reasonable and harmonious and he will bring it to pass.

***God
protected
Cain with a
mark so
that men
would not
kill him!***

***Adam and
Eve now
hoped their
third son,
Seth, would
be the
deliverer!***

Sons of God, Daughters of Men

“The angels noticed that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any one of them that they chose.”—Genesis 6:2 (Moffatt Translation)

Long before the creation of mankind angels were created. Most of these angels were very happy serving God and enjoying the many blessings bestowed upon them. When God and the Logos formed the earth and placed Adam upon it to be its ruler, the angels sang with happiness! Here would be more beings—Adam and his millions of children—in the wonderful universal family of God.

But there was one spirit being who was not at all pleased with God's plan. His name was Lucifer (Son of the morning, Day Star) and he was handsome and talented. He would have been a great help working along with God and the Logos in their exciting projects. Unfortunately, Lucifer did not desire to cooperate with his Creator. He was ambitious and jealous and wondered why the Logos should have such an important part in the universe (Isaiah 14:12-14).

He became very rebellious. A few of the angels would follow him, but just a few would not help much. Then Adam and Eve were created. Children would be born until the planet earth would be filled with people. Perhaps Lucifer thought: “Here will be a large number of individuals who will not know as much as the angels do about God and his love. They might accept me as their god.”

Then a terrible thing happened. Lucifer, who came to be known as Satan (which means adversary, hater, enemy of good) caused Adam and Eve to sin against God. He tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit by lying to her that she would not surely die (Genesis 3:4).

It was possible for angels to materialize at that time, and many of them did so that they could marry the daughters of men.

God saw that it would be good for mankind to have experience with sin and evil, so he permitted Satan and his followers, the fallen angels, to continue in their disobedient ways. This experience with sin will help mankind choose righteousness in the Millennial age for they will have learned sin's dreadful results.

Most of the angels were happy when God created man on the earth!

Some angels materialized and married human women!

While the Ark was Preparing

“Then God said to Noah . . . you alone have I seen righteous before me in this generation.”—Genesis 7:1 (Lamsa Translation)

The angel-men and their human wives had children called *nephilim* (giants). They were much stronger than the other boys because their fathers were angels. Their minds were very clever, but they did not spend their time thinking of better ways to serve the LORD. Instead they thought of cunning schemes to enable them to rule the earth.

God watched mankind for hundreds of years, seeing them become more and more wicked and violent. Finally only eight people on earth were worth saving. All the other families had intermarried with the angelic stock which was contrary to God's will. The father of this exceptional family was named Noah. He and his wife had three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and each of the sons had a wife.

Noah was given exact instructions for building an ark (boat) which would save him and his family and some of each of the animals and birds from the coming flood. Since it had never rained upon the earth up to that time, everyone laughed and jeered to see Noah building a boat on dry land!

The earth was like a great greenhouse. Plant life grew lavishly in the warm, moist climate; there were no seasons. When the ring of water that surrounded the earth broke, the rains poured down in great torrents to become the cataclysmic flood the Bible tells us about (Genesis 2:5, 6 and 7:18).

The ark was a peculiar and enormous structure, approximately five hundred feet in length, eighty feet in width, and fifty feet in height. It was of three stories, built of gopher wood, and made watertight with pitch. A window (opening) for light and ventilation ran around the four sides just under the eaves. Noah was told how to shape the ark so the flood would not smash it.

Since the ark was not built for navigation but merely as a float, no room was taken up by steering apparatus. This would allow much more room for the animal pens and for storage of food and water.

The sons of the angels were stronger than other boys!

Noah was told how to shape the ark so the flood would not smash it!

Nephilim Destroyed

**“God did not spare the angels who sinned.”
—2 Peter 2:4 (Lamsa Translation)**

All of Adam's family died because he sinned by being disobedient to God's command. That family includes all of the human beings who were ever born on the earth, and each of them will be made alive again because Jesus died for them.

But there is one class of beings who died that will not be resurrected because their fathers were not children of Adam—they were the disobedient angels. Jesus did not die for the angels nor for the children of angels (nephilim).

Life is a wonderful blessing, but God never intended for nephilim to come into being. When the flood destroyed them they died forever. They would not fit into a kingdom where no one will hurt or destroy (Isaiah 65:25), where everyone will live by the Golden Rule, and peace and goodwill shall prevail.

The mothers of the nephilim will be resurrected to the earthly kingdom because they were daughters of men—daughters in Adam's human family. The angel fathers had been alive in heaven before Adam was created and were not sentenced to death because of Adam's sin.

After the flood, the disobedient angels (who had become very wicked) were no longer welcome back into heaven nor could they stay on the earth as humans. They were cast into *Tartarus* (earth's atmosphere). God restrained or limited their powers so that their ability to materialize and associate with humanity was gone (Jude 6).

They may, however, act through any who *invite* their companionship, but they can do no more. They have no honor, no dignity, no favor from God. We associate them with spirit mediums, false gods, and many other forms of the occult.

We should have no dealings whatever with these occult systems. In due time they will be judged in righteousness. This means that never again will Satan and his cohorts be permitted to deceive mankind.

***The
children of
the angels
will not be
resurrected!***

***The fallen
angels can
still be
active
today to
those who
invite them!***

The End of That Age

“ . . . so that the world of that time was destroyed by being flooded by water.”—2 Peter 3:6 (The Jerusalem Bible)

People die and people are born, but the earth lasts forever (Ecclesiastes 1:4). God had a reason for creating the earth—he formed it for mankind to live on forever (Isaiah 45:18). The wicked ones were destroyed in the flood but the planet earth remained. The flood water settled into lakes and rivers, and dry land was again visible. The First Dispensation was ended and another age had begun.

The First Dispensation lasted from the time of Adam's creation to the beginning of the flood—a period of 1656 years. During that time the angels watched over mankind, but they brought so much wickedness to the world that God would not let them continue.

The Second Dispensation is known as the “present evil world.” It is divided into the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Gospel Ages.

After the flood ended the Patriarchal Age began. It lasted until the death of Jacob. At that time God's dealings and favors were only with a few individuals. Some of these were Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The patriarchs were counted (or reckoned) perfect because of their faith in God and not because they were actually perfect as Adam had been.

God changed Jacob's name to Israel—his twelve sons and their families became the tribes of Israel. At his death, the Jewish Age began when God would deal with the Jews (Israelites) only.

The Gospel Age started with the first advent of Jesus. When its work is complete the Millennial Age will begin, which also starts the Third Dispensation—the ages to come.

God's plan of the ages develops slowly, but very surely it will come to pass. The earth will be made glorious and restored to all that was lost in Eden and redeemed at Calvary.

Calvary was a hill not far from the walls of Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified and buried. The word *calvary* means *skull*. Since the hill was shaped like a skull, the name was very suitable.

The earth itself was not destroyed in the flood!

God's plan develops slowly, but will surely come to pass!

The Rainbow Pledge

"Never again shall all living creatures be swept away by the waters of the deluge . . . never again shall there be a deluge to destroy the earth."—Genesis 9:11 (Moffatt Translation)

When the rain stopped and the land was drying out, Noah and his family and the animals went out of the ark. They built an altar and offered sacrifices to God to thank him for his loving watch care over them.

No one had seen a rainbow before the flood, for the sun's rays could not come directly through the watery envelope around the earth. But when the envelope broke, the sun shining through the fine vapors caused a beautiful rainbow—the first one ever! It was a symbol of God's promise to Noah and to all mankind that the whole earth would never again be overcome by a flood of water (Genesis 9:13, 15).

Many changes were brought about by the flood. Genesis 9:2 tells of the first time that the animals feared man; Genesis 9:3 that animals could be killed for meat. And in Genesis 9:21 we are informed that food and drink would spoil. Noah had not expected this.

Science tells us that the earth had been like a conservatory (greenhouse). It had been damp and warm and the same temperature everywhere. The flood caused great changes—around the North and South Poles the weather turned exceedingly cold, and around the equator the weather became very hot.

It happened very rapidly. An antelope was eating green grass in northern Siberia. Suddenly the water around it turned into ice and the antelope froze to death. When it was found, green grass was still in its stomach—undigested! In the same way, a mastodon was found imbedded in ice with food (vegetation) still in its mouth and stomach. And hundreds of elephant tusks have been found in the same area, where grass cannot now grow, nor these types of animals live.

This sudden huge downpouring of water produced the great ice fields and ice mountains of the arctic regions. The movement of the glaciers cut deeply into the earth's surface causing tremendous changes. This is referred to as the Ice Age or Glacial Period by the scientists.

The Bible is precious to us because it is the Word of God, but it is also remarkable because it is the world's oldest textbook.

The first rainbow was not seen until after the flood because light could not break through!

Ancient animals have been found in Siberia with green grass still in their stomachs!

Demigods of Greece and Egypt

"We have not followed cunningly devised fables . . ."—2 Peter 1:16

There are many fairy tales and fables that we have read and enjoyed, knowing that they were not true stories. There are also many myths from the ancient Greeks and Romans which are interesting to read, but are also just imaginary. These stories often have a lesson in them.

The Greeks and Romans really believed the myths at that time, thinking that Bacchus, Ceres, Apollo and others were actual gods and goddesses. Gifts of sacrifice were burned in their honor, and special acts were performed to please these imaginary gods. People prayed to them—asking for good crops, strength, happiness, etc.

We know that Jehovah, the Almighty Creator of the universe, is the only true God. Where did the idea of these other gods come from?

The word *god* means *a mighty one*—strong and powerful. There have been many strong and powerful persons, good and bad. The strongest and most powerful individuals who ever lived on earth were the giants (*nephilim*) who were destroyed in the flood. They were the *demigods* of Greece and Egypt and the angels who materialized were the gods.

Demi means *half* or *lesser*. So the demigods were less than the angels, who were the gods. They were more than humans because of their angelic fathers. They were a hybrid race which had not been authorized by God. *Hybrid* means the offspring of two animals or plants of different breeds or species.

The gods and demigods did many supernatural things to gain power among the people. They had this power because of their angelic background. Their mighty and wicked deeds were told about long after they themselves were gone. Their foolish and sinful acts were admired and imitated by some men who considered the giants as gods.

In the tombs of the Egyptian pharaohs there are lists of names of some of the families, beginning with the creation of man. One list includes the names of Adam and his sons, his grandsons, etc., all the way down to the pharaoh who had the list written. Most of the lists, however, have extra names of individuals who were not really a part of Adam's family. These would be the giants, or nephilim.

The gods of mythology are really the fallen angels!

Adam's name is still preserved on a list in an Egyptian tomb!

From Adam to Moses

"The LORD said to him (Moses) . . . I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."—Exodus 4:11, 12 (Lamsa Translation)

When the Greek, Herodotus, wrote his history book, he gave the same information as that which was written on the Abydos Tablet. When the Egyptian, Manetho, wrote his history book, he also used these same facts. When the great prophet of Jehovah, Moses, wrote the first five books of the Bible, he was familiar with the best sources of historical information.

The Abydos Tablet, a slab on which records were kept of Pharaohs and kings, was found in the sepulcher (tomb) of Pharaoh Seti I. It is not as long a list as some of the others, yet Seti took great care to preserve it. He sank a shaft sixty feet deep through solid rock and there his stone masons cut out a staircase on which the Tablet is portrayed. An exact copy of it is found in the British Museum today.

Although Moses had been born a poor Hebrew boy, God arranged that he would be adopted by the Egyptian princess. In the palace he learned all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

To be used in God's service, Moses received the finest education from the best schools in Egypt, as well as all that his Hebrew mother could tell him of God's marvelous leadings and care for his people. Jochebed knew well the history of the Hebrews. She had heard it from Moses' father, Amram, who had heard the story from the patriarch Levi, who had heard it from his grandfather, Isaac, who (with his father, Abraham) had heard the story from Noah's son Shem, who had heard it from Methuselah, who had heard the story from Adam.

When he was a young man, Moses chose to serve Jehovah God and be counted among his people, even though they were in bondage to the Egyptians. In doing so, he gave up the riches and pleasures of the comfortable life he had had in the palace.

Besides having all the knowledge of the best schools in Egypt, and belonging to the family of God's chosen people (thereby knowing their history firsthand), Moses was blessed by the greatest advantage of all: God guided and instructed him. What a wonderful way for Moses to know what he should write in God's holy Bible!

Moses had access to the best sources of historical information!

Moses learned the history of Israel from his mother!

The Tower of Babel

The city “was called Babylon, because it was there that the Eternal [God] made a babble of the language . . . and . . . scattered men all over the wide earth.”—Genesis 11:9 (Moffatt Translation)

Noah and his family praised God for his justice and power. They were glad for the rainbow which was a sign to them from God that there never again would be such a flood.

But as the years passed, many began to forget what God had done for mankind. When they saw the rainbow in the sky, they did not think of Noah or God or the promise.

Because the people had lost confidence in God, they began to build a great tower. They thought if they built a tower so tall it would reach up to heaven, it would save them from any flood of waters in the future. God saw what they were doing but did not want them to complete the tower. He confused their language so they could not understand one another—Genesis 11:4-8 (Amplified Bible).

How odd it must have been to want to talk to your neighbor and suddenly your words were completely strange to him, just as his words were strange to you. Perhaps he was speaking Hebrew and you were speaking Arabic, and someone else was speaking Greek, or Ethiopian, etc.

This very effectively stopped the building of the tower so they could not work together anymore. It also scattered people to various parts of the earth. This is what God wanted them to do, so that all of the earth would eventually become populated.

The unfinished tower fell into ruins and nothing is left now but a huge hole which is used as a quarry (a place to dig our building stones, such as marble and limestone). When standing, the tower had many platforms, one on top of the other, each smaller than the one below.

Today the language barriers are breaking down and the tendency of humanity is to reunite for protection. There are many people who speak two or more languages. Also, there are those who act as interpreters between speakers of different languages. This allows meetings and conferences to be held with the people of many countries participating.

The tower of Babel showed that the people had lost confidence in God!

Nothing is left of the tower of Babel today but a stone quarry!

Abraham, God's Friend

"Now the Lord said to Abram . . . in you shall all families of the earth be blessed."—Genesis 12:1, 3 (Lamsa Translation)

Abraham became the friend of God because of his great faith (Exodus 3:11). He followed God's instructions to leave his own country and go to Canaan. Abraham became heir to the promise of our text: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This is called the Abrahamic covenant. A covenant is an agreement or contract between two or more individuals or parties. God had changed Abram's name to Abraham because he would become the father of many nations (Genesis 17:5).

Many stories in the Old Testament are pictures of things that will happen later—and on a larger scale. These stories are called *types*, and the things which happen later are called *antitypes*. These are very helpful to us in understanding God's plans and purposes.

Abraham's beloved wife, Sarah, waited and waited to have a child (Isaac), just as the Abrahamic covenant had to wait and wait for the Messiah, Jesus, to be born and begin the work of that covenant.

Rebekah represented (or typified) the 144,000 saints, the church, because she was Isaac's bride and the mother of his children. The church is called the Bride of Christ, and will help him resurrect and restore the world of mankind to perfect life in the kingdom.

The offering of Isaac in sacrifice on Mount Moriah was a type of the sacrifice our Lord Jesus made for all mankind at Calvary. Just as Isaac was willing to let his father, Abraham, kill him in sacrifice, so Jesus was a willing sacrifice when he was hung on the cross. God intervened for Isaac and provided a ram as a substitute sacrifice. Not so with our Lord Jesus, because his perfect human life was a *necessary sacrifice* for the life of Adam.

Hagar represented the Law Covenant (Ten Commandments) because she was a servant in Abraham's household and mother of his child, Ishmael. The Law Covenant served a purpose in God's plan by helping the Israelites realize their need of a savior as, being imperfect, they could not keep a perfect law.

Ishmael was like the nation of Israel. He was a part of Abraham's household, but not the promised seed. The nation of Israel is a part of God's plan, but not the heavenly seed, which is Christ and the church.

Many Old Testament stories are pictures of future events!

The sacrifice of Isaac was a picture of the sacrifice of Jesus!

The Destruction of Sodom

“This was the guilt of . . . Sodom . . . arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.”—Ezekiel 16:49 (New American Standard Bible)

The people of Sodom lived in a very rich valley. They did not have to work as hard as others to have good crops and become prosperous. They had many luxuries; they became idle and full of pride and selfishness and extremely wicked.

Jehovah God saw that it would be better for the Sodomites in the resurrection if he destroyed them now before they became even more wicked. There were only four people in Sodom who were righteous: Lot, his wife, and their two daughters. Two angels were sent to warn Lot's family of the coming disaster. Lot then warned others to escape, but they merely laughed at him.

Apparently an earthquake took place in the valley causing shifting and pressing down of the earth onto the oil, sulfur, salt, and gases under the earth's surface. A tremendous explosion occurred which destroyed the entire city, as well as the city of Gomorrah and other cities nearby.

Tons of fiery oil, sulfur (brimstone), and gases were expelled into the atmosphere. The two angels helped Lot, his wife, and daughters to flee the city. But Lot's wife, evidently not wanting to give up her home and all her treasures, lingered and looked back. She was caught in the “rain” of salt and was completely covered, so as to form a pillar. This is one of the strange stories from the Bible that many have thought to be a myth, but scientific research workers have proven it to be an statement of fact (Genesis 19:24-26).

The destruction of the Sodomites is an example of what happens to sinners (all of mankind) at death. Death—the absence of life—and not eternal torment is the penalty for sin (Romans 6:23).

The Bible teaches that the Sodomite people are not hopelessly lost. Rather, in the Millennial Age, they will have an opportunity to hear of God's great plan of salvation for all. They will have a chance to accept God's laws and rejoice in his truth, just as will all those who have not had an opportunity beforehand to do so. The Sodomites will actually be judged less severely in the kingdom than those who were able to see Jesus' miracles and hear his words, and yet rejected his message (Matthew 10:15).

The city of Sodom was in a very fertile valley!

The people of Sodom are not hopelessly lost, but will be resurrected in God's kingdom!

Melchisedek, Priest and King

"The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedek."—Psalm 110:4 (New American Standard Bible).

Melchisedek was a priest of God and at the same time he was the king of Salem (which means peace). Salem was later called Jerusalem. As a king he ruled the people, and as a priest he blessed them and taught them of God's ways. Abraham acknowledged Melchisedek and paid tithes to him (a tenth of all his goods).

The Bible tells us very little about Melchisedek. It is stated that he was without father or mother and without beginning of days or end of years. This is very puzzling until we realize that it is referring to his position as priest and king. No record was made of him as to when his priesthood began, nor was any provision made for a successor. In this way he was a picture (type) of the Messiah, or Mediator, in the Millennial Age.

There are other priests in the Bible, and also other kings, but only Melchisedek held both of these positions at once.

In the kingdom, the 144,000 members of the church with their head, Jesus, will be like Melchisedek. They will rule the world and they will bless the people and teach them of God's ways—they will act as priests and kings.

It is possible that Melchisedek was one of the Shepherd kings who peacefully ruled Egypt and built the Great Pyramid of Giza. The pyramid is one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was built about 2170 B.C. It is located on the Nile River near Cairo, Egypt in the geographical center of the land surface of the whole world. This enormous structure covers thirteen acres and is referred to in the Bible in Isaiah 19:19, 20.

There are many fascinating things we can learn about the pyramid which support the plan of God. Its interior passages represent all of human history. The downward passage pictures the course of sin and death; the upward passages represent the Law Age, the Gospel Age, the kingdom glory of the church, and human restitution. Its measurements indicate the length of the year, the weight of the earth, the distance to the sun, and many other scientific facts.

Melchisedek did not inherit his priesthood from his father or his mother!

Possibly Melchisedek was instrumental in building the Great Pyramid!

Job's Adversity and Restitution

"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."—Job 1:21 (Lamsa Translation).

About the time of Melchisedek and Abraham there also lived a man named Job. Job was a good man of great wealth, learning, and influence. He loved and revered God and appreciated justice, and God loved him. Job and his wife had seven sons and three daughters.

A merchant prince, Job was considered to be one of the great men of his time, yet he thought of the widows and orphans and was very generous to them. Satan told God that Job loved him only because God had so greatly blessed him. So God allowed Satan to test Job.

Suddenly terrible disasters came upon Job—his children, wealth, influence, and health were all taken from him. In spite of all that happened, Job's faith did not waver. He said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Job's wife did not share his trust and said to him, "Curse God and die" (Job 2:9; 13:15).

Three friends came to visit Job and comfort him in his trials, but they, too, felt that Job was to blame for all the misfortunes that had come upon him. They said that he must surely have sinned against God. Job is remembered to this day for his great patience, yet at one point, his trials were so heavy and severe that he wished he were asleep in sheol (the grave) and asked only that he would be remembered in the resurrection.

Eventually God brought blessings again to Job. In fact, he now had more than he had ever had before (Job 42:10). What a beautiful picture of the history of mankind!

Man was removed from his perfect garden home and suddenly found himself having to work very hard to have a home and enough to eat. In the Millennial Age mankind will be restored to all that he had had and more! The curse of sin and death will be removed, and instead, the blessings of God will flow down upon the human family for a thousand years, giving back life to all who have gone down into death, and multiplying the blessings of the earth more than double.

Job was a wealthy, but generous, merchant prince!

Like Job, mankind will be restored to all that he had had in the garden—and more!

Seeking a Bride for Isaac

“The LORD . . . will send his angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my kindred and from my father’s house.”—Genesis 24:40 (Revised Standard Version)

Abraham had been willing to sacrifice his son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah but could not understand God’s reason for asking him to do what must have seemed to be a terrible thing. His faith and trust in God were rewarded when a ram was provided as a sacrifice instead of Isaac—he would not have to kill his son after all!

A picture had been made—Abraham represented God and Isaac represented Jesus, the son who was to be sacrificed for the life of the whole world. When God told Abraham to raise Isaac from the altar, it was a picture of Jesus being raised from the dead.

After Sarah died, Abraham sent his trusted servant, Eleazar, to find a bride for Isaac. He was to go to Haran where most of Abraham’s family still lived and select a girl from his own people.

Eleazar took ten camels and many servants with him, as well as beautiful gifts for the girl and her family. This is a picture of God sending his holy spirit to choose a bride for his son, Jesus. This “bride” will consist of 144,000 members.

When Eleazar and his servant reached Haran they were tired and hungry and very thirsty. Abraham had told him that the girl who would give him a drink of water and also water his camels would be the one that God had chosen for Isaac.

Rebekah was a lovely girl, young and pure, and she worshipped the one true God. After giving Eleazar, his servants and his camels water from the well, she led them to her father’s home where they were given food and lodging.

When Rebekah’s mother and brother heard Eleazar’s message, they wanted her to stay home several days before going to Isaac. But Eleazar felt they should leave the next morning and Rebekah, with no hesitation, said she was willing to go.

It was evening when Rebekah neared her new home and saw Isaac in the field. She got down off the camel, covered herself with a veil, and went to him. Together they represent Christ and his church who will resurrect and rule over the world of mankind in the next age. The twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis tells us this beautiful story.

***Abraham
did not
know why
God
wanted him
to sacrifice
Isaac!***

***Rebekah
went
willingly
with
Eleazar to
become the
bride of
Isaac!***

Jacob's Ladder Dream

"There stood a flight of steps rising from earth, till it reached high heaven! And there were God's angels ascending it and descending."—Genesis 28:12 (Moffatt Translation)

Jacob and Esau were twin brothers, but they neither looked nor acted alike. Esau (who was born first) was a strong, athletic boy and enjoyed hunting more than anything else in the world. Jacob was quiet and gentle. He often thought of God and his promises and knew he would rather have God's blessing than anything else in the world.

One day when Esau came home from hunting he was extremely hungry. Jacob was cooking a thick vegetable and meat stew (pottage) which looked and smelled delicious. He begged Jacob to give him the stew.

Jacob had always realized the great value of the promise God had made to Abraham and then to Isaac. He felt it was more important than the earthly riches which were also part of the firstborn son's inheritance. He asked Esau to give him his birthright promise in exchange for the pottage. Esau cared little for God's promises at the time; he was only interested in something to eat. He agreed to the exchange.

Later Jacob deceived Isaac, who was now blind, into believing he was Esau so his father would give him the blessing. When Esau found out, he wanted to kill Jacob, for now the birthright seemed more valuable than when he had sold it.

Jacob fled from Esau's anger. That night he found a quiet place and, using a stone for a pillow, wrapped himself in his warm cloak and went to sleep. God encouraged Jacob by giving him a dream.

In the dream he saw a ladder extending from earth to heaven. It was crowded with angels coming and going. At its further end he saw the God of glory and heard him speak. God assured him that he had secured his father Isaac's blessing and God now recognized Jacob as the legal heir to the great Abrahamic promise.

The dream was a picture of the fulfillment of this promise made to Abraham (Genesis 28:14 and Acts 3:25). It will bring about, once again, peace and fellowship between heaven and earth, between God and man.

Jacob had always realized the great value of the Abrahamic promise!

The dream of Jacob's ladder assured him that God was hearing his prayers!

Joseph's Coat Identified

"They took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood . . . and they brought it to their father."—Genesis 37:31, 32

Jacob had become the father of twelve sons. The oldest son was Reuben who was kind but not wise. Simeon was very clever, but not very kind. Each of the sons was very different from the others. Joseph and Benjamin were the youngest and still at home while the ten other brothers were tending the flocks. Jacob especially loved Joseph and made him a beautiful woolen coat of many colors. The older boys became very jealous of Joseph and when he had two dreams which seemed to indicate that all of the family would some day bow down to him and he (Joseph) would bless them, it only made them more jealous.

One day Joseph went out to the fields to bring messages and food to his brothers from their father. The brothers could see him coming and they plotted to get rid of him. The cruel brothers sold him as a slave to a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants on their way to Egypt. Then they killed a kid and smeared Joseph's beautiful coat with its blood. When they gave Jacob the coat he thought exactly what they intended him to: that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast.

Jacob was heart broken and bitter—no one could comfort him—and he cried, "I shall go down to *Sheol* to my son, mourning" (Genesis 37:35 Revised Standard Version).

This is the first use of the word *sheol* in the Bible and it is the only word translated *hell* in the Old Testament, King James version. Jacob did not think of his beloved son as having gone to a place of eternal torture. He knew of no such place. Some teach that because *sheol* is translated *hell* in the common version it means a place of everlasting punishment, yet the words "hell," "grave," and "pit" were used interchangeably as a translation of *sheol* in the Old Testament. Bible scholars now agree that it simply means *tomb* or *grave*.

In the New Testament the word which means tomb or grave is *hades*. Some modern translators leave *sheol* and *hades* untranslated (such as the Revised Standard Version). One of the meanings of the word *hell* is "a place that is covered or hidden." It is very clear that there is no thought of eternal fire and everlasting torment with either *sheol* or *hades*.

Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons and they became jealous!

Jacob expected to go to the Bible "hell," the grave!

Joseph Sold Into Egypt

“As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.”—Genesis 50:20 (Revised Standard Version)

God was watching over Joseph. His trials and difficulties were helping him develop a character that would eventually bring him a position of honor in Egypt second only to the Pharaoh!

Pharaoh had two dreams which Joseph interpreted to mean there would be seven years of plenty and seven years when food would not grow. Joseph directed the people to store up enough grain in the first seven years to carry them through the famine years.

The famine also affected Joseph's family in Canaan. When they had no more food to eat, ten of Jacob's sons came to Egypt to buy grain. They were completely unaware that they were dealing with their brother whom they had sold into slavery so many years before.

Joseph was kind to them, although he did not let them know who he was, inquiring about their family, and giving them grain. He told them the famine would continue and they would be needing more grain. He also said when they came again to bring with them their youngest brother, Benjamin, to prove they were not spies.

Jacob at first refused to let Benjamin go, but as the famine worsened, he finally said they could take him. But, he said, if Benjamin did not come back it would mean his death: “. . . you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol” (Genesis 42:38, Revised Standard Version).

This is the second occurrence in the Bible of the word *sheol*, which means the tomb, but mistranslated hell thirty-one times in the King James Version. It did not even come into Jacob's mind that his sons would be in a place of burning torment and that he would join them there—this is a very God-dishonoring doctrine. No, Jacob expected to be unconscious in death, out of existence, when he spoke those words.

Joseph was a type of Jesus who was also rejected by his brethren (the Jewish nation), but was eventually exalted to a place of honor and glory next to the heavenly Father. And, just as Joseph gave bread to the Egyptian people, so Jesus will give the bread of everlasting life to the willing and obedient in the next age. What a beautiful picture!

***God
watched
over
Joseph,
even in his
prison
experiences!***

***Joseph was
a type, or
picture, of
Jesus!***

Joseph and His Brethren

“And be kind one to another and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God has forgiven us through Christ.”—Ephesians 4:32 (Lamsa Translation)

When the brothers returned to Egypt with Benjamin, Joseph had a feast prepared for them. This astonished the brothers and made them fearful for they did not know what he had in mind. Finally, Joseph sent his servants away and told his brothers that he was their brother whom they had sold into slavery. He assured them of his forgiveness and explained that God had caused all his hard experiences to work out for good. Now he was able to save his family, as all the Egyptians, from losing their lives to starvation.

The brothers were overjoyed! They all wept and hugged each other and could hardly believe that this was truly their brother. Joseph asked about his father and told them to bring him and all their families to Egypt where there was plenty of stored grain for all. Pharaoh gave them the land of Goshen, the very best land.

So Jacob, now called Israel, lived in Goshen, and his people began to prosper. They had many children and became a great nation. Joseph said to his brothers, “God turned into good what you meant for evil . . .” (Genesis 50:20 Living Bible).

Joseph pictures Christ and his church. These have endured and overcome their trials and lived according to God's commands to the best of their ability. This will bring them the highest kingdom honors. Joseph's brethren represented the Jews, the Egyptians pictured the rest of mankind. Both Jews and Gentiles will be blessed because of the glorious exaltation of Messiah (Isaiah 25:6-9 New International Version).

Joseph, in his dying request, wanted the Israelites to carry his bones with them when they returned to Canaan. The families of Israel lived in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years when Moses came on the scene to lead them back to their homeland.

We see how Joseph trusted God because of his knowledge of the promise made to Abraham. So also it was with all the worthy ones of the past, and the same principle holds true today!

Joseph was able to save his family from starvation!

Joseph's brethren pictured the Jewish people!

Moses the Deliverer

"I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians."—Exodus 6:7 (New International Version)

When Jacob (Israel) died, the age of the patriarchs (e.g., Noah, Abraham, Isaac) was over, which meant the end of God's special favor to them. God's favor was now with the children of Israel. Their families had become very large and they were called "the twelve tribes of Israel."

The families continued to grow until the Egyptians became worried that the Israelites would become too powerful, perhaps even taking over their country. They made slaves of the Hebrew people and worked them very hard, but still they multiplied. So an edict (order) went out that all Hebrew babies were to be killed.

When Moses was three months old he was placed in the little covered basket his mother had made and set afloat in the Nile River. His older sister, Miriam, watched over him from among the reeds along the river bank.

There he was found by the Egyptian princess and brought to the palace of her father, who was Pharaoh, to be reared as an Egyptian. Moses' own mother was asked to care for him—surely Jochebed could feel that her prayers for the safety of her little son had been answered.

Moses received an excellent education in "all the learning of the Egyptians," as well as the instruction he would have had from his Hebrew mother. But Moses could not enjoy the honors he had in Egypt because of the way his people were being persecuted. Eventually he killed an Egyptian while defending a mistreated Israelite and fled to Midian. He became a shepherd and lived there for forty years.

When God was ready for the Israelites to leave Egypt he appointed Moses to lead them. His brother, Aaron, was appointed to speak for the Israelites in Pharaoh's court.

This commission was given to Moses at the burning bush. This was a bush which apparently was all aflame, yet it did not burn up! Moses had learned a great lesson in humility while he lived in Midian and now God could use him in his plans to have the Israelites return to Canaan. So Moses became the great leader and man of God whom Pharaoh dreaded and the Hebrews needed (Acts 7:30-34 Living Bible).

Jacob's death marked the end of the age of the patriarchs!

God appointed Moses to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage!

Let My People Go

“When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you . . .”—Exodus 12:13

Let my people go!” Time and again Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh with this message from God. But Pharaoh had no intention of losing the Israelites, they were slaves and worked very hard for the Egyptians. (More bricks were made while this Pharaoh was king than at any other time in the history of Egypt!) The Egyptian taskmasters pushed the Israelites to work harder than ever, thinking this would keep them from rebellion.

Of course Jehovah knew of the plight of the Hebrews. He sent various plagues to force Pharaoh to let the people go. The Nile River was turned into blood, thousands of frogs left the river and went into the homes—into the beds, the ovens, the bread dough! And when the frogs died there were lice, then there were flies everywhere. The Egyptian animals contracted a deadly disease, the Egyptian people were covered with boils, hail fell from heaven to ruin the land, and millions of locusts ate every bit of vegetation the hail had left. Darkness then covered all of Egypt—a darkness so thick it could be felt! And still Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go.

Finally the Israelites were instructed to select a lamb—a male, not over a year old, and with no blemishes of any kind. On the fourteenth of the month of Nisan they were to kill and roast the lamb whole with bitter herbs. In the meantime, they were to pack their belongings, gather their flocks and herds, and get everything ready for a journey. God would send an angel of death throughout the land of Egypt and the firstborn male in every household would die.

The Hebrews would be spared if they took the blood of the lamb and sprinkled it on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. This would be a sign to the angel to pass over that home.

At midnight that night the angel of God passed throughout the land of Egypt and every firstborn male died, both of men and animals. The one thing Pharaoh loved more than himself was his son—his death was a terrible blow to him. He called Moses and told him to leave Egypt at once and all the Israelites with him.

The Egyptians had no intention of letting the Israelites go free!

The death angel did not strike the Israelites because they were “under the blood!”

Israel's Wilderness Experiences

"Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."—John 6:31

At last the Israelites were free from their slavery. They began the long trek through the desert to the land of Canaan. God led them by day with a cloud and by night with a pillar of fire. The Israelites were taught many lessons of faith during the forty years they wandered in the wilderness.

Every night God sent manna for them to eat. It took time and patience every morning to gather and prepare the small grains. Each person was allowed an omer, about seven pints. The manna would spoil after twenty-four hours except that gathered on the sixth day, which stayed fresh over the Sabbath.

In spite of all that God had done for them, the Israelites soon became dissatisfied with the manna. They cried for the fish of Egypt as well as its cucumbers and onions and melons (Numbers 11:5, 6). So the LORD sent a wind from the sea and many birds (quail) flew with this wind. The quail grew tired from their long flight; they flew very low so the Hebrews easily caught them. The people ate and ate and ate—so much that many became ill and some died.

At different times the people complained to Moses because there was no water to drink. He sweetened the waters at Marah by throwing a certain tree into it. At other times he struck a rock with his rod and water gushed forth to refresh the people. What a beautiful picture of the death of Jesus (smiting the rock) and the gushing water picturing the great river of truth that flowed forth because of his death.

Another experience was a plague of fiery serpents. God told Moses to make a serpent of copper and raise it up on a pole where all could see it. When the Israelites looked at the copper serpent they were healed of their snake bites. The serpents represented sin, which would bring death. God provided life for the sin-bitten world through the crucifixion of Jesus. He was treated as a sinner in order that sinners (all of mankind) might one day be freed from sin and death.

A man named Korah led a conspiracy against Moses' leadership. The result was that Korah and those with him were cast into a pit to die. This is a picture of Satan and all the opponents of Messiah perishing in the second death in the next age.

The manna showed God's care for Israel during their wilderness wanderings!

The brazen serpent was a picture of the death of Jesus!

The Law Covenant at Mt. Sinai

"If you live by my rules and follow my orders obediently . . . I will live among you and be your God."—Leviticus 26:3, 12 (Moffatt Translation)

The Israelites looked to Moses for guidance. They complained to him when they were not pleased even though they found that God's blessings always came through him. Moses was their *mediator*. This is one who brings about friendly relations between two parties that do not agree. Moses explained God's will to the people and begged God's forgiveness when they sinned against his laws.

God gave the Israelites many rules (or laws)—the most important ones are called the Ten Commandments. Moses went up to Mt. Sinai where God explained the Law to him. Some were rules of health: what foods to eat, what to do when there was sickness; others told how to conduct business fairly. And, most importantly, the Law taught the people how to deal with God and with each other. All the people agreed: "We will do everything the LORD has said" (Exodus 19:8 New International Version).

The Law was perfect and the Israelites, being imperfect, could not keep it. God knew this would happen but he allowed them to try as it would help them realize their need for a Savior. One of God's greatest mercies and kindnesses is his promise that in the kingdom the Israelites will be resurrected and he will make a new covenant with them. It will be easier for them to keep this New Covenant and, by so doing, will earn them everlasting life on earth.

Moses was the mediator between God and the Israelites in the wilderness which pictures The Christ (Christ and his church) as mediator between God and mankind in the Millennial Age.

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17):

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make any graven image or idol to worship.
3. You shall not use the name of the LORD God irreverently.
4. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not be unfaithful to your husband or your wife.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not tell falsehoods (lies) about others.
10. You shall not want or long for (covet) what belongs to others.

The Ten Commandments were given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai!

Moses was the mediator between God and the Israelites!

The Typical Tabernacle

“The sacrifices amounted to an annual reminder of sins; for the blood of bulls and goats cannot really remove the guilt of sin.”—Hebrews 10:3 (Phillips Translation)

There are many lessons we can learn from the tabernacle. This remarkable tent of worship was built as God instructed Moses. It had to be very carefully made, for it was to be a picture of God's plan of the ages.

The people were eager to help build the tabernacle. They brought far more silver and gold and beautiful cloth than was needed. The finest artists and most skilled craftsmen put their very best efforts into its making (Exodus 12:35, 36; 35:29, 32; 36:5).

Every year, on the Day of Atonement, a bullock was sacrificed on the brazen altar in the court of the tabernacle. Many other sacrifices were burned throughout the year, but this was a special sacrifice. It was the people's way of telling God that they knew they were sinners and wanted to do better—they wanted to be his people.

The bullock represented Jesus' human life and everything that happened to the bullock later happened to the goat, which represented the 144,000 members of the church. Because Jesus voluntarily died on the cross—a perfect man (Jesus) for a perfect man (Adam)—all mankind will be resurrected to life on the earth and shall be given an opportunity to live forever.

The court, the holy, and the most holy, the furniture, the priests, and the sacrifices of the tabernacle illustrated the more important features of the divine plan. The three items of furniture in the holy were: the golden candlestick, representing the light of truth; the table of shewbread, representing the Old and New Testaments; and the incense altar, representing the consecrated church class continually offering the incense of faith, love, and obedience to God.

The only piece of furniture in the Most Holy was the Ark of the Covenant. It was a box about the size of a cedar chest and covered with gold inside and out and had a lid made of solid gold. On the lid were two golden angels and there was a bright light between them that showed that God was present with his people. Inside the ark were the two tables of the Law, Aaron's rod that budded, and the golden pot of manna that never spoiled. All these things were pictures having to do with God's great plan.

On the Day of Atonement, the people of Israel confessed that they were sinners!

The tabernacle contains many pictures of the plan of God!

Crossing the Jordan

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you."—Isaiah 43:2 (New International Version)

Moses, the faithful leader of the Israelites, died on Mt. Nebo. Joshua, his friend and follower, became the new leader. The people had wandered in the wilderness forty years because of their unfaithfulness to God. Finally God led them to the Jordan River, beyond which was Canaan, the promised land!

Four hundred and seventy years had gone by from the time God had promised to give Canaan to Abraham before his descendants actually crossed Jordan and began to inherit the land.

The Canaanites no doubt felt secure from attack because the Jordan was a swift river and at this time of year it was overflowing its banks and thus was much wider than usual.

We do not know exactly how God held back the waters of the Jordan but this might be what happened: about twenty miles above the camp of the Hebrews, at a place called Adam, a great amount of earth swept down from a hillside into the river. No longer could the water flow along as it had done before—it could not get through that huge mound of dirt. Soon the river on the other side of this landslide began to dry up. Now the people could walk across the dry bed where the Jordan had so recently been flowing.

The priests, carrying the Ark, led the people. When they reached the center of the river bed they stood firmly until all the hosts of Israel had passed over.

Twelve large stones (one for each tribe) were taken from the bed of the Jordan and piled on the shore. Similarly, twelve stones from the shore were placed in the river bed where the priests stood. The two piles of stones were a memorial of the miracle that had taken place (Joshua 3:17; 4:1-10).

The land of Canaan was a picture of the new earth condition in the Millennial Age. The Jordan represents the sentence of death against mankind. People will learn God's righteous laws in the kingdom. Some, however, will want to go back to the old ways that brought so much suffering. If they continue to oppose the laws of the kingdom, they will be cut off in second death from which there is no resurrection.

***Joshua
was the
new leader
who
succeeded
Moses!***

***The
crossing of
Jordan
pictures
man
crossing
over the
death
sentence!***

Conquest of Canaan

“Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous.”—Joshua 10:25 (New International Version)

There are many unusual stories in the Bible that tell us of God's dealings with and watch care over his chosen people, the Israelites.

In Canaan, the city of Jericho was heavily walled for protection against its enemies. God directed Joshua to take the city in a very unmilitary way. At the end of seven days of marching around the city while blowing trumpets, the walls crumbled. Joshua and his small army were able to take the city easily.

The story about Joshua's long day when he commanded the sun and moon to stand still sounds very strange; however, it is not to be understood literally. Had they actually stopped, the earth and entire solar system would have been destroyed. The scripture is speaking of the *sunlight* and the *moonlight*. These were darkened by a violent storm in which great hailstones rained down on Joshua's enemies, killing many. The intense darkness frightened the Midianites and confused them. They were used to very bright sunlit days, and indeed, even worshipped the sun! The darkness of the day and the moonless night gave Joshua the advantage and he won the battle. This is one of various ways of interpreting this incident of the sun and moon standing still (Joshua 10:12-15).

Gideon had an army of 32,000 men, but God had him reduce the number to three hundred! With this tiny army, Gideon defeated the Midianites and the land was at peace for forty years. Read the fascinating account of Gideon's little band in Joshua 6, 7, 8.

Another army captain, Jephthah, promised the LORD that he would give him the first thing that came to meet him when returning home after his victory over the Ammonites. The “thing” that came to meet him was his daughter, his only child! Jephthah understood that a vow to the LORD was a very serious thing—that if you do not want to pay a vow, do not make it! (Ecclesiastes 5:4). His daughter felt the same way and did not rebel against her father. She asked him only to have a little time to go into the mountains with some of her friends and prepare herself for a life without a husband and children; the rest of her life would be dedicated to the LORD's service (Judges 11).

The “long day” of Joshua has a scientific explanation!

Gideon's army of only 300 defeated all the forces of Midian!

Anointing of David

“Take no account of it if he is handsome and tall. . . . men judge by appearances but the LORD judges by the heart.”—1 Samuel 16:7 (New English Bible)

The Israelites wanted a king just as the nations around them had their kings. God had been their invisible king and Samuel the Prophet guided and judged them according to the leadings of the LORD. But the Israelites wanted a human king and a royal family who would live in a palace! To please the people, God chose Saul to be the first king of Israel.

Saul was tall and strong and handsome and, at first, humble. He led the people in the ways of the Lord. But, after a few years, he became careless about obeying the LORD's commandments.

God directed Saul to attack the Amalekites and completely destroy them and all their goods. Instead, Saul and his men captured their king and kept the best of the sheep and oxen and anything else that appealed to them. When Samuel confronted him, Saul said he wanted the animals to sacrifice to the LORD. But Samuel replied that obedience is far better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). Eventually, God took the kingdom away from Saul.

God declared to Samuel that he had chosen one of Jesse's sons to be the next king of Israel, and Samuel was to anoint him. Seven of Jesse's sons passed before Samuel; they were tall and handsome young men, but the LORD rejected them all. Samuel was surprised, but asked Jesse if these were all his sons. Jesse answered that the youngest, David, was out tending the sheep. When David came before Samuel, the LORD said, “This is the one, anoint him.” Samuel poured the olive oil upon David's head and the spirit of Jehovah God came upon David (1 Samuel 16:12, 13).

We are especially interested in the story of David because his name means *beloved*, and because he was a picture of The Christ—Jesus and his faithful brethren, the church.

David was anointed many years before he became king. Just as the years of trials and testings David experienced were to prepare him for his office as king, so Jesus and the church also have a period of trials and testings in preparation for their roles as kings and priests in the next age.

Israel did not please God when they wanted to have a king!

David was anointed many years before he actually became king!

Jealousy of Saul

“Jealousy is cruel as the grave.”—Song of Solomon 8:6

King Saul was a very tall man, good looking, and he possessed much wisdom. From the human standpoint he was quite ideal. But King Saul tried to rule the people in the same way that other kings ruled. He completely ignored the fact that his kingdom was very different from all other kingdoms. He also overlooked the fact that God was the true king of Israel and he himself only represented God and should be guided by him in every way.

David, on the other hand, was anxious to do the LORD's will and was repentant whenever he erred. He was spoken of as a “man after God's own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22).

When Saul became unusually nervous and depressed, he was glad for David's music to cheer him. When Saul was desperately frightened of Goliath and the Philistines, he was grateful for David's bravery which saved the battle. But when the people praised David more than they did Saul, the king became exceedingly angry and jealous and tried to kill the young man.

Saul tried to get help from his son Jonathan in his wicked plan to kill David, but Jonathan loved David and helped him to escape from his father's wrath. Even though the anointing of David was kept a secret, Saul realized that God's favor was with him which only served to increase his jealous feelings.

It was a hard trial for David to wait for the LORD's due time to become king of Israel since his life was always in danger from the angry Saul. However, he learned many valuable lessons in patience!

David was humble but he was also courageous. In the name of the LORD he fearlessly killed Goliath. David was courageous but he was also merciful. When Saul intended to kill David, it was necessary that he run away and hide in order to save his life. But twice when David could have killed Saul, he would not, even though some urged him to do so. He said, “I will not put forth my hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed” (1 Samuel 24:10 Revised Standard Version)

King Saul was subject to fits of depression!

It was not easy for David to wait for God's due time for him to become king!

Saul Disobeys God

“Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop on the spoil, and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?”—1 Samuel 15:19 (Revised Standard Version)

God gave King Saul special instructions through his prophet Samuel. Saul, however, was always self-willed and did things his own way. The Amalekites were a very wicked people. When they were at war with Israel, God told Saul to slay every one of them and not to take a spoil (goods taken from an enemy in wartime).

Not only did Saul take King Agag captive, but he took the best of the animals, telling Samuel he planned to use them as sacrifices to the LORD. The lesson to be learned from this event is in Samuel's reply to Saul which is recorded in 1 Samuel 15:22 (Living Bible): “Obedience is far better than sacrifice.”

If the slain people had gone into eternal torment (hell fire), it would have been a terrible thing for God to command that they should all be killed. But the Bible does not teach that there is such a horrible place for the “dead.” Because of Jesus' death and resurrection there is a provision made to bring back life to all the families of the earth—the resurrection of mankind! God had given the sentence of death to Adam which then came upon everyone, so it does not matter if they die by famine or war or illness, etc. God will, in the kingdom, restore them all and give them an opportunity to live forever under much better conditions.

The resurrection of all people is a most wonderful truth taught in the Bible (John 5:28, 29 Revised Standard Version). All who do not receive a knowledge of God in this life will have a chance to learn to know him and his marvelous plan in the next age when Messiah is ruling.

In the past, many people were in ignorance because they were not allowed to study God's word or did not know how to read. During the Dark Ages there were very few Bibles. Those which were in existence were very expensive as they had been hand-copied and took months and years to complete. Since the advent of the printing press we now have many Bibles from which to read and study and learn of God's plans and purposes for all mankind. As the years passed, many more translations and versions of the Bible were printed. Most people can now afford to have several Bibles in their home libraries, as well as concordances, Bible dictionaries, and other study helps.

***Saul sinned
by sparing
the life of
Agag, king
of the
Amalekites!***

***Those who
died in
ancient
battles will
all be
resurrected!***

The Witch of Endor

“Let no one be found among you who . . . engages in witchcraft. . . . Anyone who does those things is detestable to the LORD.”—Deuteronomy 18:10-12 (New International Version)

The angels who were disobedient before the flood were not permitted to live on earth like men anymore. Nor were they allowed back into their former home in heaven.

Their punishment for being disobedient was to be restricted to the area around the earth. There they could invisibly influence those human beings who would allow themselves to be “used” by them. Those who were so used are called *mediums* and they work with the angels of Satan to deceive other humans. It is wise to stay away from them.

Moses had warned the Israelites to drive all wizards and witches out of the lands they conquered or put them to death.

The Philistines were gathered to battle King Saul's army and the frightened king knew he could not win but hoped he could find help. There had been a time when God had guided him, but now he had sinned against God so he could not expect a blessing from that source. In desperation, Saul turned to the witch at Endor to contact the dead Samuel for advice (1 Samuel 28:3-25).

Because Samuel was dead and could not actually respond to the witch, evil spirits (fallen angels) impersonated him. They gave the witch the information she needed to convince Saul she had really seen and spoken to Samuel.

She told Saul his army would indeed lose the battle the next day and he and his army would be killed. Actually the battle occurred a few days later and while Saul and three of his sons were killed (including David's close friend, Jonathan), two sons escaped and lived many years.

These evil spirits, the fallen angels, are working with Satan to continue the lie Satan told Eve in the garden: “Thou shalt not surely die (Genesis 2:17). The mediums claim they receive information from those who have died, but God's word assures us that the “dead know not anything” (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10).

***Israelites
were
forbidden to
use witches
or other
spirit
mediums!***

***Fallen
angels gave
the witch
the
information
she needed
to convince
King Saul!***

David Reproved

"For whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and he disciplines the son with whom he is pleased."—Hebrews 12:6 (Lamsa Translation)

The Bible is very different from every other book—it is completely honest in telling the stories of various people.

King David's wrongs were told about just as fully as were his good and heroic deeds. David had been a humble shepherd boy; he became a brave soldier and was a loving friend to King Saul's son, Jonathan. He had been loyal subject to the king who hated him.

But David was overcome in a weakness of the flesh when he had one of his soldiers, Uriah, killed in battle so he could marry his beautiful wife, Bathsheba.

God sent his prophet, Nathan, to King David who had smothered his conscience about his transgression. Nathan told the king a parable about a wealthy man stealing a sheep from a poor man. It made David angry that such a thing could happen and he asked Nathan the man's name.

The prophet declared, "Thou art the man!" This humbled David as he realized his terrible mistake and he wept and asked the LORD to forgive him. Because he was truly repentant God did forgive him, yet he did not withhold punishment for David's wrong course (2 Samuel 12:1-7).

The honesty of the Bible is shown in both the Old and New Testaments. Even though Abraham was very faithful to the LORD and was called "the friend of God" (James 2:23), yet he made many mistakes in his life.

The apostles had many faults. When Jesus was accused and condemned to die on the cross, his beloved friend, Peter, was so frightened he would not admit he even knew Jesus. Paul, the apostle who took the place of Judas, had been the cruel Saul of Tarsus. It was he who consented to the stoning of Stephen and caused problems for the early church. Peter and John were called "ignorant and unlearned men" (Acts 4:13).

God loves us and helps us when we ask for his forgiveness and strive to do better. In spite of his faults, David was loyal at heart to God. He became Israel's most beloved king and God promised him that the kingdom would come through his descendants.

The Bible tells about its heroes' weaknesses, as well as their good points!

The apostles had many faults, but were loved by God!

Solomon in All His Glory

"The reverence of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."—Proverbs 9:10 (Lamsa Translation)

King David loved the LORD with all his heart, but most of his years were spent in battle. When he wanted to build a temple for the LORD he was not permitted to do so. David was experiencing sorrows, testings, and lessons just as all the LORD's people do during their lives on earth.

King Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba and became heir to the throne after the deaths of his older half-brothers. He had been educated by the prophet Nathan. His reign was peaceful and prosperous and he was permitted to build the temple of Jehovah. The world marveled at his wisdom and great riches. Solomon was like the LORD's people in their heavenly glory—able to bless wisely from their abundant riches.

Solomon's fame spread throughout the civilized world. The Queen of Sheba, who lived in southern Arabia and was also very wealthy, came to visit him and see for herself. She was amazed at what she saw and said, "The half was not told me" (1 Kings 10:1-8 Lamsa Translation).

After Nathan's death, Solomon turned to the ways of the heathen gods. Therefore God took away from him the privilege of having the Messiah, Jesus, born of his line of descendants.

Jesus was the perfect son of God and much wiser than Solomon. Strangely, the people of Palestine did not appreciate Jesus. They wanted a great warrior, a strong athlete, a rich king, a clever ruler. They heard Jesus, a poor carpenter's son, talking about flowers and fish and ordinary people and very few were impressed.

The "eyes" of our understanding must be opened to be able to truly appreciate spiritual things (Matthew 13:16). Only then can we see the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God.

Only a few will have their eyes opened at the present time (during the Gospel Age). In the kingdom all people will know of the love, wisdom and great riches of God and his dear Son. They will then worship them in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

King Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba!

The people of Israel rejected Jesus at his first advent!

The Temple

"The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."—1 Corinthians 3:17

King David greatly desired to build the temple, the house of the LORD, but God did not permit him to do so because of the wars and bloodshed that occurred during his reign (1 Chronicles 22:8). King David represented the church members while they are here on earth.

King Solomon, who represented the church members after they have been glorified, did build the temple of God. His peaceful rule foreshadowed the reign of Christ in the Millennial Age.

The tabernacle in the wilderness represented God's temporary home with the Israelites. Later on the temple was built in its place and this let the people know God would always dwell with his people.

What is the difference between a tabernacle and a temple? A tabernacle is a temporary structure and a temple is a permanent structure.

The tabernacle represents the church during the Gospel Age, for this is their temporary home while they are being prepared and built up as a spiritual temple.

The temple represents the church in glory. Solomon's temple took thousands of workers seven years to complete. It was erected without the sound of a hammer, ax, or any tool of iron (1 Kings 6:7). Just so, each member of the church is being fitted and polished for a place in the spiritual temple unbeknownst to those around them.

The temple was a beautiful place to pray and worship God away from the busy noises of the world. It was holy, set apart from the world for the worship of Jehovah. It was beautiful and glorious, and built to last forever.

But Solomon's temple was destroyed in 606 B.C. when the Chaldeans conquered Judah. Much later, in Jesus' day, King Herod built another temple of great splendor on the same site. It, too, now lies in ruins.

The followers of Christ Jesus are being shaped for a place in God's spiritual temple. Just as David spent his lifetime fighting the enemies of God (for instance, the Philistines), so the saints spend their lives fighting sins in the world and in their lives. All of God's faithful saints will be "living stones" in the temple of the LORD! (1 Peter 2:4, 5 Diaglott).

David was not permitted to build the temple because he was a man of war!

The church is a spiritual temple of God!

Elijah and The Priests Of Baal

**"If the LORD be God, follow him."—1 Kings
18:21**

Elijah the Tishbite was a faithful servant and prophet of God. At that time Ahab was the king of Israel. His wife, Jezebel, who was exceedingly wicked, prayed to the gods of her father—Asherah, the goddess of wood represented in trees and wooden poles; and Baal, represented in stone pillars. She also brought hundreds of false prophets from her home in Tyre so they could teach the people to pray to them too. Worst of all, they killed the true prophets of Jehovah.

Elijah (whose name means "my God is Jehovah") boldly faced the powerful Ahab and told him there would be a great drought in the land for many years. This angered King Ahab and he sought to kill Elijah. But God was protecting the prophet and told him to hide near the brook Cherith where he sent ravens to feed him twice a day. Eventually the brook dried up. However, God continued to protect Elijah by sending him to the home of a widow and her little son who were almost out of food. Through Jehovah's power, Elijah caused her containers of meal and oil to stay full until the rains returned. Later, he restored the widow's son to life after he had died of an illness.

Finally Elijah returned to Israel, not to surrender to the king, but to show the people that Jehovah is the true God. He called together over eight hundred priests and prophets of Baal and told them to prepare a sacrifice to their god. Elijah also built an altar and a bullock was placed on each altar. Elijah and the priests would each pray for their gods to consume the sacrifices with fire.

All day long the heathen priests called upon Baal to accept their sacrifice. There was no response. The prophets called loudly and leaped up and down at the altar. Finally they cut themselves with knives, shedding much blood. Still Baal did not answer.

Elijah had several barrels of water poured upon his sacrifice until it was completely soaked! Then Elijah prayed to Jehovah and immediately fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, and even licked up the water in the trench around the altar. The people fell on their faces before Jehovah, convinced that he was the true God. All the priests and prophets of Baal were killed and the rains returned to water the earth.

***Elijah was
miraculously
fed by
ravens
twice a day!***

***Fire
consumed
Elijah's
sacrifice
even
though it
was
doused
with water!***

Zedekiah: Last King of The Davidic Line

"I will raise up for David a righteous Heir, and he shall reign over the kingdom."—Jeremiah 23:5 (Lamsa Translation)

King Saul of Israel did not remain faithful to the LORD and, as a result, his kingdom was given to David. King David was beloved of the LORD who promised him that the great Millennial king, the Messiah, would be one of his descendants.

For several centuries all of Israel's kings were of David's family. Some of the kings were good, many were bad. The last king of the Davidic line was Zedekiah. He was so evil that the LORD God said of him: "You . . . impious (without reverence) and wicked prince of Israel, your fate has come upon you in the hour of final punishment. . . . Ruin! Ruin! I will bring about such ruin as never was before, until the rightful sovereign (ruler) comes. Then I will give him (Messiah) all" (Ezekiel 21:25-27 New English Bible).

When God took his kingdom from Zedekiah he told him that he would be taken a prisoner to Babylon and that he would never see Babylon! Both of these prophecies came true. When Zedekiah was taken prisoner, his eyes were put out and he entered Babylon a blind man.

Now God allowed the Gentiles (non-Jews) to have dominion (rulership) over the nations. The lease of power would last for 2,520 years—from 606 B.C. (when Zedekiah lost his throne) to 1914 A.D.

In Bible symbolism each day represents a year. The Jewish year had twelve months of thirty days each. Thus, each year represented three hundred and sixty years. There would be a complete overthrow of Israel's government for a period of "seven times" (Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24).

By multiplying 7x360 we can see that the period of time that the kingdom would be "ruined" (though not completely destroyed) would be 2,520 years. In October of 1914 World War I began. This marked the end of the Gentile times (the 2,520 years). World War I caused tremendous changes in all the governments of the world. They have been in a state of change ever since, with very few monarchs still reigning—and those who are have very little power.

Yes, the throne was taken from God's chosen people and the land lay desolate. But they were left with one hope: ". . . until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him" (Ezekiel 21:27).

Most of the kings of Judah were wicked, as was Zedekiah, their last king!

Gentile governments were to rule Israel for 2,520 years!

Jerusalem Desolated Seventy Years

"You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee . . . it shall be holy to you."—Leviticus 25:11, 12 (New American Standard Bible)

The Jewish nation was to keep a Sabbath every seven years when they would let the land rest for a full year (Leviticus 25:1-5). Every fiftieth year was a jubilee year. During this jubilee year these rules were to be followed:

- 1. Slaves were set free—liberty was proclaimed for all the Israelites who were in bondage to any of their countrymen.**
- 2. All debts were canceled—the land and other possessions were to be returned to those who had been compelled to sell them because of poverty.**
- 3. The land was to lay fallow (inactive)—no sowing, no reaping, no pruning of vineyards. Spontaneous (natural) growth was not to be reaped but left for the poor and the traveler (Leviticus 25:8-16).**

The Israelites, like many people, were selfish. They did not want to lose money on land they had acquired during the forty-nine years. So they only kept the jubilees halfheartedly, and eventually they did not keep them at all.

When Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took King Zedekiah and his people captive to Babylon, this conquering monarch destroyed Jerusalem and its temple with fire. The city lay desolate for seventy years. The city's desolation was God's punishment upon the Israelites for not properly keeping their jubilee years.

The Israelites did not understand how important it was to keep the jubilees, that it was a picture of a grander time to come in God's plan.

The number seven is always closely connected with all of God's works and plans. It typifies perfection—and God will eventually have all things to be perfect. This will be after the times of restitution, which is a time when all mankind will come back in the resurrection and learn to live in accordance with God's laws in the Millennial Age (Isaiah 35). How wonderful to think of a perfect earth filled with perfect people! This was God's plan from the beginning.

Israel was punished 70 years for not keeping the Jubilee!

Israel's Jubilee year pictures the promised "times of restitution!"

Daniel Interprets a Dream

“God gave to Daniel special ability in understanding the meanings of dreams and visions.”—Daniel 1:17 (Living Bible)

Daniel was a young Israelite who was taken captive to Babylon along with many others. He and three other captives were chosen to be trained for special jobs in the Babylonian government. They served well for that was their duty, but they continued to pray to the LORD and obey him, and live according to his commands for they loved God wholeheartedly.

One night King Nebuchadnezzar awoke from a terrible nightmare—he was trembling with fear. But in the morning he could not remember his dream except that it seemed very important. He became extremely angry with the “wise men” of Babylon (magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, etc.) because they could not tell him what his dream was or what it meant.

If he had been able to tell them the dream they would have guessed at its interpretation, but they could not easily explain something the king himself could not remember. The king was so furious with them that he ordered them all to be killed. Daniel and his companions would be included for they were among those who counseled the king.

The young men prayed for the LORD’s help and guidance. Daniel then had a dream in which God revealed Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and the interpretation of it. Daniel asked Arioch, the commander of the king’s guard, not to execute the “wise men” but to take him to Nebuchadnezzar and he would explain the dream.

This is what Daniel told the king: He had dreamed of a huge statue which had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron. The feet and toes were of iron mixed with clay. It was truly awesome!

Then a stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, was hurled at the feet of the statue and it fell to the ground. It was ground to powder and the wind carried it away. The stone grew until it became a great mountain and filled the whole earth!

Daniel explained that the head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar himself—king of Babylon. The kingdom of Medo-Persia was represented by the silver, Greece by the brass, and the Roman Empire by the iron legs. The iron and clay mixed showed that the Roman Empire would become divided. Each kingdom gave way to an inferior kingdom.

The stone which struck the statue represented the kingdom of God which will replace the governments of earth and stand forever (Daniel 2:44 New International Version).

Daniel was trained for a high position in the Babylonian government!

The dream Daniel interpreted showed over 2000 years of world history!

Daniel's Dream of Great Beasts

"The kingdom and dominion . . . shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High . . . an everlasting kingdom."—Daniel 7:27

God revealed many things to Daniel, for he faithfully served the LORD and openly worshiped him. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a great statue which represented the kingdoms of the world. Daniel also had a dream of earthly kingdoms.

The world looks upon the kingdoms of this world as great and powerful and glorious. The LORD, however, sees them as wicked and beastly.

In Daniel's dream Babylon was represented by a lion-like beast with eagles' wings—splendid, proud, ruler of all. The second beast was like a bear—big, heavy, stubborn, powerful—and represented Medo-Persia. The third beast was leopard-like—clever, sneaky, unreliable, deceitful—and represented the kingdom of Greece. The Roman Empire was represented by a fourth beast that could not be described—hideous and ferocious and extremely strong. It was so terrible it could not be compared with any other beast!

At first this last beast had ten horns (horns represent power). These horns compare to the ten toes on the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Then a small horn grew and replaced three of the ten horns—the Roman Empire was changing. Instead of being a pagan (heathen) kingdom of armies and false religions, it became Christian. But the Holy Roman Empire was just as wicked and ungodly as the pagan empire had been.

This change from pagan to Christian (in name only) was shown in Daniel's dream when another horn grew in size until the three little horns (the divisions of the old Roman Empire) were pushed out of the way.

While this fourth beast still exists, its power and influence have gradually lessened and, in due time, this beast will be destroyed. The cause of this fall will be the establishment of the fifth universal empire of the world, the Kingdom of God, under Christ and his church (Daniel 7:18).

The fifth kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all other dominions of the earth will learn its laws and obey them. What joy to look forward to this kingdom for which so many have prayed for so long—"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

What the king saw as glorious, Daniel saw as beastly!

The fourth beast of Daniel's vision still exists, though its power has lessened!

The Fall of Babylon

“So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire.”—Isaiah 55:11 (New American Standard Bible)

King Nebuchadnezzar became full of pride—he had a great statue erected of himself as earth’s ruler. Then he made a law that all the people had to bow down and worship it. The penalty for those who would not kneel to the statue was to be thrown into a burning fiery furnace.

Nebuchadnezzar had been very pleased with Daniel’s three Hebrew friends for they were excellent servants in the Babylonian kingdom. He did not expect their absolute refusal to worship the statue, but they loved God and were loyal to him. The king was furious and had the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and the three Hebrews were cast into it. Even the soldiers who bound them and threw them into the furnace were killed by the extreme heat (Daniel 3:20-22).

The king and his lords were amazed when another person was seen with the Hebrews walking around in the furnace—one “like unto the Son of God.” None of them was hurt or even singed! Nebuchadnezzar realized that their God was very powerful and commanded the people to worship him.

But Nebuchadnezzar was still full of pride because of his riches and power as the king of Babylon. He became insane and acted as though he were a beast. He lived with the animals in the fields and ate grass like cows. He remained that way for seven years before his reason returned.

Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson, became king of Babylon. He was also full of pride and arrogance. The kingdom was very rich and there was much idleness. All these things helped to bring about the fall of Babylon.

Belshazzar had a splendid feast for a thousand of his officers, which boasted of the greatness of Babylon. But while they were eating and drinking to Bel, the god of Babylon, the fingers of a man’s hand were seen writing upon the wall of the palace in letters of fire: “Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.” The king asked Daniel for an interpretation and what he heard was a crushing blow to him: “God has numbered your kingdom and brought it to an end. You are weighed in the balances and found wanting. Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians” (Daniel 5:26-28 Lamsa).

That very night Cyrus the Mede and his army marched into Babylon through the dried-up river bed and captured the city which the Babylonians thought was too strong to ever be taken. King Belshazzar was put to death and Cyrus became king!

The three Hebrews were not even singed in the fiery furnace!

Cyrus captured Babylon by marching his armies in through a dried-up river bed!

Kings Darius and Cyrus

"Praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble."—Daniel 4:37 (New International Version)

During the Israelites' seventy years of captivity in Babylon, four kings learned of the God of Israel. First was King Nebuchadnezzar who, when he returned from his insane life with the animals, lifted up his eyes to heaven and gave praise and honor to Jehovah, the God of Israel.

The second was King Belshazzar, who once had his wine served in the goblets stolen from God's temple and that very night was slain. This ended the Babylonian kingdom (Daniel 5:2-4, 30).

Third was King Darius, the Mede, who took the kingdom of Babylon that night, and who took Daniel as well. He wanted Daniel to be the first prince over all the princes and rulers of that kingdom.

Darius appreciated Daniel's honesty and grew to love him as a noble friend. But the princes and rulers were jealous and hated the king's favorite. Not only did they desire the favor of the king, but they could not steal from the empire's wealth with Daniel watching everything so carefully.

They plotted against Daniel, yet could find no fault in him. The only thing he did besides work long hours for the king was to pray to his God. Three times each day Daniel went to an upper room where it was quiet and restful. There he prayed to Jehovah God before an open window. Daniel was not ashamed to be seen praying to his God—also, others could realize that he was not pretending to pray to Darius. This was enough to have him thrown into the den of hungry lions! The story of his experience and rescue is found in Daniel 6.

The fourth was King Cyrus of Persia whose heart was stirred by Jehovah God to issue a proclamation giving all the Israelites liberty to return to Palestine. He also gave money and decreed that the precious vessels of the Lord's temple should be returned.

About fifty thousand Israelites went back to Palestine. This was not very many out of the great number who had been captured. These fifty thousand remembered God's promises and wanted to live in the land he had promised them. They rebuilt the city, and in due time, the temple.

Daniel was an official in both the governments of Babylon and Media!

Daniel risked death by continuing to pray publicly!

The Valley of Dry Bones

“They shall live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where their fathers lived; there shall they live . . . for all time.”—Ezekiel 37:25 (Moffatt Translation)

Ezekiel, the priest, was used of the LORD to prophesy as was Daniel. The faithful Israelites yearned to know about their future as a nation—what were God’s plans for his chosen people? Daniel had worked in the heathen palace and witnessed for the LORD to the Babylonians, but Ezekiel taught his own people and lived among them.

The elders of Israel came to Ezekiel to learn God’s will. They had obeyed the prophets of the LORD in peacefully surrendering to Nebuchadnezzar and being taken captive to Babylon. But they longed to return to their homeland.

The power of the LORD caused Ezekiel to see a vision. In that vision the prophet saw a valley full of dry bones. He knew these bones were like the nation of Israel—scattered throughout Babylon, their hopes dead (Ezekiel 37:1-6).

As Ezekiel walked among the bones (in the vision), he wondered if they could ever live again—could the nation of Israel ever be restored? The vision showed that the day would come when the scattered bones would come together to form a full skeleton. The breath of life would enter that body and it would live again. Yes, the nation of Israel would live again!

This would happen at a time of great commotion—thunder and earthquakes—picturing that God would restore Israel during the time of trouble at the end of the Gospel Age (Daniel 12:1-4).

Evidence that the bones had come together to form a skeleton came in 1948 when Israel was recognized as a nation. Near the end of the Gospel Age the LORD brought the dry bones back from where they had been scattered for so many centuries! This was not a resurrection from the dead, but of the “dead hopes” of the Israelites.

But the prophecy’s fulfillment had only just begun—the complete fulfillment belongs to a future time, to the Millennial Age, when God will remove the stony hearts of the people and replace them with new hearts of flesh. This will not be an instantaneous work. It will come about gradually through the troubles and afflictions of the “day of wrath.” By instructions in righteousness and blessings from the LORD, the transformation to hearts of flesh will take place (Ezekiel 11:19).

Ezekiel saw Israel as a valley of dead and dried bones!

Israel has been coming back to life, and in 1948 was recognized as a nation!

The Logos Made Flesh

"The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth."—John 1:14 (The Jerusalem Bible)

Long before Jesus lived on the earth, he was in the heavens as a spirit being with his father, Jehovah God. He is called the *Logos*, which means *word* or *mouth-piece*. It is a Greek word.

The scriptures also call him the *Alpha* and *Omega* (Revelation 21:6), which means the *first* and the *last*. He was the first and last work of God's creation (Revelation 22:13).

The Logos created marvelous worlds and creatures, always according to the great Creator's instructions. The Logos had more power and skill than anyone but God himself. He never worked against God's plans and he took great pleasure in doing God's will.

This dear son of God, the Logos, is described in Colossians 1:15-18 as the image of God, God's firstborn, the creator of all things in heaven and earth (see New International Version). Although the Logos was a spirit being, he was not immortal—he *could* die.

Even in that long ago time the Logos said he would come to earth as a human baby and grow up to be a perfect man (human being) for the purpose of laying down that human life for Adam. This would take away the sentence of death that was upon Adam, and because of him, upon every person who has ever lived.

Had the Logos been immortal he could not have died in Adam's place. To be immortal means that one would have life within himself—not dependent on anyone or anything else for his existence.

Jehovah God and the Logos loved each other very much—together they created the universe and all that is in it! One of the most loving things they did was to create man (Genesis 1:26). How sad it would make them feel when Adam disobeyed the admonition not to eat the fruit of a certain tree. However, the heavenly Father knew that Adam would fail the test of obedience and had already arranged for his redemption.

The Logos was willing to give up the honor and glory that he had in the heavens and the close association with his Father because he loved mankind. He humbled himself to take on a nature a little lower than the angelic (2 Corinthians 8:9).

In John 17:5 Jesus prayed only to be restored to the life he had had with his Father as the Logos. But because he had fulfilled all the requirements and remained faithful, the Heavenly Father rewarded him with the glory and honor of the divine, or immortal, nature!

***Before
Jesus was
born he
was a spirit
being,
called "The
Logos!"***

***As the
Logos,
Jesus was
not
immortal, or
he could not
have died
for mankind!***

Tidings of Great Joy

"I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone!"—Luke 2:10 (Living Bible)

The Logos was rich in spiritual privileges, glory and honor, yet for our sake he became poor, giving up everything he had as a perfect spirit being. God transferred his life principle to Mary's womb. Mary provided and nourished the baby's body and God provided the life spark. When Jesus was born the angels rejoiced to announce his birth to the shepherds—they knew this was the Logos made flesh.

God's law is very exact: "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth . . ." (Deuteronomy 19:21). A *perfect human life* would have to die to redeem Adam (a perfect human life), for he had disobeyed God and was sentenced to death. This life could not be that of a fallen human (as all were sinners and therefore imperfect) nor could it be that of an angel. It had to be a perfect man just as Adam was before he sinned (1 Timothy 2:6; Psalm 49:7).

Since there was no perfect human being to take Adam's place in death, God prepared a perfect human body so the life principle of the Logos could be born as a baby, the baby of a faithful young Jewish woman named Mary. He was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners.

The baby was named Jesus. No longer could he be the Logos, for he was no longer a spirit being but a dear little baby boy—a perfect human life. And that baby would grow up to be the man Christ Jesus. At thirty years of age he would reach maturity according to Jewish Law. At that time he could offer himself as a sacrifice for Adam and become the Savior of the whole human race! The word *savior* means *life-giver*.

We know that the angel's prophecy of "peace on earth, good will to men" has not yet been fulfilled. But we know that it *will* be fulfilled in God's due time, and all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Thus we see that the "good tidings" announced by the angels so long ago will, in due time, truly be "good tidings which shall be to **all people!**" What wonderful blessings God has in store for all mankind because of his great love for his earthly creation.

Jesus had a perfect human life to give for the perfect human life of Adam!

Jesus' birth will ultimately be "good news" to "all" people!

John the Forerunner

"It is of him [John] that the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, 'A voice crying aloud in the wilderness, "Prepare a way for the Lord, clear a straight path for him."'—Matthew 3:3 (New English Bible)

Lovely young Mary had her baby, Jesus, the most wonderful baby in all the world. Six months previously her cousin Elizabeth also had a child, John, and he too was used of the LORD. He became known as John the Baptist.

The overruling providences of God brought about the birth of John. Luke 1:5-25 will tell you all about it. He was the one who would point out to the people that the Messiah was near.

Luke 1:80 tells us that the child (John) grew and became strong in spirit. He had lived a very simple life in the desert, but a life that would help him in his work of ministering to the nation of Israel. Desert life would call for much courage and strength of character.

John was the last of the prophets of the Jewish Age. Jesus began a new age, the Gospel Age, which would see the development of the church class.

John believed God's promise that he would send someone to deliver Israel. He realized that the Messiah would come and sinners would not be able to receive his blessings. So John preached to the people, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And when some did repent (were sorry for their sins against the Law) John baptized them. It was as though their sins were washed away.

John's baptism was not intended for Gentiles for they were not under the Law of Moses and therefore could not sin against it.

John's baptism was not for faithful Jews (those who were striving to follow the Law), but for those Jews who cared nothing for the Law and constantly sinned against it.

John's baptism is not for Christians. Their baptism is for a very different purpose, and not to wash away their sins against the Law. Instead it shows a new life devoted to God.

When the nation of Israel left Egypt to follow Moses, it was a picture of baptism in the Gospel Age. The Israelites agreed to do God's will and follow Moses when they marched after him into the sea (which separated so they could pass over). Just so, Christians agree to do God's will and follow Jesus, leaving worldly pleasures, when they are baptized.

Jesus was six months younger than his cousin, John the Baptist!

John's baptism was not for Gentiles, but for repentant Jews!

The Baptism of Jesus

"I have come to do your will, O God."—Hebrews 10:7 (New International Version)

Jesus presented himself to John to be baptized. This surprised John very much for he knew Jesus was a perfect man and did not need to repent (be sorry for) his sins, for he had none. John told him that he had more need for Jesus to baptize him. But Jesus only said, "Let it be so for now."

Jesus' baptism had a new and special meaning—it symbolized the full consecration of his life to God as a sacrifice, even to death. John did not understand, but did as Jesus asked and baptized him in the Jordan River. To the others who were there John said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29 New International Version).

John saw the holy spirit come upon Jesus in the form of a dove and he heard God speak, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

As Jesus came up out of the water, the heavenly truths became clearer for he had received the Holy Spirit and could understand the "deep things" (truths) of God (1 Corinthians 2:10). From the time Jesus was immersed at thirty years of age until he died on the cross three-and-a-half years later, he was being baptized. In other words, immersion in water is only the beginning of true baptism. It is a symbol of what is in the heart, the desire to do the Father's will (Luke 12:50). As Jesus was dying on the cross, he cried, "It is finished!" His baptism into death, begun at Jordan, was now completed.

Christians are baptized into Jesus' death (Romans 6:3). When a Christian is raised up from the water, it shows the "burial" of his personal desires forever. He now begins a new life completely dedicated to the Lord. This would be impossible to do on one's own, but Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection have guaranteed that all the help needed will be there.

Those who are baptized receive a portion of the holy spirit which will help them to understand and "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Baptism into death is the real baptism for the church, as it was for our Lord. Water baptism is only a symbol, or picture of it. Those who have willing, honest and teachable hearts will strive to follow in the footsteps of Jesus the rest of their lives. If they remain faithful in doing this they will share with him in the first resurrection.

Jesus' baptism symbolized a full consecration of his life to God!

When a Christian is baptized he begins a new life completely devoted to the Lord!

Gospel of the Kingdom

“O my God, bend down your ear and listen to my plea. Open your eyes and see our wretchedness . . .”—Daniel 9:18 (Living Bible)

For more than sixteen hundred years God's chosen people, the Israelites, had waited and prayed for a deliverer who would be greater than Moses. They looked for a king who would be greater than David (a man after God's own heart) or Solomon in all his glory.

Now the deliverer, the Messiah for whom they had looked for so long, was among them. John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2), Jesus (Matthew 4:17), and Jesus' followers (Luke 10:9, 11) told that the kingdom was at hand but most of the Jews did not believe their message.

Many were too busy to remember God's promises. Some were too selfish to fit into God's plan for a kingdom—they wanted rich and powerful rulers like the heathen emperors of their day. They did not want to follow a poor carpenter's son who did not even have a place to live (Matthew 8:20).

Jesus had come to his own people (the Jews) and they rejected him—indeed, they crucified him. But a few did understand and believe what Jesus was telling them. These were given the privilege of becoming sons of God (Hebrews 3:1-6).

God's people were like beloved, well cared for servants. They remembered Moses as their greatest leader and knew that they should serve God by obeying, to the best of their ability, the laws he had given to Moses.

Now these faithful and obedient ones could be more than favored and protected servants. Now they could become sons of God, of the house of sons, brethren of Jesus, joint-heirs of the kingdom! At Pentecost they received God's holy spirit—the power and understanding they needed to work with God.

The offer to the Jews was taken away because there were not enough who were worthy of becoming part of the church. The invitation then went out to the Gentiles. When the number of the church (144,000) is complete, no more will be called to become a part of it (Revelation 14:1). They are called a “little flock” and they will reign with the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) in the kingdom.

When the work of gathering out a church class has been completed, the Gospel Age ends, the blindness of Israel is removed, and the blessings of the Millennial Age will come to the whole world!

Most of the Jews did not believe the message of Jesus and his followers!

Jesus opened up the opportunity for believers to become sons of God!

Parables of the Kingdom

**“The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those who do not know the secret, everything remains in parables.”—
Mark 4:11 (Phillips Translation)**

Jesus is considered a great and remarkable teacher even by many who are not Christians. One of his methods of teaching was to tell parables. There are about thirty parables in the New Testament.

Parables are short, fictitious stories that illustrate a moral lesson or religious principle. It is a comparison of two objects for the purpose of teaching. They are also called fables or proverbs.

Teaching with parables was done so that only a few would understand the message. Jesus taught the deepest truths of the kingdom in these interesting stories. We can read and study them and gain a much better understanding of the plans and purposes of God.

The parable of the king's son in Matthew 22:2-10 tells us that the Jews had the first invitation to receive the highest place in the kingdom. After that, because there were many positions left, the invitation went out to the Gentiles.

In those days wedding guests had to wear a “wedding garment” (Matthew 22:11-14); it was provided with the invitation. The man who removed his robe (wedding garment) was thrown out of the wedding party!

This story shows that those who reject Christ's sacrifice as an atonement for their sins will have the light of truth taken away from them. They will lose their opportunity to become a part of the Church. Those who wish to have a part in the marriage of the bride (church) and the bridegroom (Christ) must wear the robe of Christ's righteousness, which is invisible! It is a symbolic robe that Jesus' death provided his followers to cover their sinful flesh. This is called justification which means “to make right.”

In Matthew 13:46 we read about the “pearl of great price.” The pearl illustrates the priceless value of the kingdom—it has a value beyond all price! It is worth its cost—everything that we have!

The parable of the talents shows that those who are followers of Jesus are stewards (masters or caretakers) over the talents they have. Each disciple should be faithful in using even one talent to the best of his or her ability in the Lord's service (Matthew 25:14-29).

Even many who are not Christians consider Jesus a great teacher!

Each parable told a specific lesson to those who were willing to accept them!

Two Parables

“And He spoke many things to them in parables.”—Matthew 13:3 (New American Standard Bible)

Read Luke 15:11-32. The man in this parable represented God, the older son the Jewish religious leaders, and the younger son the Jews who were careless of their spiritual privileges. Many of these careless Jews repented (were sorry for) their sins and were baptized by John.

When the prodigal son saw the error of his ways, after having recklessly spent all of his inheritance, he wished to return to his father's home as a servant. The father not only welcomed him and forgave him but gave a great feast in his honor.

The proud older brother (who represented the scribes, Pharisees, and doctors of the Law) did not want to share his father's wealth and love. However, the father was just and forgiving, and extremely happy to have his second son home again.

These are the gifts the father gave to his prodigal son: a beautiful robe (picturing the robe of Christ's righteousness), an expensive ring (showing God's influence and power and favor), shoes (sandals of peace), and a fattened calf (as in the Tabernacle sacrifices, showing forgiveness.)

Those people represented by the older brother were outwardly righteous in following the Law but were actually self-righteous, and full of pride and jealousy.

The same lesson is found in another interesting parable: Luke 16:19-31. The Jewish nation was represented by Dives, the rich man. His table was loaded with rich, elegant foods, representing the rich promises of God. The Jews were the only ones to have these promises at that time.

Lazarus, the poor beggar, who wanted only to eat of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, represented the Gentile nations. The Gentiles were very poor as to spiritual promises. But the rich man died and the great blessings went to the Gentile nations for God's favor was no longer for the Jews only! They (the Gentiles) could now be invited to become part of the church class. Lazarus also died, picturing the end of his condition in God's disfavor.

There are many more pictures in this parable, and in the other parables. Remember, they are not true stories, but only stories made up to show lessons that Jesus wanted his disciples to learn.

*The
“prodigal
son” was a
picture of
the
publicans
and sinners
in Israel!*

*In the “rich
man and
Lazarus,”
the beggar
represented
the Gentiles!*

Awakening

"All were weeping and bewailing her; but He said, Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing well that she was dead."—Luke 8:52, 53 (Amplified Bible)

Jairus' only daughter, a girl of about twelve, had died. Jesus assured Jairus and the people gathered around that the child was only "asleep." He took her hand and she awakened!

When the brother of Mary and Martha died, Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep." Yet Jesus waited four days before awakening him—his body had already started to decay! (John 11:11-14 New International Version).

It is interesting to note that Lazarus (and the others) said nothing about where they were or what they felt during the time that they were dead. Surely they could have described a beautiful heavenly home if they had been there, or tried to warn others if they had been in a fiery hell.

David is said to have slept with his fathers (1 Kings 2:10). In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15 Paul speaks of those who have "fallen asleep" in death. The word *sleep* has long been used to describe the death condition. Abraham "slept" with his fathers who were heathen.

While death and sleep are not exactly alike, yet they are much the same. When you are asleep you know nothing of what is happening around you. Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10 and Psalm 146:4 describe death in just that way.

When a man or beast loses the breath of life he is dead. It is a condition of quietness or unconsciousness—it is the absence of life. Mankind was promised an awakening from the sleep of death in the resurrection. Life on the human plane was lost in Eden but will be restored in the next age (Luke 19:10).

Jesus awakened only a very few of those who died. This was to illustrate the resurrection in the Millennial Age which will last forever, if man is obedient to God's laws.

We see then that when people die they are not alive anywhere—they are "asleep in Jesus" in the sense that he is their promised Savior and Redeemer whose sacrifice (the ransom) provided a way for their future awakening (Daniel 12:2). What a wonderful promise!

***Those
whom
Jesus
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said
nothing of
their time in
death!***

***The Bible
describes
death as a
sleep from
which you
expect to
awake!***

Judgment

"I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you [Capernaum]."—Matthew 11:24 (Moffatt Translation)

Jesus performed most of his miracles in the city of Capernaum, yet today it is only a ruin. This fulfills Jesus prophecy in Matthew 11:23 (New International Version). The people of Capernaum had been given many privileges and blessings from the LORD which meant they had a responsibility to use them wisely.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had not received such great blessings and so not as much was expected from them (Matthew 11:21). These cities were notoriously wicked and unholy, yet the scripture assures us that they would have repented had they had the light and knowledge given to those of Capernaum.

The first judgment day was in Eden—Adam was tested and he failed. Because of his failure, Father Adam was sentenced to death and this plunged all of mankind into death also. If Jesus had not provided his life a ransom for the life of Adam, thus releasing him and all his progeny (children, offspring) from the death sentence, they would have stayed in the death condition forever!

The Day of Judgment (Millennial Age) is not a twenty-four hour day but a thousand-year day (2 Peter 3:8) in which all the world will be tested and judged worthy or unworthy of everlasting life. This includes all who lived in Sodom or Gomorrah and other cities destroyed because of their excessive sinfulness.

An individual will be judged only after being given every possible opportunity to do that which is right in God's sight. Satan's influences will be done away with and every help and blessing will be made available so that obedience to the laws of the kingdom will be much easier.

Those who become Jesus' footstep followers during the Gospel Age are released from the punishment which had come upon Adam for his disobedience to God's laws. The followers, the little flock, have their own time of testing before the world's great day of judgment.

When the 144,000 are given their reward of immortal life they will become heavenly judges with Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:2). Remembering God's mercy and love in their own experiences, they will be able to help the resurrected population to learn the ways of righteousness so that they may gain everlasting life on earth.

Both the citizens of Capernaum and Sodom will be brought back to life!

God does not judge an individual until he has had every opportunity to do right!

Second Death

“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”—Matthew 25:34 (New International Version)

The parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46) pictures kingdom conditions after the church class has been glorified in heaven. It is the only one of Jesus' parables which explains the work of the kingdom after it has been set up.

All people of all nations, including those who are now asleep in death, will be on trial before The Christ (Jesus and his church) during the thousand years of the Millennial Age.

Their true desires will be determined—whether or not they are willing to come into full harmony with God and the laws of the kingdom.

The sheep in the parable represent the people who willingly learn of the love and righteousness of the Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, and strive to obey the laws of the kingdom. These people will gradually come into harmony with the laws; because they do, they will be judged worthy of everlasting life—to live forever on the perfected earth! Like sheep, they are meek and willing to be led to the “pastures” of truth and righteousness.

The goats, (which are not nearly as numerous as the sheep), on the other hand, will show their stubborn and self-willed ways and refuse to receive the instruction which would give them everlasting life. Since they make no attempt to change their sinful ways, they will be judged worthy of second death or destruction—being cut off from life (Ezekiel 18:4).

Many scriptures use fire as a symbol of destruction. God never intended for mankind to think of fire as his punishment for sin. He is a God of love and mercy and would never torture any creature forever in such a terrible way.

Because fire destroys things so completely, the Bible often uses it to show total destruction. The garbage dump of Jerusalem was in the Valley of Hinnom, where a fire was kept burning constantly. Not only was garbage thrown into it, but also dead animals and even the bodies of vicious criminals whom no one had bothered to bury. The Valley of Hinnom was also called Gehenna, often mistranslated “hell” in the scriptures. Gehenna represents the second death from which there will be no redemption—not coming back to life ever again.

The parable of the sheep and goats pictures conditions in the kingdom!

Fire is a symbol of destruction, not a picture of punishment!

Illustrations of the Kingdom

“Our Heavenly Father . . . May your kingdom come, and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”—Matthew 6:10 (Phillips Translation)

Jesus and his disciples taught others about the kingdom through parables and by performing miracles. The miracles were a sample of what is to happen in the kingdom. Just as many of the Old Testament stories were pictures of things to come, so the miracles, too, were pictures or foreshadows of the kingdom blessings.

Instead of only a few people being healed in the kingdom, all the diseased and disabled of mankind will be healed. Deaf ears will hear, the blind will see, etc. (Isaiah 35:5, 6).

Leprosy is a picture of sin. When Jesus healed the ten lepers only one returned to thank him. Only a few in this age appreciate that Jesus died to save all the world from sin (Luke 17:11-17).

The healing of the sick represented the fact that in the kingdom all diseases (physical, mental, moral) will be healed by the “Good Physician.” God’s work in Christ is to save the whole world from sin.

The opening of the blind eyes and the deaf ears represented the opening of the eyes and ears of understanding in the kingdom. Then mankind will realize how much God loves them and the wonderful provisions he has made for everyone.

Our Lord’s transfiguration on the mountain was another illustration of the kingdom. Transfiguration means that while Jesus’ appearance seemed to change, it did not actually do so. It was a vision, or picture, of himself as the glorified divine being he would become.

Peter, James, and John, who were with him, could see the vision as had been promised in Matthew 16:28. They also heard the voice of God, “This is my beloved Son . . . hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5)

Moses and Elias, who had been dead for a long time, were also seen in the vision. Moses represented the Law and the Ancient Worthies who will be princes in all the earth. Elias represented the heavenly phase of the kingdom, the church class. The vision assures us that the kingdom *will* come in due time!

***Jesus’
miracles
illustrated
far greater
ones to
come in his
kingdom!***

***When
Jesus was
transfigured
on the
mountain, it
provided a
vision of
the
kingdom!***

Hosanna in the Highest

“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!”—John 12:13 (New International Version)

When it was nearing the end of Jesus' ministry he visited his good friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, in Bethany. (This was the same Lazarus whom Jesus had awakened from the sleep of death). He had often been a guest in their home and had been a blessing to them.

To express her appreciation, Mary took an alabaster box of a very expensive ointment (perfume) and poured it on Jesus' head and on his feet, wiping them with her hair. A wonderful fragrance filled the room. The alabaster box represented our hearts, and the sweet perfume represented good wishes, kindness and love toward all, and especially to Christ and the church.

The disciple Judas criticized Mary. He suggested the perfume be sold and the money given to the poor. However, Jesus was pleased with Mary's token of love and devotion, and said it was an anointing for his burial. He knew that not many days would pass before he would be taken from them and it would be too late to give him any earthly gift.

The next day he sent for a donkey and rode into Jerusalem, as was the custom of Israel's kings. The multitude of people hailed him as the Messiah (Savior). They scattered clothing and palm branches before him as they shouted: “Hosanna to the son of David. . . . Hosanna in the highest” (Matthew 21:9). Hosanna means praise, joy, and gratitude—similar to Hallelujah.

The Pharisees were very unhappy about the attention being given to Jesus and told him to stop the people from shouting. Jesus replied that they were fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 and if they did not shout the very stones would cry out!

The people thought Jesus would become a great earthly king who would destroy their enemies and they would no longer have to serve the Roman government.

But Jesus wept over the city. He knew his kingdom would not begin at that time and that the people would be sorely disappointed and many would be angry, so angry they would soon be clamoring for his death!

He went to the temple and saw merchants selling doves for sacrifices. The noise and bargaining were not like a place of prayer should be. There were huge profits being made from the market booths which went to enrich the family of the high priest. Jesus was greatly offended and drove the money changers out of the temple.

***Our hearts
are our
alabaster
boxes of
praise for
the Lord!***

***The people
mistakenly
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earthly king!***

The Cost of the Kingdom

“Strait [difficult] is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life., and few there be that find it”—Matthew 7:14

As Jesus was walking along the road a young man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. This rich young ruler was living a very good life, obeying the Law to the best of his ability. This was merely his duty as no one has a right to live a bad life.

He was a Jewish religious leader and was well acquainted with the Law. He realized that he was lacking in some way and asked Jesus, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” He had recognized something good and true in Jesus and knew of the things he had been teaching.

Jesus told him to keep his commandments. The Law promised eternal life to any Hebrew who would keep it. The young man had always tried to be pleasing to God and replied, “Teacher . . . All these things I have kept since I was a boy.”

The young man probably felt quite satisfied that he had done all he could, yet something was missing in his life and so he asked “What do I still lack?” He knew he was not perfect, that something was the matter, and he wanted to know what to do to gain eternal life.

Jesus loved the young man for he showed earnestness and humility in coming to him in a public manner. Jesus responded “There is still one thing you lack, . . . Sell all you have and give the money to the poor—it will become treasure for you in heaven—and come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21, Living Bible).

The young man's face fell and he went away very sad for he had great wealth and was unable to consider giving up his luxurious way of life. He did not realize that Jesus meant that he should use his riches in the best ways he could to help others, not that he would have to sell everything he owned all at once. The rewards of following the Lord would be far greater and richer than any of his material possessions.

The parable of the camel going through the eye of the needle illustrates perfectly what Jesus was talking about (Matthew 19:23, 24 New International Version). The “needle's eye” was a small gate in the walls of ancient cities. After sundown the main gates were closed. A camel could enter the small gate on its knees as long as all its burdens were first removed. We, too, must remove all that is unnecessary in our lives if we would follow the Lord.

For the Jew, keeping God's Law was the way to eternal life!

A camel had to kneel down to get through the “needle's eye” gate into the city!

The Memorial Supper

“. . . Christ our passover (lamb) is sacrificed (slain) for us.”—1 Corinthians 5:7

Five days before the Jewish Passover, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, offering himself as Israel's king.

The Feast of the Passover was celebrated every year for seven days, beginning with the fifteenth day of the first month (Nisan). It reminded the Jews of Moses leading the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt many years before. It was also a picture of the passing over, or sparing from death, of the firstborn of that nation. They were all subject to death because of the tenth plague upon Egypt unless they were under the blood which had been sprinkled on the doorposts and lintels of their homes. It was an event that marked the birth of the nation of Israel. Passover is still celebrated to this day.

Jesus would become the Passover lamb to fulfill the picture of the first Passover. Jesus and his followers ate the Passover supper each year. The last time Jesus was with them and they had finished their meal of lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread, Jesus gave them a new way to commemorate (observe). In place of the Passover he started the Memorial Supper.

Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take eat: this is [represents] my body, which is broken for you . . ." (1 Corinthians 11:24). Then he took the cup of wine (fruit of the vine, grape juice), gave thanks, and passed it to each disciple, saying, "Take, drink of it, all of you" (Matthew 26:27 Lamsa). He said it represented his blood which was to be shed for the remission (forgiveness) of sins.

Jesus' followers are to do this each year in remembrance of his death. They must realize in their hearts that Jesus' death is the ransom, the corresponding price for the sins of the whole world.

They are invited to lay down their lives in sacrifice and develop a new creature (new mind) which, if they remain faithful, would receive a spirit body in the kingdom. They will become members of the church and live and reign over the earth with our Lord Jesus Christ for a thousand years! (Revelation 20:4).

The lives of the church class are not necessary to redeem the world, but God has a great reward (the divine nature) for those who eagerly walk in their Master's footsteps, sacrificing all they have (time, money, talent, strength, etc.) until death.

***The
"Passover
lamb" was
another
picture of
Jesus being
sacrificed
for mankind!***

***Each year
we
remember
Jesus'
death by
participating
in the
Memorial
Supper!***

Behold the Man

“. . . Pilate . . . said to them, See, I bring Him out to you so that you may know that I find no fault (crime, cause for accusation) in Him.”— John 19:4 (Amplified Bible)

When the supper was finished, Jesus went with eleven of his apostles to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. While they were there, Judas (the twelfth apostle) came to Jesus with a band of men armed with swords. They took Jesus to the high priest, Caiaphas. The chief priest and all the council wanted to have Jesus put to death and accused him of many things.

Then they took him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman ruler of Judea. Pilate realized that Jesus was a good man and that the Jewish chief priests were wanting him killed for their own selfish reasons (Mark 14:55).

Just the week before, Jesus had ridden on a donkey into Jerusalem and the people hailed him as a king. They thought that the Romans would surely put Jesus to death for that!

Learning that Jesus was from Galilee, Pilate tried to get rid of the responsibility of condemning a man he believed to be innocent. He sent him to King Herod, Tetrarch (ruler) of Galilee. But Herod was fearful of dealing with Jesus for he had heard about the miracles he had performed, so he sent Jesus back to Pilate.

Pilate did not like the Jews but he did like this man they had brought to him. Hoping to avoid more trouble from the Jews, Pilate tried to satisfy them by having Jesus scourged (whipped). But this did not satisfy the mob and they cried, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Jesus was not their idea of a king and conqueror. They expected one like Alexander the Great, one who would save them from their Roman captors. They despised him for his nonviolent ways and for the meekness, gentleness, patience, and love he expressed to everyone. They knew that many people were acclaiming him as the Son of God and that Jesus was warning them against dishonest and greedy priests. They wanted this stopped!

At Passover time it was customary to release one criminal from prison. Pilate offered the Jews their choice of releasing Jesus or Barabbas, a convicted criminal. The mob chose Barabbas! (Luke 23:13-25). Although Jesus could have asked God to free him from his captors, he knew that the cause for which he came (to save all mankind from death, Luke 19:10) would require his death and therefore made no attempt to escape.

The chief priests wanted to have Jesus put to death, so they falsely accused him!

Pilate did not want to have Jesus crucified, but felt he had no other choice!

The Crucifixion

"And He said to him, 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.'—Luke 23:43 (New American Standard Bible)

Pilate felt Jesus was innocent but gave orders to have him executed according to the wishes of the people. Crucifixion is a very cruel form of death,

The soldiers had taken Jesus' robe from him; they put a crown of thorns upon his head. They spat on him and mocked him unmercifully. His closest friends did not know what to do. Three times Peter denied that he even knew Jesus for he had lost his courage. Suddenly he heard a rooster crow and remembered that Jesus had told him that he (Peter) would do this. He was so ashamed that he ran out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:54-62).

Two thieves were crucified at the same time as Jesus, one on either side of him. Over the head of Jesus was a sign: "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." It was written in three languages and told of his "crime."

Jesus' enemies had heard of his miracles so they taunted him to come down off the cross. But Jesus trusted God completely and he knew his time to die had come in God's plan. Jesus willingly endured the cross even though he knew he could save his own life. Of course he knew that if he did not die he would never become the Savior of all mankind, and that was the purpose of his coming to earth!

One of the thieves scorned Jesus and said to him "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" The other thief scolded the first and said, "We are receiving what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." He then asked the Lord to remember him when he came into his kingdom.

Jesus answered him kindly, "Truly I say to you today, you shall be with me in Paradise." Notice that the comma in our theme text comes before "today" but here we have written it after "today." (See footnote on this verse in Lamsa Translation). Just one little comma, but what a big difference it can make!

The writers of the Bible used no punctuation; it was not invented until about four hundred years ago. We know it is not correct in this instance to put the comma before instead of after "today" because Jesus did not go to paradise the day he died, and neither did the thief. Paradise means "garden." The garden of Eden was but an illustration of when the earth would become perfect and beautiful in the Millennial Age!

"This is the King of the Jews" were the words over Jesus' head on the cross!

Jesus did not go to paradise that day, but promised that day that the thief would go to paradise!

The Empty Tomb

"It is sown a natural [physical] body; it is raised a spiritual body."—1 Corinthians 15:44

The hopes of the disciples were shattered. They had expected so much of the Lord; they had loved him dearly, and trusted his great wisdom and power. They were ready to follow him right into the kingdom. But now he was dead. Crucifixion! The shame of dying with criminals! They hardly knew what to do next.

The disciples were unable to understand spiritual things until Pentecost. They could not understand that Jesus had been resurrected and was now a spirit being—he was no longer a man, no longer flesh and blood. It was necessary that Jesus show himself to his followers so that they could realize that he was still alive, though of a different nature. As a spirit being he had the power to appear to them as a human being. They could see him, and eat and speak with him.

It was the third day after Calvary when Mary Magdalene went to the tomb with embalming spices and saw that the stone at the entrance had been moved away. She looked inside the sepulcher and saw an angel of the Lord who said, "Fear not . . . He is not here: for he is risen . . ." (Matthew 28:5, 6).

Mary spoke to Jesus but did not recognize him for he appeared to her as a gardener. But when he spoke she knew his voice. He explained that he had not yet ascended to his Father in heaven (John 20:17). He told Mary to tell the others what had happened.

Later that day, Cleopas and another disciple were walking to Emmaus and talking about the sad events of the last few days. Jesus joined them but they did not recognize him. As he walked with them, he explained many of the prophecies which foretold of his death and resurrection and why it was necessary for him to suffer before being glorified.

They were so interested in what Jesus was saying that they urged him to stay and eat with them. It was then that he made himself known to them and disappeared from their sight. His blessing went deep into their hearts and they said, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32 New International Version).

That evening many of the disciples gathered in the upper room; the doors were locked and bolted for fear of the Jews. They were discussing the amazing events of the day when suddenly Jesus was there with them! He appeared as the man they had known, but they were frightened. He calmed their fears and explained he had the power to materialize (1 Corinthians 15:46).

The disciples could not understand at that time why Jesus had to die!

On the road to Emmaus Jesus explained how his death was prophesied in the Old Testament!

No Longer Flesh

"Blessed be those who believe though they have never seen me."—John 20:29 (Moffatt Translation)

The Apostle Thomas thought his brethren had been too easily convinced that they had seen Jesus. He felt more proof was needed and said he would believe it only if he felt the nail prints in Jesus' hands and the spear wound in his side.

It was very important that the disciples believe that Jesus had been resurrected so they would have a basis for their faith. Most of the disciples realized that Jesus was with them by the tone of his voice or his manner of "breaking bread" (eating) or praying.

One evening they were gathered together when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst saying, "Peace be unto you." This time he looked like the Jesus they had known. He told them to touch him and he ate with them. This put them at their ease. He was able to explain many scriptures and reviewed the prophecies he had fulfilled. He showed them the reason and necessity for his miracles and his death (Luke 24:33-48).

He told Thomas to be convinced that it was he, Jesus, but also said that those who believed without those proofs were more blessed. Jesus appeared to his followers three times on his resurrection day and five times more during the next thirty-nine days. They realized Jesus had indeed risen and was now a spirit being, "highly exalted" (Philippians 2:9).

Judas Iscariot had been a traitor and thus lost his position as one of the twelve apostles. The word apostle means "one who is sent forth" or "a messenger." All the true followers of Jesus can be called apostles for they are sent forth to preach the good news of the kingdom to all nations. But there were to be twelve who were especially chosen to be apostles. Saul of Tarsus was selected to take the place of Judas.

After Pentecost, Jesus went to be with his Heavenly Father. Saul was on his way to Damascus when the glorified Jesus appeared to him. His glory and brightness were so overwhelming that it left Saul blinded. His name was later changed to Paul.

In a vision, the Lord spoke to Ananias (a disciple in Damascus) to go to Paul and explain to him the Lord's message, saying that Paul was to be a "chosen vessel," that is, chosen by God to become an apostle. As Ananias ministered to Paul the "scales" fell from his eyes and he could see, although never as well as before (Acts 9:18). Paul had been doing everything he could to destroy Christianity, but now was ready to lay down his life to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thomas demanded more proof that Jesus had really risen from the dead!

Saul of Tarsus took the place of Judas Iscariot as the twelfth apostle!

Pentecostal Rest

"It is only as a result of our faith and trust that we experience that rest . . ."—Hebrews 4:3 (Phillips Translation)

A part of the ancient Jewish Law required every fiftieth year to be a year of Jubilee (fiftieth anniversary). This meant that all those in bondage to their countrymen were freed, homes and lands were restored to their original owners, and the land was to lie fallow (that is, no crops were planted, giving the land a rest).

Leviticus 23:15, 16 (New English Bible) also speaks of a Jubilee day. This was the fiftieth day after the gathering of the sheaf of first-fruits, which was two days after Passover. It was a day of rejoicing and thanksgiving, later called Pentecost.

Just as the Jubilee year followed a cycle of seven times seven years, so the Jubilee day (Pentecost) followed a cycle of seven times seven days.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, the eleven apostles were instructed to stay in Jerusalem until they received power from on high. These eleven were the Lord's special representatives who would bring the message of the kingdom to others.

The eleven were in the upper room on Pentecost waiting in an attitude of prayer and expectancy and ready to fulfill their mission of "feeding" (teaching) Jesus' "sheep and lambs" (those who would believe and follow the Lord).

Acts 2:7 and 14 seem to indicate that others beside the eleven were present, since they were accustomed to meeting with the apostles.

The Pentecostal blessing was the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon those gathered, shown as a cloven (split) tongue of fire which "sat" upon the head of each disciple. With the rush of a mighty wind and the appearing of the flames, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit! This was the beginning of the development of the church. Jesus had completed his sacrifice for Adam and now, because God had accepted it, his blood was to be used on behalf of those who will become the church.

The only thing the apostles did during the time they awaited their own acceptance by God was the choosing of a successor for Judas Iscariot. However, God did not recognize their choice of Matthias and later selected Paul.

These twelve will be the twelve foundation stones in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14) and no more would ever be chosen.

The Day of Pentecost was a "Jubilee" day in Israel, celebrated with a great feast!

The Holy Spirit was given to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost!

Pentecostal Preaching

“And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.”—Joel 2:29

The unfaithful apostle, Judas, had killed himself in shame for having betrayed Jesus to his enemies. There were only eleven apostles until Paul was chosen to take Judas' place.

In Jerusalem, the eleven and many other disciples were given the Holy Spirit. They also received many miraculous gifts for the purpose of starting the Christian church. God gave to these humble Christians the talent of speaking in foreign languages so they could preach in various places and the people could understand them.

The crowds were amazed that they could understand the Galileans who were speaking to them in their own tongues (languages). Jesus' followers could also prophesy the future, heal the sick and the lame, and even raise some of the dead!

They taught the people about Jesus, the Savior, who had died and was resurrected so that all the world might have an opportunity for life in the kingdom.

There were many followers of the Lord at that time, both men and women; however, only the apostles were specially used of God. To them only Jesus said, “. . . whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19 Lamsa Translation). The words *bind* and *loose* were expressions used in those days which meant *forbid* and *permit*.

It was the apostles who were given this instruction and were enabled to understand which things of the Jewish Law were binding upon the church and which things were not. The apostles were God's mouthpieces, which meant that the things they spoke and wrote were authoritative. The Lord's overruling would make the apostles safe guides for his church. The instruction was given only to the twelve and does not apply to any other person at any time.

Peter was told in Matthew 16:19 he would receive the keys of the kingdom. These were symbolic keys which Peter could use to open the door of the kingdom message, to the Jewish nation first. Three and a half years after Jesus' death he would use the second key to open the door to the Gentiles. The first Gentile convert to membership in the body of Christ, the church, was Cornelius.

The disciples were given the ability to speak in foreign languages so they could preach everywhere!

The apostles were specially given as guides to the new church!

The Apostle Paul

"I have chosen him [Paul] to be the means of bringing my Name before the Gentiles . . . as well as before the sons of Israel."—Acts 9:15 (Moffatt Translation)

As the early church grew, deacons were selected to share the work of caring for the needs of the brethren (Acts 6:1-6).

Stephen, a deacon, "full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people" (Acts 6:8). He was stoned to death for his beliefs. A man named Saul was present at the stoning, holding the cloaks of the assailants. Stephen was the first to die as a Christian martyr.

Saul thought he was helping the Lord's cause by consenting to the stoning and putting away many others in prison because they loved Jesus and were faithful to tell others about him.

Saul was very sincere and zealous about what he was doing—he believed it was God's will. When Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, he explained where Saul was wrong and what a privilege he would have by following God's true teachings. Because Saul's heart was right, he was converted to Christianity and spent the rest of his life serving God. His zeal and faith were so great he was chosen to be the twelfth apostle! He had more visions and revelations than the others and wrote many letters to the churches which became books of the New Testament. These fourteen letters are called epistles.

On his first missionary journey, Saul's name was changed to Paul. He was the apostle to the Gentiles, going into many countries preaching the gospel. Never does he (or any of the others) teach of a fiery hell or torment for anybody. He emphasized that Jesus must come a second time, and then reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. He taught the resurrection of the just and the unjust, and many other doctrines.

The power of the truth in Paul's life was great and we are richer in learning and faith because of the abundance of his writings.

Paul made many missionary journeys. He suffered greatly because of his fearless and courageous preaching, writings, and travels. He laid down his life every day in the service of God—having been stoned, beaten, starved, frozen, shipwrecked, almost drowned, and finally beheaded.

Even though Paul had never met Jesus in the flesh, his conversion was complete and his life one of self-sacrifice! What an example he was to all the followers of Jesus Christ throughout the Gospel Age.

Saul thought he was doing God service by persecuting the Christians!

On his first missionary journey, Saul's name was changed to Paul!

The Apostle Peter

“. . . And you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root . . .”—Romans 11:17 (New International Version)

Cornelius, a Gentile, prayed to God and respected him, but he was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He knew about Jesus and wanted to follow him and to do God's will, but that way had not yet been opened to him or to any other Gentile.

An angel of the Lord appeared to Cornelius in a vision. He told Cornelius that God had heard his prayers and that he should find a man named Peter who would explain God's will to him. So Cornelius sent two of his servants to the house of Simon the tanner where Peter was staying.

In the meantime, God instructed Peter about Cornelius. Up until this time God had dealt with the Jewish people only. But now, three and a half years after Jesus' death on the cross, God's invitation to become part of the church class was to be extended to the Gentiles. Cornelius would be the first Gentile convert.

This was a new concept to Peter and the others for they had been forbidden by the Law to have close friends among the Gentiles or to marry into their families. Had the Jews been faithful to become followers of Jesus Christ, the entire church would have been selected from among them. However, comparatively few responded to the call and so the way was opened to the Gentiles as soon as the full time of the Jewish Age was completed.

Peter learned through a vision that God's instructions to the Gentiles were to change. Peter saw a great sheet come down from heaven which contained many different four-footed beasts, all of which had always been forbidden for Jews to eat as they were considered unclean. Now God was telling Peter to kill and eat them. This happened three times. While Peter thought about the vision and was still feeling doubtful, three men came to summon him to go to the house of Cornelius. Peter and several other men from Joppa went to Cornelius' home immediately.

They found Cornelius and his family eagerly awaiting to hear what Peter had to say. Peter told them the true story of Jesus—his death, his resurrection, the call to the church to be his bride. They were delighted to hear the message and fully accepted the terms of discipleship.

God poured out his Holy Spirit upon them and they received the gifts of speaking in foreign tongues and of healing, etc., just as the Jewish disciples had at Pentecost. They were all baptized in the name of the Lord—and Peter learned that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). The Gospel Age had begun.

***Cornelius
was the
first Gentile
to become a
Christian!***

***Peter was
given a
vision to
instruct him
to accept
the Gentiles
into the
church!***

The Church at Antioch

"The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."—Acts 11:21 (Phillips Translation)

Except for Jerusalem, the city of Antioch in Syria was the most important city in the history of the early church. The gospel message brought there found many "hearing ears" among the Gentiles. It was at Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians.

The Antioch church had very simple arrangements, much like those practiced by Jesus and the apostles. They met for growth in knowledge, fellowship, and to help each other in the narrow way. They helped send missionaries to other cities.

Paul started his first and second missionary journeys from Antioch. His third journey also started there but ended with his imprisonment in Jerusalem.

When the brethren at Jerusalem heard of the growing number of believers at Antioch they were delighted. Earlier, at the stoning of Stephen, some of Jesus' followers escaped to Antioch and these brethren taught the people there all about Jesus and the wonderful plan of God.

Barnabas was a good and faithful minister to the church at Antioch. He was a native of Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean Sea; he was a Levite and well-learned in the Law. His name means *son of consolation* or *helper*, and he was a kind and loving comforter who helped teach the new Christians. There were so many who were hungry for more knowledge of the plan of redemption that Barnabas sent for the Apostle Paul, the best teacher he knew (Acts 13:1-3, 14:26, 15:36).

Paul and Barnabas were loved and respected by the Antioch brethren. The Jews, however, hated and persecuted them. Not long after this, terrible persecutions were inflicted upon the Christians by the Roman emperors who took pleasure in doing so, just to relieve their boredom!

God permitted these evil things to come to the church as testings of their faith and loyalty to him. They are necessary to the church, who walk in Jesus' footsteps so that their characters can be developed and crystallized (made definite).

The experiences of the church throughout the Gospel Age often have been extremely cruel and difficult, coming in many different forms. These experiences also help the church become very sympathetic with all people who have gone through trying and difficult experiences. It will give the church an understanding of and compassion for them in the next age.

Antioch was the second most important city in the history of the early church!

Barnabas was a special helper to the church at Antioch!

Berean Bible Students

The Bereans “received the message with great eagerness, studying the scriptures every day to see whether it was as they said.”—Acts 17:11 (New English Bible)

The believers at Berea, in Macedonia, are famous among God’s people because of their diligence in searching the scriptures. They did not just take the word of Paul or Silas for the truth. They were a little class, but their faithfulness to God’s word caused them to be known as Berean Bible Students.

They gathered together as children of God, begotten by the Holy Spirit, to study the message of Jesus that was brought to them. The early church did not meet in splendid churches or temples, their elders and deacons did not wear rich robes of office. There was no showy display of any kind. They simply met together with those of “like, precious faith” (2 Peter 1:1) to study and prove the scriptures under the direction and care of Jesus, the only head of the church.

Bible students of today have the advantage of convenient, inexpensive Bibles of many translations and versions, as well as many other helpful books. These would include concordances, Bible dictionaries, scriptural comments, etc. And we have the ability to learn from them in our homes! For hundreds of years there were very few Bibles in the world, and most people could not read—even kings and queens! Today the majority of the people are educated and can read and write. And we can turn a light on when it is dark!

We are living in the days of Daniel 12:4 when “many shall run to and fro” and “knowledge shall be increased.” This applies to our generation as it has to no other: trains, airplanes, space ships, books, radios, television, computers; and these on a scale never before dreamed of!

We can go to Bible studies, not just in our own homes, but in other places as well. Many can attend conventions of Bible students throughout the world. We are very blessed at this end of the age, but we must realize that there is a great responsibility because of these bounteous blessings.

Many people today deny that the Bible is the word of God, causing themselves and others to fall away from the faith taught in the Bible. It is time in God’s plan for a fuller, deeper understanding of his word than ever before. Let us be faithful to learn all we can, building up our characters in the most holy faith.

The Bereans were noted for their faithfulness in searching the Scriptures!

We are living in the days when knowledge is increased and many run to and fro!

The Holy Roman Empire

**"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."—
Isaiah 55:9 (New English Bible)**

After the apostles died, the church began to look to other leaders, giving them much more authority than they should have had. Because the early church was without the benefit of Bibles and education—the common people could not read—it was easy to make this mistake. Those in power (those who could read) were the bishops and other leaders who often taught different and contradictory doctrines not inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The Emperor Constantine called a council of all the "apostolic bishops" in A.D. 325. It was held in the city of Nicea (a city in Turkey, now called Iznik). The council was called by Constantine to try to keep his kingdom from disintegrating—it was a political move.

They argued for months and finally the emperor decided which doctrines were "correct." Apostolic succession and the Trinity were two of the erroneous doctrines forced on the people. All who would not accept the new Nicene Creed would be exiled.

Christianity spread throughout Europe (which included western Russia) but without the Master's spirit. The Holy Roman Empire was established—the pope and the emperor sat side by side on the throne. This is called a "marriage" of church and state. Most Bible Students consider such a union to be contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

This system received a hard blow when, in 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte refused to allow the pope to crown him, and in fact, took him captive to France. It was a very humiliating experience for the pope, and since that time the authority of the Papacy has declined a great deal.

As Christianity spread, many visited the land where Jesus had lived and died. These journeys were made peaceably until the Moslem Turks captured Jesus' homeland and took over Jerusalem. They treated the Christians with great cruelty.

Christians came from all over Europe, traveling hundreds of miles, determined to fight the Turks and win back the Holy Land. But they forgot Jesus' teachings of love, and that *how* you worship is much more important than *where* you worship. Jesus warned men that if they fought with the sword, they should expect to die by the sword. The Crusaders killed many innocent people in their frantic attempts to regain control of the Holy City.

After the apostles died, the church looked to other leaders, many of whom were unworthy!

Napoleon took the pope prisoner in 1799, and the pope died in prison!

The Middle Ages

"It is not everyone who says to me 'Lord! Lord!' who will get into the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father in heaven."—Matthew 7:21 (Goodspeed Translation)

During the Middle Ages terrible things were done by many of those in power to others who did not agree with them. Some were tortured, others stoned to death or burned at the stake. All these things were done in the name of God, Christianity, truth, and righteousness. However, Charlemagne (whose name means Charles the Great) was an excellent emperor who realized that knowledge and law and order are necessary in a good kingdom.

When Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne ruler of the Holy Roman Empire in 800 A.D., many people hoped that this would be the end of wars and that peace would come at last. But his empire was not God's kingdom; all of his schools of learning and courts of law were made by men and could not last forever or give perfect justice. He accomplished much to advance civilization during his short reign of fourteen years, but it was not God's time to set up his kingdom.

The Crusades did much to break down the feudal system and stimulate the economic and intellectual life of the West. There came into existence groups of people who began to hold and spread ideas which were in conflict with the doctrines and government of the Catholic Church.

One of these groups was the Albigenses of France, Spain, and Italy. They completely rejected the clergy and the claims of the Church of Rome. They lived lives of self-denial and moral purity, and made great use of the Scriptures. They were considered heretics (those who hold religious beliefs opposed to the official and established views of a church).

Followers of Peter Waldo were called Waldenses. They were also from France and Italy. They believed that the Bible, and especially the New Testament, should be the only rule of faith and life for Christians. Their preaching caused a great desire among the people to read the Bible. Both of these groups were non-Trinitarian.

Terrible persecutions completely destroyed the Albigenses within a hundred years. The Waldenses fled to the high valleys of the Alps where they still live, the only medieval group that has survived to the present time. They still carry out evangelistic work in Italy today.

Many Christians were tortured for their beliefs during the Middle Ages!

The Albigenses and Waldenses had to flee persecution and live in poverty conditions!

Reformers

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly [accurately] handles the word of truth.”—2 Timothy 2:15 (New International Version)

Here and there were men who were not satisfied with the plans of emperors or the words of priests and bishops. They wanted to study the Bible for themselves and learn to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Two early reformers were John Wycliffe, born in England in 1320, and John Huss, a Bohemian. They did not believe that God spoke only through the pope, nor that he had a right to take tax money from the people. They admired men who lived simply and served the church faithfully. Huss was burned to death for his beliefs. Many people, like Huss, loved liberty and hated wickedness and were willing to fight for their beliefs. The various wars caused by this philosophy killed a great many people.

Another English reformer was William Tyndale who wanted to help others study God's word. He translated the Bible into the English of his day. He, too, was killed for his efforts to serve God and his people.

Martin Luther, perhaps the most well-known of the reformers, was the head of a Catholic college which trained young men to become priests. He studied the writings of other priests and the beliefs of the church. He did not study the Bible because he thought the Catholic books explained it very well.

One day Luther read a copy of the New Testament and was surprised that it was so easy to understand. Certain scriptures showed many errors in Catholic teachings.

Because the majority of people were uneducated and could not read, they were often taken advantage of by unscrupulous preachers who taught false doctrines. One of the most notorious was Johann Tetzel, a German monk. He convinced many to pay for sins not yet committed—these were called Indulgences. Schemes like this brought wealth and prosperity to the church and eventually gave rise to the Reformation.

Luther wrote ninety-five theses (items for discussion) against the selling of Indulgences and nailed them to the church door. Printing had recently been invented, so they were printed and distributed to people in many countries.

Eventually Luther was taken captive and ordered to recant [give up] his beliefs. He refused, and went on to bring about even more reforms. He translated the Bible into the German language and established the Lutheran church.

John Wycliffe and John Huss were two of the earliest reformers!

Martin Luther started the Great Reformation by posting 95 items for discussion on the church door!

The Inquisition

**"The time is coming when a man who kills
you will think he is thereby serving God!"
—John 16:2 (Phillips Translation)**

The Holy Inquisition was instituted by Pope Innocent III in Europe. This was a church court for finding and punishing heretics (those whose beliefs were different from those in power).

This court was terrible in its power. It required everyone to inform against any person the least bit suspect. It became the most devilish thing in human history. Horrible forms of cruel and inhuman torture were devised to inflict on those people unfortunate enough to be caught. The pope was determined to crush the Reformation movement. This dreadful work went on for five hundred years.

Eventually the church's power began to decline. Many scholars and thinkers realized that errors were being taught and spoke out against them. Although they were usually killed for their beliefs, they had influenced the thinking of many others and brought about the Reformation.

Both Catholics and Protestants now realize the Inquisition was very unholy. We need to remember that those were times of widespread ignorance and superstition. However, with the invention of the printing press and more education becoming available, the light of a better day began to shine.

The commandment given to Moses in Leviticus 19:18 and later to the disciples in Mark 12:33, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," had been completely neglected. Thus there was no love or sympathy, and justice was violated and non-existent.

John Calvin, a French Reformer, studied hard and drove himself to learn all the religious knowledge then available. When in his twenties, Calvin converted to Protestantism. He wrote a book about Bible truths as he saw them.

Later he imposed his very strict beliefs on those to whom he preached. He felt it his duty to punish anyone who held other views. When Michael Servetus published a book attacking the doctrine of the Trinity, he was tried, found guilty, and burned at the stake. Calvin, too, forgot the commandment of love.

Calvin thought God selected only a very few to have a spiritual resurrection and all others would suffer the pains of "hell fire" forever. What an extremely narrow and erroneous view of the scriptures and of a kind and loving God!

The reforms started by Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland were continued by Calvin. These reforms were more sweeping than those of Luther.

***The
Inquisition
was a
religious
court that
persecuted
true
Christians
as heretics!***

***John
Calvin,
though a
reformer,
also
persecuted
heretics
and put
them to
death!***

The Wesleys

“All who delight in piety and are determined to live a devoted and godly life in Christ Jesus will meet with persecution—that is, will be made to suffer because of their religious stand.”—2 Timothy 3:12 (Amplified Bible)

John and Charles Wesley were sons of an Episcopalian minister and his deeply religious wife who lived in England. There were nineteen children in the family, and Bible stories and scripture reading were a vital part of their growing up years in the early 1700's.

When their father was getting on in years, John left Oxford College to assist him in the parish. In the meantime, Charles, still at Oxford, formed a club with two other students to have Bible studies that would be helpful to the Christian life. It was called a “Holy Club.” The members learned to live very regular and orderly lives. Some students made fun of them; some called them “Methodists” and the name stuck.

In 1735 the two brothers sailed to America in answer to a call for missionaries. Charles fell ill and returned to England. By 1738 John, too, was back in England, his mission work considered a failure. However, John had been very impressed with some German Moravians who showed a quiet trust in God even throughout a dangerous storm during their journey aboard ship. He learned much from them about Christian behavior and their deep and complete faith in God.

The Wesleys returned to the simplicity of the early church in preaching, class gatherings, and Bible studies. They were strongly opposed by those of other faiths who sometimes drove cattle among the worshipers to interrupt their meetings. John Wesley was a great preacher, which often stirred up a lot of hostility and caused mob action against him.

In 1784 John Wesley broke with the Church of England, and the Methodist Church came into existence. Charles Wesley was the hymn writer for Methodism—he wrote thousands of hymns and many are still being sung today.

A very precious Bible truth uncovered by Wesley was that of Free Grace. His favorite scripture was Revelation 22:17, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And . . . take the water of life freely.” However he did not see the full extent of this truth—that in the kingdom all mankind will have the opportunity to have life on earth forever.

Charles Wesley preached in London until his death in 1788. In 1791 John Wesley died in London in his eighty-seventh year. The influence of his teachings was immeasurable.

John and Charles Wesley were first called “Methodists” when they were going to school at Oxford University!

The Wesleys advocated Bible studies and a return to the simplicity of the early church!

Pilgrims and Pacifists

**“Be of good courage and he shall strengthen your heart, all you that trust in the LORD.”—
Psalm 31:24 (Lamsa Translation)**

On December 21, 1620, the Pilgrims landed on the rocky coast of Massachusetts. They thanked God for their safe arrival in the New World. These were deeply religious people who had separated from the Church of England. It took great courage to separate from the church, as well as their homeland.

About nine years later the Massachusetts Bay Colony was established by the Puritans. They, too, were men and women of deep religious life and conviction who left England because of the lack of religious freedom.

A few years later in England, George Fox, a very serious and deeply religious young man who firmly believed in the Bible, was distressed at the worldliness of so many in the churches of his day. This led him to become the founder of Quakerism. He began preaching about 1640.

Many groups were pacifists. This means they opposed war and would not fight. They were persecuted for their beliefs. These were the Amish, the Mennonites, the Quakers (properly called “The Society of Friends”), and others. Many of them left Europe because of their anti-military stand. They also believed that each local church or congregation was a complete church in itself and no church should have anything to say about any other church!

The Friends based their religious life on the principle that kindness produces kindness. They are a plain people and very firm in their belief in divine guidance, not only in meetings, but in their daily lives. They have become quite famous for their relief work in wars and disasters, and were the only religious group in colonial times to take a definite stand against slavery.

In spite of being severely persecuted, their numbers continued to grow. In 1634 there were sixty Quakers in America—four years later there were thirty thousand!

Bible Students, as a whole, are also opposed to bearing arms in wartime, preferring to remember Paul’s statement that our weapons are not carnal (worldly) (2 Corinthians 10:4 Diaglott). We surely would be opposed to the destruction of human lives when our desire is to save them! If compelled by the government to enter the military service, look for alternate non-combatant ways of serving your country, such as the conscientious objectors’ program in the United States.

Early Pilgrims to the United States were fleeing religious persecution in Europe!

Bible Students have historically opposed taking part in the military!

Higher Critics

“Build yourselves up on the foundation of your most holy faith and by praying through the Holy Spirit keep yourselves within the love of God.”—Jude 20, 21 (Phillips Translation)

Most Christians do not suffer physical persecution today. They are not burned at the stake or thrown into a den of hungry lions. However, they are frequently attacked by critics—people who believe that Christianity is a weak and foolish religion.

It is very important to study the scriptures, for in them we can see God's beautiful plan which includes all of mankind. And as we continue to study and pray, we are building a sound faith which will strengthen and encourage us every day. Many errors can creep into our thinking and take us away from the reasonable and harmonious lessons we have learned. We need to prove all that we believe with the Bible—it is the inspired word of God (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

There are those whose study is mainly for the purpose of refuting (denying) the Bible. Their study does not bring them the truth or a desire to understand God's plans and purposes. These people are called “higher critics.” Paul refers to them as “scoffers” (those who jeer and laugh at other's beliefs) (2 Peter 3:3).

Those called higher critics do all they can to discredit Daniel and other Old Testament prophets. In doing so, of course, they also discredit Jesus and the apostles who felt that these prophets were inspired by Jehovah God. The book of Daniel has many wonderful prophecies that point to our day. We have seen (and are seeing today) many of them being fulfilled, e.g., Daniel 12:4.

Many people are very intelligent about worldly subjects which can cause them to become full of pride and self-exaltation. Those who study their Bibles and have a good understanding of the truth can also become prideful and high-minded. We need to keep in mind that the truth is from God, and glory in his wisdom and not our own. We can have complete confidence in God's word—that his promises will never fail. This will bring us understanding of what it means to walk in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 9:23, 24).

As more and more religious errors were believed, the hope of the resurrection and a wonderful kingdom here on earth was swept away. Eventually this unbelief will lead to anarchy, which is no government at all, a state of lawlessness and disorder. This will lead to the “time of trouble” spoken of in Daniel 12:1. And, in due time, the time of trouble will lead to the establishment of Christ's kingdom! (Proverbs 29:18).

***Most
Christians
do not suffer
physical
persecution
today!***

***Those who
study the
Bible must
be careful
not to
become
prideful or
high-minded!***

Christianity Moves Westward

"He Himself appointed and gave men to us, some to be apostles (special messengers), some prophets (inspired preachers), . . . some evangelists (preachers of the Gospel, traveling missionaries), some pastors (shepherds of His flock) and teachers."—Ephesians 4:11 (Amplified Bible)

In the early 1800's there were many influences on the churches in the United States. Some of these were the westward movement, the new immigration, and the Civil War. Many new sects and divisions occurred as people left the various established churches and new churches were started. Missionary societies were formed and were often interdenominational. In 1816 the American Bible Society was founded and spread much literature to even the remotest areas.

In 1786 the Methodists brought to the United States the idea of religious instruction for children. By 1816, only thirty years later, Sunday Schools were to be found in every section of the country.

As the West was being settled, there came a growing need for religious leaders. Many denominations founded schools for religious training (called seminaries) where future priests and ministers were trained.

Evangelists and missionaries became part of this move to the West. Evangelists are those who preach the gospel. They are Protestant ministers or laymen who speak at special services, often moving about to different places. Missionaries are similar in that they also preach the gospel, often in newly settled regions or in foreign countries. As a rule, they are also involved in educational and hospital work.

The early nineteenth century also saw the beginning of the camp meetings. These became a common practice in American evangelism and were held in every section of the West.

The immigrants coming in from Europe and the large number of people moving westward caused the rapid growth of many new sects. Some of these were Mormons (Latter Day Saints), Adventists, Christian Scientists, and later the Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. Evangelist Dwight Moody carried on Christian work among the Civil War soldiers.

Many churches, in the South as well as the North, felt an obligation to the blacks who had been freed from slavery, setting up schools and providing religious instruction. Eventually the blacks organized their own churches.

These all fulfill the theme text of this article and are examples of how God's Word was spread in the United States.

The westward movement, immigration, and the Civil War influenced Christianity in the United States!

Missionaries preached the gospel in newly settled areas and in foreign countries!

Church of the Living God

“So . . . you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”—1 Timothy 3:15 (Lamsa Translation)

Throughout the Middle Ages there were many church movements and many leaders who influenced the people in varying degrees.

As early as 330 A.D. there was rivalry between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Greek Orthodox Churches. The final split between them came in 869 A.D. Because the East refused to recognize the authority of the pope, the schism (division) has never healed (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 903).

The Greek church held back the Islam religion from “flooding” western Europe. There have been many martyrs among the Greek church—they were willing to suffer and die for their faith.

Great temples or cathedrals have been erected throughout the civilized world. It was most often the people who were very poor who donated the money for building and keeping them in good repair.

In Jesus' day it was not considered “Christian work” to raise money for church purposes, while today money-raising is taught to be the ideal work for Jesus. The Apostles taught that the real work of the church of Christ is not to build churches (which are usually so costly that it puts them in debt), but to build themselves up in the most holy faith (Jude 20).

God's people are like living stones, being shaped and polished by their experiences for places in the spiritual temple. This temple is not a church of stone or brick; it is, rather, made up of those who follow in Jesus' footsteps in the service of the Truth during the Gospel Age. These will “do good unto all men as they have opportunity . . .” (Galatians 6:10).

The fellowship of the brethren is very important (Hebrews 10:25). Gathering together to study and pray and sing praises will help the footstep followers keep themselves in “the light” of God's word and to let that light shine out to others. (This can be done anywhere, not just in a church building.)

Some brethren do not have any opportunity at all to meet with others of “like, precious faith,” yet they are very clear in their knowledge of the Truth and have a deep appreciation of God's plan because they have done so much reading and studying. So the Lord provides for all those who wish to follow in Jesus' footsteps and become “living stones” which will make up the temple of Jehovah God!

The Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox churches divided in 869 A.D.

God's people, like living stones, are being shaped and polished to be part of a spiritual temple!

Many Shall Run To and Fro

“. . . O Daniel, shut up the words, seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”—Daniel 12:4

There has been a greater development of knowledge within the past one hundred years than ever before in the history of mankind. Most of the inventions which are so common to us today were unknown a century ago. Not many people realize they are the foregleams (something seen ahead of time) of the blessings to come in the long-promised Messiah's kingdom.

The invention of the printing press by John Gutenberg in 1454 A.D. has allowed men to accumulate a store of knowledge over the years. As a result, the world has become flooded with literature in every language and on every subject.

The increase of knowledge, including a knowledge of God's word, has followed along with the running to and fro. Running to and fro also includes communication. This tells us we are living in the period referred to as the "time of the end." This time will include the closing of the Gospel Age and the dawning of the Millennial Age which will bring the end of the long reign of sin and death.

In God's due time men's minds were opened to the possibilities of inventions which then opened the way for other and more complicated inventions. In the nineteenth century men realized they could use steam to power machines. Later, electrical power began to be used. Now electronics and nuclear power have opened up newer and faster means of communication, transportation, etc., than ever before thought possible.

Think of the knowledge that went into the planning and building of the space shuttles—and the advent of men walking on the moon! It is amazing that these inventions have developed within a comparatively short space of time. For centuries mankind was unable to travel any faster than on horseback and the majority of people probably never traveled fifty miles from their birthplaces.

The first locomotive was built less than two hundred years ago; now we have many forms of transportation. However the automobile is the most common and widespread means of transportation and is the best example of running to and fro. The Bible is very descriptive of this in Nahum 2:4 (New American Standard Bible).

There has been a greater increase of knowledge in the last hundred years than ever before!

The first locomotive was built less than two hundred years ago!

Knowledge Shall Be Increased

“For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be”—Matthew 24:27 (New American Standard Bible)

Twenty-five hundred years ago God foretold through Daniel's prophecy that in the time of the end knowledge would be increased. Not only do we see this increase of knowledge in temporal (earthly) things, but also in spiritual things. God's plan was hidden from the world for hundreds of years—until the return of our Lord in 1874.

Since that time the truth of God's word, the Bible, has become available to thousands of people. Ideas and myths that had been prevalent throughout the Middle Ages could not stand in the light of truth. An enlightenment of minds to spiritual things was begun and is still going on.

The lightning referred to in our scripture text is from the Greek word *astrape*, which can be translated *bright-shining*. Since lightning actually gives very little light, the reference would be to the sun which floods the earth with light as it progresses from east to west. So the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, will shine into all corners of the world, bringing to light the hidden things of darkness and revealing the truth on every subject!

When a child has been born into a world of television, computers, jet planes, space exploration, etc., it is hard for him to realize that his parents often knew nothing of these inventions. Looking back at the way things were done in years past, we quickly realize that we are, indeed, in the time of the increase of knowledge, the time of the end (the end of the present dominion of evil).

Not only has the industrial (mechanized) age changed life on earth, but nature, too, is experiencing changes which will prepare the earth for habitation in areas never before possible. Major earthquakes, storms, floods, etc., all contribute to these changes. In due time the curse shall be removed and the blessings of God will be substituted! (Isaiah 35:1, 45:18, 65:17, 21, 22).

The Bible tells of the coming glory of earth—it will become a wonderful paradise. This will fulfill God's plan for all mankind and bring blessings beyond that which we can imagine. The earth is God's footstool and he will make his footstool glorious! (Isaiah 66:1; Acts 7:49; Isaiah 60:13).

In the past two centuries the Bible has become available in almost all languages!

Even nature is experiencing changes to prepare the earth for being brought to perfection!

A Time of Trouble

“For then there will be great tribulation—affliction, distress, and oppression—such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now; no, and never will be (again).”—Matthew 24:21 (Amplified Bible)

Jn the present time we are realizing the fulfillment of the predictions of the text scripture and Daniel 12:1—“there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” But it gives us great comfort to know that it will be the last of the troublous times coming upon the earth.

The lessons will be very severe for all living on the earth at that time for all people must come to accept the fact that God is in control, and always has been, of all of earth's affairs. He will not allow the literal earth or the world of mankind to be completely demolished but will, instead, destroy those who are destroying (corrupting) the earth (Revelation 11:18).

When the time is right for Christ and his church to take over the rulership of the earth, Satan and his followers will be restrained from their deceitful and wicked works (Revelation 20:2, 3). There will be a resurrection of the dead (Acts 24:15) and peace and righteousness will predominate everywhere. What wonderful blessings! And because these things were promised by Jehovah God we can be sure they will come true!

We do not like to hear about wars and rumors of wars, or of the terrible ways in which some people treat others. We do not like to think about the building and use of machines of war which have been produced for destruction only. Nor is it pleasant to think about plagues of diseases, widespread starvation, strikes and layoffs, huge corporations merging and increasing their control of tremendous wealth and power, excessive greed and selfishness among people of all nations.

These are things that will need to be made right in the coming age so that all mankind will be able to live together in peace and harmony. Even the religious institutions will experience great upheavals so they also will eventually come together in peace and harmony.

These upheavals in all realms of earth's society are called *anarchy* (complete disorder and lawlessness) causing a time of trouble such as never was! While we do not look forward to such terrible troubles in the world, yet we can rejoice that a better time is coming afterwards and that this “better time” will be for everyone—all who have ever lived upon this earth.

The present “time of trouble” will be the last troublous time for the people of earth!

We do not like to hear about wars, but they are a necessary part of God's plan!

The Church, Militant, Triumphant

“And he shall rule them [the nations] with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers [pieces] . . .”—Revelation 2:27 and Psalm 2:9

The church during the Gospel Age is spoken of as being “militant.” This does not mean that they should go to war with swords, guns, tanks, etc. God’s people are to battle in an entirely different manner as their warfare is against the temptations of the world, of human desires, and the deceitfulness of Satan.

The church does not fight for their “rights.” It was a terrible mistake when, in the Middle Ages, the church battled with swords and spears against nations and heretics (those who do not conform to the accepted beliefs or doctrines).

While Jesus and the apostles were on earth they did not interfere in any way with earthly powers. On the contrary, they taught the church to obey the laws of the land and to respect those in authority because of their office even if they were not personally worthy of this respect (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1). Jesus and his apostles were all law-abiding, although they were separate from and took no part in the governments of this world.

Ephesians 6:11-17 describes the “armor” the church militant is to wear. The Christian does battle by wielding the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the truth. He tells of the good news of the coming kingdom and has the spirit of service to others.

The breastplate of righteousness symbolizes our Savior’s death. It is a covering for us provided through the merit of Jesus’ sacrifice. Our hearts would fail from discouragement without it.

The sandals of peace symbolize our full consecration to the Lord. They will help us over the rough places without compromising the truth.

The shield of faith is our trust in God and in his truth. It helps us withstand the “arrows” of Satan and his cohorts (followers).

We put on the helmet which symbolizes knowledge, an intelligent hope of salvation. We need this as the Adversary (Satan) will try everything in his power to take us away from the truth. We carry the sword of the Spirit which helps us defend the doctrines of Christ from the snare of error. We can own this sword only by careful and constant study of God’s word and by being ready to use it in defense of the truth.

The church is not to interfere in any way with the powers of earth!

God has given the Christian a spiritual armor to protect him from the great Adversary!

New Heavens and New Earth

“Then I saw the new heaven and the new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; and the sea is no more.”—Revelation 21:1 (Moffatt Translation)

Many teachings of the Bible use symbolic language. In our scripture text the word *heaven* is used to represent the various religious or spiritual powers. The *earth* is symbolic of the lower or social order of things. *Mountains* represent earthly governments and the *seas* represent the restless and discontented masses of people of the earth.

When John was given a vision of the new earth he saw the same physical earth with a new social order—a better way of life based on God’s righteous rules and principles.

When John saw the vision of the new heavens he was not seeing God’s throne in a new place. The heavens here referred to are the religious systems in the world all claiming to be the one “right” religion. These will give way to the establishment of Christ’s kingdom of truth and righteousness.

Christ’s kingdom is the third “heavens and earth” or “the world to come.” The first was the world that was overflowed with water, the great flood of Noah’s day. It had been under the rule and influence of the angels (2 Peter 3:6).

The second world (or social order) was then begun and will end in the great time of trouble. This is also called the “present evil world” because of the prevalence of Satan’s power and influence; indeed, he is called “the prince of this world” (John 12:31). The new heavens and the new earth in the world to come will be based on love and justice rather than might and oppression, and righteousness will prevail.

The blotting out of evil will be gradual and will need all of the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom to be accomplished. This will be a time when “the righteous shall flourish” (Psalm 72:7), and “the willing and obedient will eat the good of the land” (Isaiah 1:19). Eventually all evil men will be cut off (Psalm 37:9 New International Version).

Mankind has been hoping and praying for these conditions since our Lord’s first advent when he taught his disciples to pray: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10), a wonderful promise—and yet to come true!

The “new heavens and earth” will not replace the physical earth we live on!

The social order that we now have is called the “present evil world” in the Bible!

The Desert Shall Blossom

“The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing.”—Isaiah 35:1, 2

It is interesting that at this time when the world is in terrible turmoil, many strides are being made to save the earth and the environment. We see human ingenuity and engineering feats working miracles. New inventions are being made so rapidly that many become obsolete in a short time.

Many of these inventions are not being used for the betterment of mankind, however, for men's hearts are still filled with pride and greed. Those who are trying hard to bring about a better world may have some successes but it will take God's power during Christ's reign to bring about the perfect earth and social conditions.

The “blossoming of the rose” assures us that provisions will be made for the needs (physical and spiritual) of millions to be brought forth from the tomb. Men's minds will be freed of superstition, knowledge will replace ignorance, and love will replace hate and sinfulness. The next age will be a time of education!

The Jewish nation had an erroneous idea of the kingdom of God in supposing it be an earthly kingdom only. Many today make the opposite mistake in supposing it to be a heavenly kingdom only. Yet Jesus was very clear in his teaching that a kingdom, a government, will be established right here on earth, as well as a heavenly government which will reign over all (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1).

Read Acts 3:19-21. It is hard to imagine a perfect earth where all people will live together in peace and harmony. All of the destructive forces will be gone and the earth will truly “blossom as the rose” for there will be plenty of water for the dry places to flourish (Isaiah 35:6, 7). The restored earth will be like the garden of Eden before sin destroyed it. The earth will then be called “paradise” and mankind will appreciate the blessing of being able to live forever in such a beautiful place.

The opportunity of experiencing both good and evil now will enable mankind to choose good in the kingdom, and be granted everlasting life on the perfected earth. Those who continue to love and practice evil will be destroyed in the second death.

During the thousand years of restitution work under the reign of the Messiah, the earth will be brought to the condition God intended when it was created. Then the creative work will be complete—both of the earth and of mankind!

Today we see many attempts to save the earth and the environment!

The restored earth will be like the garden of Eden before sin destroyed it!

Hallelujah Chorus and Ages to Come

“Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord, God, the omnipotent! Righteous and true are thy ways, O king of the nations!”—Revelation 15:3 (Emphatic Diaglott)

At the close of the thousand year Messianic kingdom the Mediator will deliver the kingdom over to the Heavenly Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). Our great God is truly worthy of worship, obedience, and love (Psalm 86:9). Yet there will be those who will have obeyed only because they shall be required to do so, not because of absolute loyalty of heart to him.

The Father will not give everlasting life to the human family without first teaching them along the lines of strict obedience to his will. For this reason, Satan will then be let loose from imprisonment (Revelation 20:3) and will try once again to deceive the people.

At that time mankind will have had experience with both righteousness and evil. They will be given their choice—to follow Satan which will eventually end in second death, or to follow the laws of the kingdom with heartfelt loyalty and live forever on the perfected earth.

Even when we were “dead in sins” (corrupt), God had great love for us! (Ephesians 2:1). Those who are “dead in sins” are all of mankind, for they are all under the sentence of death and have no right to everlasting life (Romans 3:10).

Satan has never given up his goal to be higher than God and to have mankind worship him. This goal will not change while he is bound. Fallen angels, as well as mankind, will be tested when Satan desperately tries to regain control of the world.

The end of the Millennial Age will see all the wicked destroyed, cut off in second death. All the willing and obedient will have been brought to complete perfection the way God had originally planned (Isaiah 45:18). This, then, will complete God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:18.

Then there will be no more sickness and dying (Revelation 21:4). The earth will be completely cleansed and will “yield her increase.” Every creature in heaven and earth will exclaim, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be “praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” (Rev. 5:13 New International Version; Ephesians 2:7; Philip-pians 2:10, 11).

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” Hallelujah!

God will not give everlasting life to any without being sure of their complete obedience!

All the truly wicked shall be eternally cut off in the second death!