

God's Plan for Man

THE whole universe is governed in keeping with the fixed plans of the Creator. Because this is true those who sow seed know that in due time they will reap a harvest; and astronomers can forecast the exact movements of the sun, the moon, and the stars. God also has a plan for his human creatures, every detail of which is being worked out exactly according to his design.

God created the earth to be man's eternal home, but he forewarned our first parents that their continued life depended upon their obedience to his law. They disobeyed and were sentenced to death. By heredity this death condemnation was passed on to their progeny, and the human family has experienced more than six thousand years of sin, sickness, and death. Now it is feared that the entire race might be destroyed through the selfish misuse of human inventions and discoveries.

But the Bible assures us that this will not occur, that, instead, the human race is to be restored to life as was originally designed by the Creator. The plan of God whereby this is accomplished has, throughout the centuries, been moving forward to completion, and the Bible reveals that now the time is near for the glorious consummation of that plan. Those who understand God's plan for man are filled with hope instead of fear.

There are many facets to the divine plan, as you will discover through the use of this study book. It is not a book simply to be read. You will receive the greatest good from it by making sure that you understand the

answers to the questions in each lesson before passing on to the next lesson.

To gain this knowledge it is also important that you look up all the Scripture texts which are cited. Should questions arise that are not answered in your studies, do not hesitate to write to us concerning them.

The Creation of Man

The six “creative days” referred to in the opening chapter of the Book of Genesis do not appertain to the original work of creating the universe but to the preparation of our earth to sustain life, particularly human life. We are informed that the earth already existed prior to the beginning of these “days” of creation.—Gen. 1:2

These days were in reality long eras of time during which the gradual preparation of the earth for human habitation was carried forward. It was toward the close of the sixth “day” that man was created, in the image of God, and commanded to multiply and fill the earth. (Gen. 1:26-31) The “image of God” in which man was created does not mean a physical but a moral likeness. Man was endowed with the ability to reason and to understand God’s instructions concerning right and wrong, good and evil.

Being created in the image of God does not imply that man was endowed with immortality, nor does it mean that an “immortal soul” was implanted somewhere in the human organism. The expression “immortal soul” does not appear anywhere in the Bible. The word soul simply means a living being. The living being, Adam, was made up of an organism animated by “the breath of life.”—Gen. 2:7

God’s commission to our first parents to multiply and fill the earth reveals that the divine destiny for man was that he should inhabit the earth, which had

been created to be his abiding home. (Isa. 45:18) Man was created an earthly being and perfectly adapted to the home God had prepared for him in the earth. (I Cor. 15:47) Nothing was said to our first parents about being transferred to another part of the universe.

Man was given dominion over the earth and over the lower animals. (Ps. 8:4-8) He was to “subdue” the earth, meaning that he was to bring it under his control and make it beautiful, useful, and productive. In the garden home which the Creator provided for our first parents, there was both beauty and an abundant supply of life-sustaining food.—Gen. 2:8,9

It may be assumed that this marvelous garden home was designed by God to serve as a sort of working model for man as he endeavored to fulfill the commission given to him to fill the earth with his offspring, and to subdue it. And it is not difficult to imagine what the situation would have been had the divine purpose been carried out in keeping with the Creator’s arrangements.

As the human family increased in number, that garden home which God specially prepared “eastward in Eden” would soon have been too small, so its borders would have been extended as the need required. This would have continued until the entire earth would have become one vast paradise, filled with a perfect and happy human family enjoying continuous perfect health and life, rejoicing in the sunshine of the Creator’s smile. This was God’s purpose in the creation of man.

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

In order to understand the plan of God for human salvation from sin and death, it is essential to know the divine purpose in the creation of man. Can you answer these questions?

Is it the original creation of the universe that is described in the first chapter of Genesis?

Were the “creative days” of Genesis twenty-four hour periods?

In what sense was man created in the image of God?

Was man created immortal or given an “immortal soul”?

What is a human soul?

What was implied by God’s command to fill the earth and to have dominion over it?

Explain what the human race would have experienced had the Creator’s will been carried out without interruption.

Summary of Important Thoughts:

Man was created in the moral image of God, endowed with the ability to know right from wrong. He was commissioned to multiply and fill the earth, which God created to be his eternal home.

Death's Reign Begun

It was God's design that man should enjoy everlasting life on the earth, but it was necessary that he prove his worthiness to enjoy the blessing of life in his earthly home by rendering obedience to divine law. The penalty for disobeying God's law was death.—Gen. 2:15-17; Rom. 6:23

God stated his law very simply and thus made clear what the penalty for disobedience would be. But Satan, speaking through the "serpent," said to mother Eve that death would not result from disobeying God's command.—Gen. 3:1-5

Through the ages since then, this falsehood has been expressed in many different ways, with the result that few have believed that death is a reality. Most religionists throughout the non-Christian and professed Christian worlds insist that "there is no death." Thus they agree with the vicious falsehood perpetrated by the Devil in the Garden of Eden.

Eve herself was deceived by the Devil's lie and partook of the forbidden fruit. Then she offered it to Adam and he partook. But Adam was not deceived. He knew what the result of his disobedience would be.—I Tim. 2:14

It is quite possible, we think, that Adam lacked faith in the Creator's ability to overrule Eve's transgression in a way that would be to his benefit; so he deliberately disobeyed, feeling that life would not be worthwhile without his helpmate, Eve. Whatever his

reasoning, his sin was willful, and the divine sentence of death fell upon him. (Gen. 3:17-19) Eve shared in this condemnation.

The transgression and condemnation of our first parents were prior to the birth of their children. This meant that the process of dying had already begun when their children were born. Thus their offspring were imperfect and automatically came under condemnation to death.—Rom. 5:12

Thus the reign of sin and death began, and has continued for more than six thousand years. During this time countless billions have suffered and died. Sorrow, sickness, and pain—mental and physical—have been experienced by all, both young and old, in every generation. This long period of human suffering is described in the Bible as a nighttime of weeping which has come upon the human race as a result of God's wrath, or condemnation, resting upon the people because of sin. (Ps. 30:5) However, in God's due time, as we shall see later, there will be release from suffering and death.

The Apostle Paul said that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness." (Rom. 1:18) It is revealed by everything which reminds us of sickness and death. Truly, man is learning the terrible result of transgressing divine law.

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

In order to understand God's plan for the rescue of fallen man from death, it is necessary to grasp clearly just what happened in the Garden of Eden. Can you answer these questions?

What was the condition upon which God's perfect human creatures could enjoy everlasting life on earth?

What is the divine penalty for sin, and what was Satan's deception concerning this?

Was Adam deceived by Satan concerning the penalty for sin?

What may have been the reason that Adam willfully transgressed God's law?

Explain why Adam's offspring shared in the death condemnation which came upon him.

What is one of the ways by which the Bible describes the reign of sin and death?

How is the wrath of God revealed from heaven?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

Obedience to God's law is the condition upon which any of God's intelligent creatures can enjoy a continuance of his favor and the blessings of everlasting life.

The Hope of Deliverance

When God pronounced the sentence of death upon our first parents, he did not leave them without hope that at some time and in some manner the penalty might be lifted. A ray of hope is to be noted in the statement God made to the "serpent" pertaining to a coming "seed" that would bruise his head.—Gen. 3:15

We cannot suppose that Adam and Eve understood clearly the implications of God's statement concerning the seed of the woman; but they seemed to have been given some hope by it, for when their first son Cain was born Eve said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord."—Gen. 4:1

In the light of subsequent promises of God, it is now clear that God's statement concerning a seed that would bruise the serpent's head actually did mean that in God's due time Adam and his race would be delivered from Satan's rulership and from sin and death. (Rev. 20:1-3; I Cor. 15:25,26) This means that the original purpose of God in the creation of man will be fulfilled, and the earth will become one vast paradise, populated by the redeemed and restored offspring of Adam and Eve.—Rev. 21:4

About two thousand years after man's fall into sin and death God made a promise to Abram—who was later called Abraham—saying that through him and his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3) Later, when Abraham proved his worthiness by

demonstrating his willingness to obey the Lord in the offering of his son Isaac in sacrifice, God confirmed this promise by his oath.—Gen. 22:15–18

In the New Testament the seed promised to Abraham is identified as Christ. (Gal. 3:8,16) The further explanation is given that those who follow in the footsteps of Christ will be associated with him as the promised seed. (Gal. 3:27-29) This means that true Christians will participate with Jesus in the future work of blessing mankind with health and life.

It was because of God's great love for his human creatures that, even though he foreknew they would disobey him, he had, through Christ, made provision for them to be released from the penalty of death. (John 3:16) God's plan for the deliverance of mankind from death through Christ is on the same basis as the condemnation of the entire human race through one man. All lost life through Adam, and all will have an opportunity to regain life through Christ.—I Cor. 15:21,22

There are many promises in the Bible to assure us that when the divine plan for the deliverance of mankind from sin and death is complete there will be no more sickness, pain, or death, that joy will replace sorrow, and that all tears will be wiped away. (Isa. 25:8,9) This deliverance of mankind from sin and death will include the awakening of those who have died. These have all been "ransomed" by Jesus and will be restored.—Isa. 35:10

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

To know the answers to these questions implies a priceless knowledge of the revealed purposes of God pertaining to his human creation. How many of them can you answer?

Did God leave our first parents without hope when he pronounced the sentence of death upon them?

What did Eve say which indicates that she may have thought that her son Cain was the “seed” mentioned by God?

Who is the “seed” of promise that will yet “bruise” the “serpent’s” head; and what will the complete fulfillment of this promise mean in human experience?

What promise did God make to Abraham concerning a seed?

What explanation does Paul make concerning the seed and who it will be?

Explain how the love of God provided deliverance of mankind from sin and death.

Describe the conditions on earth which will be obtained when the results of the fall are set aside.

Summary of Important Thoughts:

The vague statement made to the “serpent” concerning a “seed” is in reality God’s first promise of deliverance of fallen man from sin and death.

The Savior and Salvation

When Jesus was born, an angel announced that he was to be the Savior. (Luke 2:11) God's plan of salvation for the dying race called for the sacrifice of a perfect human life as a substitute for the forfeited life of the perfect man, Adam. Every member of the adamic race was fallen and imperfect so that none could be a redeemer and savior.—Rom. 3:10; Ps. 49:7

God's abounding love for the fallen human race prompted him to send his own beloved Son into the world that he might be the Savior. (John 3:16; I John 4:14) In order to provide salvation from death, it was necessary for Jesus to become a man, which was accomplished by his being born of a human mother. (Heb. 2:9,14) Jesus willingly laid down his life to provide salvation for the condemned and dying race.—John 6:51

Jesus loved the world of mankind and not only gave his life that the people might live, but also endured much suffering and affliction. (Isa. 53:3-7) To realize what Jesus suffered for us should bring forth our love and devotion to him and to his Heavenly Father, who gave him to be our Redeemer and Savior.

The Bible uses the word "ransom" to describe what was accomplished for us by the death of Jesus. (I Tim. 2:5,6) The word ransom, as used in the Bible with respect to the divine plan of redemption, means a corresponding

price. The perfect man Jesus became a substitute in death for the perfect man Adam, who forfeited his life through disobedience to divine law.

The Bible declares that the penalty for sin is death but that God has made provision for eternal life through the gift of his beloved Son to be the Redeemer and Savior. (Rom. 6:23) This means that in God's due time every member of the adamic race will have an opportunity to accept the provision of God's love and thereby be rescued from death.—I Cor. 15:22

God's gift of life through Christ is available only through belief and obedience. However, one must be made acquainted with this provision of life in order to believe. (Rom. 10:14,15) The vast majority of mankind have died without having received the true knowledge of Christ; but this does not mean that they will not yet have an opportunity to believe on him and obtain salvation, for they are to be "saved," or awakened from death, for this purpose.—I Tim. 2:3-6

The Bible tells us concerning that future time of blessing for the people that then the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth and that all will know the Lord and unitedly serve him.—Isa. 11:9; Zeph. 3:9

Those who now believe on Christ and devote themselves to the doing of God's will are reckoned justified upon the basis of faith. (Rom. 4:24) These are no longer alienated from God because of adamic condemnation but, through faith, are at one with him. (Rom. 5:1; 8:1) If these consecrated footstep followers of Jesus during this Gospel Age continue faithful unto death, they will be rewarded with the wonderful prize of immortality.—II Pet. 1:4; Rom. 2:7; I Cor. 15:53,54

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

Many know that the Bible speaks of salvation and of Jesus as being the Savior, but what do these expressions mean? How many of the following questions can you answer?

How alone could salvation for the dying race be accomplished?

Why was it necessary for Jesus to be born into the world as a human in order to be the Savior?

How do we know that Jesus as well as his Heavenly Father loved the fallen and dying race?

What is the meaning of the word “ransom” as used in the Bible?

How widespread will be the result of the “ransom” provided by the death of Jesus?

What provision has been made by God for all of Adam’s race to have an opportunity to benefit from the ransom?

Do believers now receive life through Christ?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

Jesus became the Savior of the world by giving his life as a ransom for the forfeited life of father Adam.

Following the Master

Jesus invited those who believed on him to become his followers. He made it plain, however, that the only ones who could be his true followers were those willing to deny themselves and bear the cross. (Matt. 16:24) Jesus explained that those who did not love him even more than they loved the members of their own families were not worthy of him. (Matt. 10:37,38) These terms of discipleship laid down by the Master are very exacting. They are not the terms upon which mankind in general will eventually receive life through Christ but are the conditions upon which, at the present time, one can be a true follower of Jesus.

Self-denial as taught by Jesus is not merely the giving up of certain good things to eat or the forgoing of other pleasures of life. Rather, it is the denial of self, a dedication to the Lord that is so complete and wholehearted that self is denied all rights to govern one's life. It is the giving up completely of one's own will and ways and accepting the will of the Lord as the rule of life. It means a complete change of outlook in life, a transforming of the mind to conform to the will of God.—Rom. 12:2

Cross-bearing signifies more than enduring unpleasant experiences. For one to take up his cross and follow Jesus signifies his willingness to suffer and to die with the Master. Those condemned to death under the Roman law carried their own cross to the place of crucifixion. For one to carry a cross, therefore, meant that

he was on his way to death, and this is the symbolic meaning of Christian cross-bearing. As Jesus' disciples, we suffer and die with him.—Rom. 6:3–6; II Tim. 2:11,12

Being a disciple of Christ, therefore, implies much more than living a moral and upright life. It means the dedication of one's life to the cause of God as it is being carried out through Christ. It means a dedication to this cause that leads to the sacrifice of self and of all self-interests. This is the Christian life.

But the life of sacrifice in the Christian cause has its compensations of peace and joy in the Lord, which result from the assurance of having divine approval. This is a peace and joy which is based upon the knowledge that our loving Heavenly Father knows what is best for us and causes all things to work together for our good.—Rom. 8:28

There are also future compensations for those who faithfully lay down their lives walking in the footsteps of Jesus. The promise to these is that if they faithfully suffer and die with Jesus they will live and reign with him.—Rom. 8:17,18; Rev. 3:21

The purpose of living and reigning with Christ is to share with him in extending blessings of health and life to the remainder of the world of mankind, the blessings which he provided by his own death as the Redeemer and Savior of the world. The privilege of sharing in Jesus' exaltation is described by Paul as "the prize of the high calling."—Phil. 3:14

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

There is no more important vocation than to be a dedicated follower of the Master, as the answers to these questions will show:

What are the terms of Christian discipleship as laid down by Jesus?

Will the world of mankind in general be expected to meet these terms in order to enjoy everlasting life on earth?

What did Jesus mean by denying self?

What is meant by bearing one's cross?

What are some of the present compensations enjoyed by those who are laying down their lives in the divine cause?

What are the future rewards for those who suffer and die with Jesus?

What is the purpose of living and reigning with Christ?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

To be a true Christian means much more than living an upright and moral life. It means sacrifice even unto death.

The Glory of the Terrestrial

One of the marvels of the creative works of God is their almost endless variety. Evolutionists believe that this variety simply indicates development and progression, which fluctuates as one species evolves into another. This continues, they say, haphazardly and endlessly. The Bible disagrees. The Bible teaches that the great variety in creation is by the Creator's design and that species are fixed.—I Cor. 15:39; Gen. 1:24,25

The highest order, or species, in God's earthly creation is the human. This is referred to by the Apostle Paul as the "terrestrial," which simply means earthly. (I Cor. 15:40) Man was created in the image of God, and in his perfection he reflected the glory of the Creator's character.—Gen. 1:26,27; Ps. 8:4,5; Heb. 2:6,7

Man was not a blending of earthly and spiritual natures. In all the myriad creations of God there are no hybrids, except as man has produced them. While, as we shall see in a later lesson, a very limited number of God's human creatures, upon conditions of faithfulness in following in the footsteps of Jesus, will be exalted to a higher nature in the resurrection, this does not mean that humans are, by nature, partly spiritual.—I Cor. 15:47-49

The perfect man was given dominion over all the lower forms of the earthly creations. In this respect he

was endowed with the official glory of the Creator, who exercises dominion over the entire universe.—Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:4-8

Because of disobedience to divine law, man not only lost life but he also lost his dominion over the earth. Because of this we do not see the glory of God reflected in the human race as it was possessed by the first man, Adam. We see man today fallen, imperfect and dying, and unable to extricate himself from the thralldom of sickness and death into which he was plunged because of his sin.—Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3; 49:7; Rom. 3:10,12,23

But God has continued to love his human creatures; he has made provision to deliver them from sin and death. (Ps. 102:19,20; John 3:16,17; 5:28,29, *RSV*) God's provision for the sin-cursed and dying world of mankind, his terrestrial human creatures, is redemption through Jesus. So, while today we see man dying and without his dominion, by faith we see that Jesus has already given his life that man's life and terrestrial glory may, during the thousand years of the Messianic kingdom, be restored to him.—Heb. 2:6-9

It is not the divine purpose to exalt the people of earth to a higher plane of life but, through a resurrection from death, to restore them to life on the earth. This is described by the Apostle Peter by the word "restitution," which means, not exaltation, but restoration.—Acts 3:21

What a glorious provision this is for a sin-cursed and dying race! Today the world is filled with misery and woe, degradation and sorrow, all of which will pass away during the thousand-year reign of Christ. Eventually not a stain of sin will mar the peace and harmony of humanity. There will not be an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of the former reign of sin and death. No longer will there be need for doctors and undertakers. Hospitals will be emptied of patients. Instead of dying and going into the tomb, the people will be returning from

death, the power of God being utilized to restore them to life. This is God's loving provision for man. This is the destiny for humanity which has been made possible through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. This will be the restored glory of the terrestrial.

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

Explain the difference between the evolutionist's view of creation and the truth set forth in the Bible.

What is the highest order of earthly creation, and what is one of the Bible's words pertaining thereto?

Is man a blending of earthly and spiritual natures?

What was one aspect of the glory with which Adam was endowed by his Creator?

Is man able to extricate himself from the result of his sin? Explain God's provision for the restoration of man to life and to his lost dominion.

What word does the Apostle Peter use to describe man's restoration?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

Man was created an earthly being and is not a blending of earthly and spiritual. Through the ransom and resurrection, he will be restored to life on the earth as a human.

The Glory of the Celestial

The word “celestial” appears only twice in the Bible. (I Cor. 15:40) It is a translation of the Greek word *epouranios*. The literal meaning of this word is “above the sky.” (See *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*.)

This same Greek word is also translated “heaven” by the Apostle Paul in a statement in which he contrasts things in heaven with things on earth. (Phil. 2:10) This indicates that there are intelligent creations of God in the realms of the universe above, or beyond, the sky, or more scientifically speaking, beyond the atmosphere of the earth.

Epouranios is also translated “heavenly” in various associations. It is this word that is associated with Father in the name, “Heavenly Father.”—Matt. 18:35

The Apostle Paul was assured that the Lord would deliver him from evil so that he might participate with Jesus in the “heavenly” kingdom. (II Tim. 4:18) Here also the Greek word *epouranios* is used.

It is also this word that is used by the Apostle Paul when, in presenting the hope set before the dedicated followers of Jesus, he uses the expression, “heavenly calling.”—Heb. 3:1

When Nicodemus, a ruler in Israel, expressed surprise to Jesus over the idea of being “born again,” Jesus referred to it as among the “heavenly things” which the human mind could not appreciate. (John

3:12) Here again it is the Greek word *epouranios* that is used.

The Apostle Paul uses this word in another context in which he emphasizes that celestial, or “heavenly,” beings are separate and distinct from earthly, or human, beings. (I Cor. 15:48) Paul does explain, however, that some members of the human race will, in the resurrection, be exalted to a “heavenly,” or celestial, state.—I Cor. 15:49

It is important to keep the import of these various texts of Scripture in mind, for they emphasize that there is a great distinction between the heavenly nature and the earthly nature, that the two are in no way blended into one, as erroneously supposed by so many. Man was in no sense whatever a heavenly, or spiritual, being when created, nor will the nature of man ever change.

The Scriptures do teach that those who sacrifice their earthly lives, following in the footsteps of Jesus, will be exalted to the heavenly nature in the resurrection. Indeed, in a future lesson we shall see that there are different planes of life, or natures, “above the sky” and that the followers of Jesus will be exalted to the very highest of these, even to the divine nature.—II Pet. 1:4

It is this glorious hope that the promises of the Bible hold out to the faithful followers of the Master. It is worth far more than giving up all that we have and are in order to attain that glorious “prize” of the divine nature.

The “glory of the celestial” is indeed a wonderful prize. The Apostle Paul describes it as “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:14) Jesus explained that this “treasure in heaven” was attainable only by giving up all earthly treasures and becoming his followers into sacrificial death, which he illustrated by the idea of taking up our cross as his disciples. (Matt. 16:24) May all who have thus set their affections on things above be diligent as they press on in the narrow way which leads to glory, honor, and immortality.

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

How many times does the word “celestial” appear in the Bible, and what is the Greek word and its meaning from which it is translated?

What other words are used in the New Testament to translate the Greek word *epouranios*?

What is implied by Paul’s contrast between the things in heaven and the things in earth?

What did the Apostle Paul mean by a “heavenly” kingdom and a “heavenly” calling?

What did Jesus say to Nicodemus about “heavenly” things?

Are the heavenly and earthly natures ever blended in one being? If not, why do followers of Jesus hope to be heavenly beings in the resurrection?

Are there different planes of being “above the sky”?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

The Bible teaches that God has created beings on higher planes of life than the human and that the faithful followers of Jesus are promised exaltation to the highest of these, which is the divine.

The Hope of Immortality

Those who possess immortality live everlastingly, but everlasting life is not necessarily immortality. Had our first parents remained obedient to their Creator and been permitted to continue partaking of the life-giving trees of Eden, they would have lived forever, but they would not have been immortal.—Gen. 3:22-24

Immortality is indestructibility. It is a quality of the divine nature which was possessed originally only by God and was conferred upon Jesus at the time of his resurrection.—John 5:26; Heb. 1:3; Matt. 28:18

The Apostle Paul informs us that Jesus brought both life and immortality to light through the Gospel. (II Tim. 1:10) The Gospel is the good tidings of salvation from death through the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ. During the Messianic Age eternal life will be offered to the whole world of mankind in fulfillment of God's promise to bless all the families of the earth, but those who now accept Christ, upon the basis of faith, and dedicate their lives to the Lord are promised immortality.—Rom. 2:7

This means that these faithful followers of Jesus will, in the resurrection, be highly exalted to be like him. (I John 3:1-3) To be like the resurrected Jesus means to be a partaker of the divine nature.—II Pet. 1:4

To attain to this exalted condition and position implies humility and faithfulness to the Lord in the

present life, a faithfulness demonstrated by a willingness to sacrifice life itself in the service of the Lord. And it must be an abiding faithfulness which continues until death.—Rev. 2:10

Man was created mortal. This means that death was a possibility, but not a necessity. Death for humans became a certainty because of sin. (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12) The followers of Jesus being members of the human race are, by nature, mortal. By faith, the condemnation of death is lifted from them, and they lay down their justified humanity in sacrifice.—Rom. 5:18; 8:1

The Apostle Paul uses the contrasting words “corruptible” and “incorruptible” to describe the qualities of mortality and immortality, and he informs us that it is in the resurrection that Christians, who are now mortal, or corruptible, put on incorruption. For emphasis Paul repeats this thought, using the words mortal and immortality.—I Cor. 15:53,54

Paul refers to the time when death is swallowed up in victory. This is one of the Old Testament promises of God which applies to the Messianic Age, when mankind is restored to perfect life on the earth. (I Cor. 15:54,55; Isa. 25:7,8) But these blessings of everlasting human life cannot flow out to the world of mankind until all the true followers of Jesus during the present age have proved worthy of exaltation to immortality. Then these will live and reign with Christ for the purpose of destroying the great enemy Death.—I Cor. 15:25,26; Rev. 20:6

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

This lesson cites numerous texts in the Bible in which the words “mortal” and “immortality” are used. Can you answer these questions pertaining to immortality?

Explain the difference between immortality and eternal life.

What is one of the qualities of immortality, and who first possessed it?

Explain the manner in which Jesus brought both life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

When are Jesus’ followers exalted to the divine nature?

How does one qualify to receive immortality?

Do the followers of Jesus die as condemned humans? Explain.

How does the Apostle Paul explain the exaltation of Christians to immortality, and when does this take place?

When will death “be swallowed up in victory”?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

Man was not created immortal, but immortality is promised to the faithful followers of Jesus and is conferred upon them in the resurrection.

Christ's Promised Return

The disciples of Jesus confidently believed that their Master was the promised Messiah and that he had come in fulfillment of the Old Testament promises relating to the establishment of a powerful government that would extend its sphere of influence throughout the whole earth. (Isa. 9:6,7; Ps. 72:8; John 1:41,42) For this reason they were greatly disappointed when Jesus was arrested and cruelly put to death. They did not then realize that Jesus was giving his flesh for the life of the world.—John 6:51

It was not until later, through the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, that the apostles and other disciples in the Early Church learned that their kingdom hopes, which were centered in Jesus, would be realized only as a result of his return to earth in what has come to be referred to as his Second Advent. However, even before his death Jesus told his disciples that he was going away, that he would return, and that they would then be with him again.—John 14:3; Matt. 16:27

After Jesus' resurrection, when he appeared to his disciples for the last time before returning to heaven, they were much concerned over their hope of the kingdom. However, Jesus then gave them a commission to be his witnesses; and when he left them, two angels appeared and gave them assurance that Jesus would return to them.—Acts 1:6-11

In a sermon Peter preached shortly after Pentecost he spoke of Christ's return and associated the event with what he described as "times of restitution of all things."—Acts 3:20,21

The hope of the return of Christ to establish his kingdom and to reward his followers was very real to the members of the Early Church. It was a source of comfort and spiritual strength to them as they sought to bear witness concerning Jesus to a hostile world.—Titus 2:13; I Thess. 4:16-18

The brethren of the Early Church did not understand that the return of Christ was many centuries away. The general expectation then was that he would return very soon. Many of the promises gave them this viewpoint, for they did not take into consideration that the promises were based upon the divine viewpoint of time. (Ps. 90:4; II Pet. 3:8,10; Rev. 3:11; 22:20) These brethren were in the difficult position of sponsoring the cause of a Messiah who had been put to death by his enemies. They understood why he had died, but the unbelieving world did not. True, they proclaimed the fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead; but to this had to be added that he had returned to heaven, which would seem incredible to an unbelieving world.

It was difficult to obtain acceptance of a message like this, and the faith of the brethren was sorely tried. To them, therefore, the return of their Lord was the center of all their hopes, and they longed for the time when he would appear.—I Pet. 1:7,8

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

Why was the death of Jesus such a great test to his disciples' faith?

How and when did the apostles and other disciples in the Early Church learn that Christ would not establish his kingdom until his Second Advent?

What assurance was given to the disciples by two angels following Jesus' ascension? Quote the promise.

With what great work did the Apostle Peter associate Jesus' second coming?

Quote texts of Scripture to show the importance to the outlook of the Early Church of our Lord's return.

Did the brethren at the beginning of the age realize that the return of Christ was so far in the future from their day?

Explain the situation that was such a severe test of faith to the brethren of the Early Church, and relate this to the hope of Christ's appearance.

Summary of Important Thoughts:

An important object of Jesus' First Advent was to die as the Redeemer, to ransom the world from death. He comes the second time as the Deliverer, to restore mankind to life.

Manner of Our Lord's Return

When considering the manner of Christ's return to earth at his second advent, it is essential to remember that he is no longer a human being, that he sacrificed his humanity to provide redemption from death for Adam and his posterity, the human race. (Heb. 2:9; II Cor. 5:16) The Scriptures speak of the experiences of Jesus "in the days of his flesh," which are in the past. (Heb. 5:7) The Scriptures also inform us that Jesus was put to death in the flesh but in the resurrection was made alive in the Spirit, or a spirit being, the express image of his Heavenly Father.—Heb. 1:3; II Cor. 3:17; I Pet. 3:18

Being exalted to the divine nature when raised from the dead, Jesus is now invisible to human eyes, even as the Creator himself. (I Tim. 1:17; 6:15,16) To prove to his disciples that he had been raised from the dead, he miraculously appeared to them on different occasions in a body of flesh—once as a gardener, once as a stranger, etc. But these appearances are referred to in the Scriptures as "signs" and "proofs." (John 20:30; Acts 1:3) The apostles knew that in order to see Jesus as he is, a divine being, they would have to be made like him, and they entertained this hope.—I John 3:1-3

Jesus taught his disciples that the world of mankind would not see him after his death and resurrection. (John 14:19) Jesus explained that his disciples would see him, and this is because they, in the resurrection,

are to be made like him. Because human eyes are not able to see the resurrected and exalted Jesus, he is able to return secretly, while the world goes on with its ordinary affairs of life.—Rev. 16:15; I Thess. 5:2; II Pet. 3:10

Jesus explained that it would be necessary for his followers to watch the signs which would denote the fact of his second presence on earth and that for a time his presence would be unknown to all who did not “watch.” Jesus likened this to the days of Noah before the Flood, when the world went on with its ordinary affairs of life, not knowing the real significance of the times in which they were living.—Matt. 24:38,39; Luke 21:36; 17:26,27

To be “watchers,” as this term is used in the Bible, does not mean to gaze into the sky to see Jesus returning. The thought is, rather, to watch world events for the fulfillment of the prophecies pertaining to the time of our Lord’s return. Peter speaks of the “sure word of prophecy.”—II Pet. 1:19

Eventually the whole world of mankind will “see,” or discern, the fact of our Lord’s second presence. The Bible says that they will “see” him in the “clouds,” meaning in the chaotic and distressing experiences incidental to the breakdown of earthly rulership and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. The people of the world will never see Jesus in a literal sense.—Rev. 1:7; II Thess. 1:7-10

The world of mankind will discern Jesus in much the same manner as Job saw God. After his faith was severely tested by the afflictions which the Lord permitted to come upon him, Job said in prayer: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.” (Job 42:5) Job did not see God literally but had gained a better understanding of him.

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

Why do we know that Jesus will never return to earth as a human? Cite scriptural proof.

How was it possible for the disciples to see Jesus after he had been raised from the dead? Will Jesus' followers ever be able to see him?

How do we know that the world of mankind will never see Jesus again?

How and by what means do the true followers of Jesus at this end of the age discern the fact of his return and second presence?

Explain what Jesus meant by his admonition to "watch." When and how will the whole world eventually "see" Jesus?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

In studying the prophecies pertaining to the return of Christ and his second presence on earth, it is essential to remember that he is now a divine being, the "express image" of his Heavenly Father.

Three Worlds

There are important time divisions in the plan of God which the Bible refers to as worlds and ages. What the Bible says concerning any one of these periods of time may not be true of another; so it is necessary in our study of the Bible to apply its various promises and prophecies to the proper period of time in the divine plan; otherwise, the Bible will seem to be contradictory. This proper method of studying the Bible is referred to by the Apostle Paul as “rightly dividing the word of truth.”—II Tim. 2:15

The entire period of time from Adam to the Deluge is referred to in the Bible as a “world”—“the world that then was.” (II Pet. 3:6) Such faithful servants of God as Abel, Enoch, and Noah lived in this world. It was toward the close of this world that God instructed Noah to build an ark.—Gen. 6:14

The period of time beginning with the Flood and ending with the establishment of Christ's kingdom is what the Bible speaks of as “this present evil world.” (Gal. 1:4) It is called an evil world, not because there is no good in it, but because evil predominates. Satan, the Devil, is the prince, or ruler, of “this present evil world.”—Mal. 3:15; John 14:30; II Cor. 4:4

A third world begins when the returned Lord binds Satan and begins his thousand-year reign. It is referred to in the Bible as “the world to come.” (Heb. 2:5) During the first thousand years of this third world, Jesus will be the supreme ruler; and the purpose of his reign will be to establish the will of God throughout

the earth and to destroy all the enemies of God and of righteousness.—I Cor. 15:25-28

Since evil has predominated in the first two worlds, it is obvious that any references in the Bible to the general conditions during these two periods of time would take this into account. Only on special occasions, and for specific purposes, has God intervened in the affairs of mankind during these two worlds to halt wrongdoing. Most of the time it has seemed as though the wicked have flourished.—Job 21:7-15

For the present it appears that evil practices are almost unrestrained. It will be different in “the world to come,” for then Satan will be bound, and the kingdom of Christ will be in control.—Rev. 20:1-4

During “this present evil world” the righteous servants of God are often persecuted. (II Tim. 3:12) Persecution is referred to in the Old Testament as the “rebuke” of God’s people, and we are assured that this rebuke will be taken away by the agencies of Christ’s kingdom. (Isa. 25:8) Then the righteous will flourish and even the great evils of sickness and death will be taken away. The Apostle John, writing concerning the third world in the divine plan, said: “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—Ps. 72:7; Hosea 13:14; I Cor. 15:55; Rev. 21:1-5

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

You have probably heard it said that the Bible is contradictory; but this is not true, as you will realize if you know the answers to these questions.

Explain what the Apostle Paul meant by “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

How does the Bible describe the world prior to the deluge?

What name does the Bible give to the period of time beginning at the Flood, which we sometimes refer to as “the world of today”?

How does the Bible describe “the world of tomorrow,” and when does this world begin?

Does God ever interfere with the wickedness of “this present evil world”? What will be one of the factors to change this situation in “the world to come”?

Will the righteous servants of God always be persecuted?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

In order to understand the teachings of the Bible, it is essential to know the various time divisions in the plan of God and apply the promises and prophecies of the Bible in their proper time periods.

Four Ages

In our previous study we learned that there are three major time divisions in the plan of God. The first of these was the world before the Flood; the second, the period which began at the Flood and ends with the establishment of Christ's kingdom; the third is the world which begins with the binding of Satan and the establishment of Christ's kingdom and continues into the eternal future.

The second of these major time divisions, described by the Apostle Paul as "this present evil world" (II Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4), is divided into three ages. The first of these ages began with the drying up of the waters of the Flood and continued until the death of Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. During this period God carried forward his plan through individual patriarchs such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He made promises to Abraham, which were reiterated to Isaac and inherited as a birthright by Jacob.—Gen. 12:3; 22:16-18; 26:3-5; 27:28,29; 28:10-14

Beginning with the death of Jacob, God began to deal with his twelve sons as a family, or nation. This change is suggested by the fact that, while Isaac could bestow his parental blessing upon only one of his sons, Jacob blessed all twelve of his sons, although only Judah received the promise. (Gen. 49:8-10) Later, after they were delivered from Egypt, God gave this people his Law, and to these he sent his prophets. (Rom. 3:1,2) We refer to this period in the plan of God as the Jewish Age, for God dealt exclusively with the

Jewish nation during this period.—Amos 3:2

The Jewish Age was characterized by the fact that it was during this time that God gave the Israelites his Law and sent his prophets to them. This arrangement ended with the first advent of Christ, John the Baptist being the last of the prophets. (Luke 16:16) One of the essential purposes of the Jewish Age was to give the Israelites as a people an opportunity to qualify for association with the Messiah in the future blessing of the world, but in this they failed.—Exod.19:5,6

The final test upon the nation was the coming of the Messiah, and they failed by rejecting him. Here the Gospel Age began, an age in which God deals with individuals who respond to the Gospel and devote themselves to his service. A few of the Israelites were the first to embrace this opportunity. (John 1:11,12) But there were not sufficient of the Israelites to make up God's foreordained number of joint-heirs with Christ, so the Gospel began to be preached also to the Gentiles, and this proclamation of the Gospel has continued throughout the age.—Acts 1:8

Following the Gospel Age comes the Messianic Age. This will be the first age in the third world. This is the age of Christ's rulership over the earth. It is the age during which all evil will be destroyed, including sickness and death. (I Cor. 15:25,26) This is the great consummation age in the plan of God when his great design will be completed.—Eph. 1:10

Through The Christ, Head and body—the faith seed of Abraham—the knowledge of the Lord will be caused to fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. In that righteous kingdom nothing will be permitted to hurt nor destroy.—Isa. 11:9

STUDENT HELPS



Questions:

To know what God's work has been in the various ages of his plan and what it will be in the future is essential in order to appreciate the harmony of the Bible. Can you answer these questions?

How many major time divisions are there in the plan of God? Identify them.

What is the name of the first age in the second world, and what is characteristic of this age?

When did the second age in the present world begin? When did it end?

What were some of the things accomplished by God during the Jewish Age?

What was God's final test of obedience upon the Jewish nation? What blessing came to those who accepted Jesus?

What is the name of the first age in "the world to come," and what will be accomplished by God during this age?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

The application of the various texts of Scripture to their proper age is most important in the study of the Bible.

The Day of the Lord

The Bible uses the expression “day of the Lord” (or day of Jehovah) to denote that period in the closing days of this Gospel Age when the hand of God is manifested in the affairs of men. It is properly applied to that part of Christ’s second presence during which Satan’s world, or social order, is being destroyed, preparatory to the establishment of Christ’s millennial kingdom.—I Thess. 5:2,3; II Pet. 3:10

The work of Christ as the Arm of Jehovah in setting aside Satan’s social order is described as being accomplished during the “days of the Son of man.” (Luke 17:26,27) It is the time when Jesus, “the Son of man,” is present, the crumbling of the institutions of the earth being among the signs that he has returned.

This day of the Lord, or Jehovah, is also foretold in the Old Testament, where it is symbolically described as one of clouds and darkness, denoting trouble. (Joel 2:1,2) Daniel described this day as “the time of the end,” in which there would be a great “time of trouble.”—Dan. 12:1,4

This same period of national and international trouble which denotes the destruction of Satan’s world is also described in the Bible as the day of “God’s vengeance.” (Isa. 34:1–8; Jer. 25:32,33) During this period the sinful and selfish institutions of men, dominated by Satan, are to be destroyed, whereas heretofore these have been allowed to flourish.

At the close of this “day,” selfish human authority

throughout the earth will be replaced by divine authority, in the hands of Christ. (Rev. 11:15,17,18) The Bible reveals that in the process of destroying the evil institutions of men the nations become angry, leading to the time of great tribulation foretold by Jesus.—Matt. 24:21,22

The Bible also uses the expression “last days” with reference to these final days of this present Gospel Age, just prior to the establishment in the earth of Christ’s righteous kingdom. This kingdom is likened to a great mountain which has a dominating position over all other “mountains” and “hills,” symbolic of the “kingdoms of this world.” The Bible shows that the people will recognize the authority of Christ’s kingdom and through obedience to its laws will find peace and security.—Mic. 4:1-4

Evil will not have been completely destroyed until the closing years of Christ’s kingdom. While it is during the day of the Lord that the selfish governmental institutions of men are destroyed in a time of national and international trouble, the work of abolishing all evil will continue during the ensuing thousand years of the kingdom. Finally all “enemies” will have been destroyed.—I Cor. 15:25,26

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

In the study of prophecy it is essential to realize that a “day” frequently stands for a long period of time. The proper answers to the following questions will reveal this.

What is “the day of the Lord” referred to in the prophecies of the Bible, and how long is it?

What does the Bible mean by “the days of the Son of man”?

How did the Prophet Joel and the Prophet Daniel describe “the day of the Lord”?

What is the day of “God’s vengeance”? Explain what will be accomplished during this prophetic “day.”

What are the “last days” mentioned in the prophecies, and what takes place during these “days”?

How long will the work of destroying evil continue?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

“The day of the Lord,” or day of Jehovah, is that period of time in the closing days of the Gospel Age, prior to the establishment of Christ’s thousand-year kingdom, when the selfish, evil institutions of men are to be destroyed in a great time of trouble. It is also described in the Scriptures as the day of God’s anger and wrath, and the day of God’s vengeance.

Object of Our Lord's Return

In a former study we learned that Jesus was born into the world as a man in order that he might sacrifice his human life for the sins of the people and thus redeem them from death. It was for this purpose that he gave his flesh, his humanity, for the life of the world.—John 6:51

The work of the Lord in the earth since Jesus' death and resurrection has not been the restoring of the people to health and life on the earth (though this was provided by his death and resurrection) but the selection from mankind of those willing to suffer and die with him, that they might live and reign with him. This company of people is described in the Bible as a "people for his name."—Acts 15:14

However, the Scriptures assure us that, as a result of the redeeming work of Christ, mankind will be restored to life on the earth. Christ returns to earth to accomplish this great work during what the Bible describes as "times of restitution of all things." The Bible informs us that the "times of restitution" have been foretold by all God's holy prophets.—Acts 3:19-21

Isaiah was one of God's holy prophets, and he foretold a day when the people would not say they were sick. (Isa. 33:24) Isaiah also forecast that blind eyes would be opened, and that deaf ears would be unstopped, and that those redeemed by Jesus—"the ransomed of the

Lord”—would return from death. (Isa. 35:5,10) In another forecast of the “times of restitution” Isaiah wrote that God would wipe away the tears of the people and that death would be destroyed.—Isa. 25:8

Jeremiah was another of God’s holy prophets, and he foretold that children who had died would be restored to life, brought back, that is, from “the land of the enemy.”—Jer. 31:15-17

The work of restoring mankind to health and life on the earth will be accomplished through the agencies of Christ’s kingdom. This kingdom is symbolized in the Bible by a mountain, “the mountain of the Lord,” and the Prophet Micah foretold that in this “mountain,” or kingdom of the Lord, the people would learn war no more and that none would make them afraid.—Mic. 4:1-4

In the Old Testament those who have died are likened to prisoners who are held captive. Their awakening from death is described as a release from their captivity. Ezekiel, another of God’s holy prophets, using this terminology, foretold the restoration of the Sodomites, the Samaritans, and the Israelites. (Ezek. 16:53) Using this same language the Prophet Jeremiah foretold the restoration of other wicked people of the past.—Jer. 48:47; 49:39

The Prophet Habakkuk foretold that following the return of the Lord the earth would be filled with a knowledge of the glory of the Lord. (Hab. 2:14) All these blessings will come to the peoples of the earth as a result of our Lord’s return.

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

What was one of the main purposes of Christ's first advent? What has been the work of the Lord in the earth since the death and resurrection of Jesus?

What is one of the main purposes of Christ's return to earth at his second advent? How does Peter describe this future accomplishment?

Cite some of Isaiah's prophecies concerning the "times of restitution of all things."

How do we know that children will be raised from the dead during "the times of restitution"?

What is one of the symbols of Christ's kingdom?

What assurance is given us in one of Micah's prophecies in which this symbol is used?

How does the Old Testament sometimes describe the dead, and how is their resurrection promised?

When will the knowledge of the Lord fill the earth?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

Christ does not return to destroy the earth but to restore the people to health and life.

The Kingdom of Christ

The kingdom of Christ is a very prominent topic of the Bible. It is sometimes referred to as the kingdom of God, which is appropriate, because it is God who provided for his Son to set up the kingdom in the earth. It is also sometimes referred to as the kingdom of heaven, which emphasizes that this world government of promise is not of human planning and origin but is set up and empowered by the God of heaven.—Dan. 2:44

Some of the promises and prophecies of the Bible pertaining to the kingdom refer to its rulers, while others pertain to its subjects, those who have an opportunity to be blessed through the administration of its righteous laws. Jesus Christ will be the great King, or Ruler, in that kingdom.—Zech. 9:9,10; Rev. 19:16; John 18:37

Associated with Jesus as rulers in his kingdom will be those who, during the Gospel Age, have denied themselves and faithfully taken up their cross to follow him, willingly drinking of his cup of suffering. These are spoken of in the Scriptures as those who suffer and die with Jesus and as being raised from the dead to live and reign with him.—Rev. 20:4

Jesus and his followers will not rule as human kings but as divine, and they will be invisible to human eyes. (Col. 1:13-15) The assurance is given the followers of Jesus that they shall be like him.—I John 3:1-3; II Pet. 1:4

One of the illustrations the Bible gives of the change of nature from human to divine is being “born again.” Jesus

explained to Nicodemus that those who are born again are invisible and powerful, like the wind. (John 3:6-8) The birth from human to spirit nature takes place in the resurrection; and when Jesus was raised from the dead he was able to go and come invisibly, appearing to his disciples only when he wished to do so.

In the kingdom of Christ these invisible and powerful kings, or rulers, will be represented on the earth and among men by the faithful servants of God who suffered and died for righteousness' sake prior to the first advent of Jesus. These are referred to in the Bible as the "fathers," and the promise is that they are to be made "princes in all the earth."—Ps. 45:16

The Apostle Paul explains that these faithful servants of God in ancient times will be brought forth from death perfect, in what he describes as a "better resurrection." (Heb. 11:35,39,40) Paul mentions the names of a few of these ancient worthies, but the Scriptures indicate that there are many others of those former ages who proved their loyalty to God and will be used in the kingdom. Jesus also referred to the ancient worthies and to their place in his kingdom.—Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28,29

It is through these two phases of the kingdom that the promise to Abraham is to be verified—"In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." "Thy seed shall be as the sand of the sea, and as the stars of heaven"—an earthly and a heavenly seed, both God's instruments of blessing to the world. This root-covenant bears these two distinct kinds of branches, each of which in the resurrection will bear its own distinct kind of perfect fruitage—the human and spiritual classes in kingdom power."—Rom. 11:17

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

Mention different ways in which the Messianic kingdom is described in the Bible, and explain.

Who will be the subjects in the kingdom, and who will be the great King?

Who will be associated with Jesus as kings in his kingdom?

Will Jesus and his joint-heirs rule in the earth as humans? Explain.

What is one of the illustrations the Bible gives of the change from human to spirit nature?

Who will serve as the human and visible representatives of the spiritual rulers in Christ's kingdom?

Will the ancient worthies be imperfect when they are raised from the dead?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

There will be rulers and subjects in the kingdom of Christ. The principal rulers will be spiritual and invisible to men, but they will have human representatives.

Subjects of Kingdom Blessed

The subjects of Christ's kingdom will be the people of the whole world, including those who have died, with the exception of those who, during the time they lived, proved worthy to be among either the spiritual or earthly rulers in the kingdom. Their blessings will consist of all the good things which properly belong to humans who desire to be in harmony with the righteous laws of their Creator. (Ps. 145:16) These blessings are fittingly referred to in one of the promises of the Bible as a "feast."—Isa. 25:6

There are many heretofore unobtainable blessings for which the human race has yearned and struggled. One of these is peace. The people of all nations have longed for a time when there would be no more wars, and God has promised that through the agencies of Christ's kingdom peace will be established—universal and eternal peace.—Ps. 46:9,10; Isa. 2:3,4; 9:7

Throughout the ages there has always been a great deal of uncertainty with many concerning their economic needs. While in America Social Security has eased these tensions to some extent, the problem is far from solved on a global basis. Only Christ's kingdom will bring the real solution. Under the laws of that kingdom, equitable and happy conditions will exist for all.—Mic. 4:4; Ps. 72:11-13; Isa. 65:21,22

Another contributing cause of human unhappiness has been the wide conflict of opinion with respect to God and religion. In every age this has led to bitter hatred and persecution. In many countries today efforts are being made to solve this problem, but at best these lead only to surface agreements of unity. However, through the administration of Christ's kingdom this problem will be completely and eternally solved.

God's promises assure us that he will write his law in the hearts of the people and that all shall truly know him.—Jer. 31:31-34

We are also assured that the Lord will turn a pure message of truth to the people, upon the basis of which all will serve him unitedly. (Zeph. 3:9) We are informed that then the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.—Isa. 11:9

All these blessings, wonderful as they are, would be of no permanent value if the people continued to become ill and die; so the Scriptures assure us that the problem of sickness and death will also be solved. This plague upon the human race will be destroyed.—Isa. 33:24; 25:8; I Cor. 15:25,26

The blessings of Christ's kingdom will be extended to those who are dead, for they will be awakened from the sleep of death. (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28,29) The entire dead world of mankind has been ransomed by the death of Jesus, and we are promised that the ransomed of the Lord are to return from death. (Isa. 35:10) This will include the wicked as well as the righteous.—Acts 24:15

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

Who will be the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and what blessings will they receive? How does the Bible symbolize these blessings?

Quote scriptures to prove that Christ's kingdom will give peace to all mankind.

Will the subjects of Christ's kingdom need to have any fears concerning their food, clothing, and shelter?

Will religious controversy continue during the thousand years of Christ's kingdom? Quote some of the texts of the Bible on this question.

Will Christ's kingdom remove the plague of sickness and death?

Will those who have died have an opportunity to enjoy the blessings of Christ's kingdom?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

The blessings of Christ's kingdom will be so all-comprehensive and satisfying that the Bible likens them to a "feast of fat things" which the Lord will make for all people.

God Tests His People

It is the will of God that all his intelligent creatures shall enjoy everlasting life. Humans are now dying, not because they were created to die, but because of sin. None will be granted everlasting life until he has proved worthy by obedience to divine law.

Our first parents had the test of obedience placed before them. (Gen. 2:16,17) They failed to pass this test, so they were sentenced to death. (Gen. 3:17-19) Through the law of heredity the penalty of death passed on to Adam's posterity, so the entire human race became a dying race.—Rom. 5:12

However, through Christ, God's love had made provision for the release of mankind from the original death penalty and for each member of the human race individually to have an opportunity to prove worthy of everlasting life. (John 3:16) Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the people, but that all might have an opportunity to live.—John 3:17

This opportunity will be given to the world in general in a future period of time described in the Bible as a day of judgment. (Acts 17:31) This day, or period of judgment, or testing, will be a time of enlightenment, when the people will learn righteousness.—Isa. 26:9; Ps. 96:10-13

With the exception of the generation living at the beginning of this future period of testing, it will be necessary for mankind to be awakened from the sleep of death in order to be enlightened concerning the divine will for them. The impartation of this knowledge to the

world of mankind is represented in the Bible as being accomplished by the opening of “books,” and those who obey the things written in these books are said to have their names enrolled in the “book of life.”—Rev. 20:12

Christ will be the great Judge during the world’s judgment day. He is described in the Bible as “that Prophet,” or teacher, and the information is given that those who will not obey that Prophet will be destroyed. (Acts 3:23) This destruction of the willfully wicked is described in the Bible as the “second death,” which is symbolized by a “lake of fire.”—Rev. 20:14,15

Jesus made a promise of the resurrection of the dead in which he spoke of the righteous—those who have “done good”—coming forth to life, and the unrighteous—those who have “done evil”—coming forth to judgment. (John 5:28,29, *RSV*) One group of the righteous will be made up of the faithful servants of God, from Abel to the first advent of Jesus. These will come forth in “a better resurrection.” (Heb. 11:35) The faithful of the present age will also come forth to life—even to immortal life—in “the first resurrection.”—I Cor. 15:53; Rom. 2:7; Rev. 20:6

The Ancient Worthies, who will not come into the future judgment, will be the representatives of the Christ in the work of judging the world. (Ps. 45:16; Matt. 8:11) The faithful followers of Jesus during the present age will come forth in the resurrection to be associated with Jesus as co-judges of the world of mankind, and these will be represented on earth by the Ancient Worthies.—I Cor. 6:2

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

What is the condition upon which any of God's intelligent creatures may enjoy everlasting life? How has this been demonstrated throughout the earth since the days of Eden?

What provision has God made to give life to the condemned and dying world?

When will the world in general be given an opportunity to learn and obey the will of God?

How will those who have died throughout the ages be given a knowledge of the truth?

How is the impartation of knowledge to the world illustrated in the Book of Revelation?

Who will be the great Judge of the world, and what will happen to those who disobey him?

What did Jesus say about the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous?

What part will the followers of Jesus have in the future work of judgment? Who will then be the human representatives of Christ and his true church?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

No one will have eternal life until proved worthy of it. Some have proved worthy in this life, and the remainder will be given a future test.

The First Resurrection

The Apostle Paul wrote that, unless there is a resurrection of the dead, even Christians perish in death. (I Cor. 15:16–18) This means that all hope of life beyond the grave depends upon the dead being restored to life in the resurrection. But all the dead are not to be resurrected at the same time, nor will all be restored to the same plane of life. In the resurrection some will be given spiritual bodies and some, human bodies.—I Cor. 15:38,40-42

Those who receive a spiritual body in the resurrection will inherit a heavenly home. (I Pet. 1:3-5) These are the footstep followers of Jesus, who, inspired by the heavenly promises of the Bible, set their affections on things above, and “run” for “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Col. 3:1-3; Phil. 3:10-14; Heb. 12:1

The followers of Jesus, together with him, are described by the Apostle Paul as “the firstfruits” of the resurrection. (I Cor. 15:23) We know that the faithful followers of the Master are included in the “firstfruits” class because the Apostle James and the Apostle John testify to this effect.—James 1:18; Rev. 14:4

One of the divine purposes in exalting the faithful followers of the Master to the spiritual plane of life is that they might reign with Christ in his thousand-year kingdom. In this connection they are said to be brought forth from death in “the first resurrection.”—Rev. 20:6

This “little flock” who will thus receive this exalted position in the kingdom will be raised up to the highest plane of spiritual life, which is referred to in the Bible as

“the divine nature.” (Luke 12:32; II Pet. 1:4) They are to receive immortality. (Rom. 2:7; I Cor. 15:54) Humans do not, by nature, possess immortality; but, as the Scriptures so clearly set forth, it is bestowed upon the faithful followers of Jesus as a reward when they are brought forth in “the first resurrection.”

The Bible refers to this highest of all planes of existence as the “crown” of life and of righteousness. (Rev. 2:10; II Tim. 4:8) The way that leads to this high exaltation with Jesus is one of sacrifice and suffering. It is a way that is not pleasant to the flesh, but the end will be glorious for all those who are faithful—faithful even unto death.

God’s grace and strength is especially bestowed upon those who walk in the narrow way of sacrifice. The Bible assures us that the same mighty power which raised Jesus from the dead is employed on behalf of all his faithful followers. This is true during the present time, when they are laying down their lives in sacrifice; and it will also be true, as it was with Jesus, that divine power will raise them up in the resurrection, high above every other creature in the universe.—Eph. 1:16-23

The plan of God for the faithful followers of the Master is truly wonderful and inspiring. Let us give thanks that our loving Heavenly Father has called us to this “heavenly calling.” Let us endeavor to be faithful day by day.—Heb. 3:1; Luke 9:23

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

Perhaps you have not realized that the Bible refers to a special resurrection of the true followers of Jesus. If not, these questions will be of special interest to you.

Why would Christians perish in death if there were no resurrection of the dead? Will all who are raised from the dead be given the same kind of bodies?

How does the Bible describe the home to be inherited by Christians?

How do we know that the followers of the Master are included in “the firstfruits” of the resurrection?

What is one of the purposes of God in exalting Christians to a spiritual plane of life in the “first” resurrection?

How does the Bible describe the plane of life to which Christians are exalted? Why is it called a “crown” of life?

How can we be sure that if we are faithful we can attain to this high plane of life with Jesus?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

Only those who are brought forth in “the first resurrection” are to receive “glory and honor and immortality.”

The Better Resurrection

The kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Christ, as discussed in the Bible, consists of both rulers and subjects. The Bible reveals that the chief rulers in the kingdom are Jesus and his church, his faithful footstep followers. These will be on the divine plane of life, invisible to human eyes. However, these spiritual rulers will be represented here on earth by perfect humans, raised from the dead in what the Bible describes as a "better resurrection."—Heb. 11:35

Those to receive this blessing of the "better resurrection" are the faithful servants of God who proved their absolute devotion to God and to his principles of righteousness prior to the first advent of Jesus. (Heb. 11) The first of these was righteous Abel, and the last was probably John the Baptist, who Jesus said would not be in the kingdom of "heaven," meaning the spiritual, or heavenly, phase of the kingdom.—Matt. 11:11

Jesus said to the people of Israel of his day that they would see and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets. (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28,29) This implies that the people of Jesus' day will have been raised from the dead and that the ancient worthies, who will be the earthly representatives of the spiritual phase of the kingdom, will also have been raised from the dead, having proved their worthiness of this exalted position in the kingdom by

their loyalty to God in the severe tests to which they were subjected.

The Bible indicates these Ancient Worthies will be raised to perfection, "made perfect." However, this "better resurrection" of the earthly representatives of the kingdom must await the completion of the spiritual class and their resurrection to "glory and honor and immortality," this being the "better thing" which the followers of the Master will receive.—Heb. 11:39,40; Rom. 2:7

In another promise of the "better" resurrection of those who will serve as the human representatives of Christ throughout the thousand years of his reign, we are informed that they will shine "as the stars forever and ever." This is in contrast with the much brighter shining of those who will be the spiritual rulers in the kingdom, which will be "as the brightness of the firmament," or "as the sun."—Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43

The shining of both these classes is symbolic of the fact that through the spiritual and earthly phases of the kingdom the knowledge of the Lord will be caused to fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.—Isa. 11:9

During the forty years of Moses' service as a deliverer and lawgiver, the people's contacts with him were largely through "counselors." Later, during the period of the judges, they were ruled through judges whom the Lord raised up to them. These circumstances are employed by the Lord to illustrate his future use of the Ancient Worthies, whom he will raise up in the "better resurrection" to be judges and counselors. (Isa. 1:26) These will surely be wonderful servants of the people.

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

The faithful servants of God of past ages are to be restored to life on the earth and to be the human executives of a new world government under Christ. The answers to the following questions will reveal this important truth of the divine plan.

Who will be the invisible rulers in the kingdom of God? Who, on the earth, will represent the spiritual rulers in Christ's kingdom, and how is their resurrection described?

What is implied by Jesus' statement that the Ancient Worthies will be seen here on earth in the kingdom?

What did Paul mean concerning the ancient worthies in his statement that they would be "made perfect"?

What is implied by the promise that the Ancient Worthies will "shine" when raised from the dead?

What did the Prophet Isaiah mean by the promise that judges and "counselors" would be raised up in the kingdom?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

There will be two parts in the ruling phase of the kingdom of Christ—the spiritual and the earthly. The earthly rulers will be the Ancient Worthies, and the spiritual, Jesus and his faithful followers.

The General Resurrection

PART I

The whole world of mankind will be awakened from the sleep of death in the general resurrection, with the exception of the overcoming classes who will previously have been resurrected, the ones, that is, who have “done good.” (John 5:28,29) Those awakened from death in the general resurrection are described by Paul as the “unjust.” (Acts 24:15) These are “unjust,” or unjustified, because, through lack of understanding or opportunity, they had never fully given themselves over to do God’s will.

The general resurrection of the dead is taught in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, although the word resurrection does not appear in the Old Testament. One of the words used in the Old Testament to describe the resurrection is “return.” In a prayer, Moses used this word to describe his hope of the resurrection.—Ps. 90:3

The dead are to be restored to life because they have been redeemed, or “ransomed,” by the blood of Christ. The Prophet Isaiah wrote of the time when the “ransomed of the Lord” would “return.”—Isa. 35:10

The word “return” is also used by the Prophet Ezekiel to describe the awakening of the dead. Ezekiel foretold the “return” from death of the Israelites, the Sodomites,

and the Samaritans, assuring us that they will be restored to “their former estate” of life.—Ezek. 16:55

The Prophet Jeremiah records a promise by the Lord which assures mothers that children who die will be restored to life. (Jer. 31:15–17) In this promise, the living and the dead are poetically represented as dwelling in two different countries, or lands. The restoration to life is described as a crossing over the border from the land of death to the land of life. The expression “come again” is used to denote this return to the land of the living.

In the Old Testament the restoration of the dead is also likened to an awakening from sleep. (Dan. 12:2) In this promise the dead are spoken of as sleeping in the dust of the earth. This language takes our minds back to the Genesis record of man’s disobedience and condemnation to death, when the Lord told Adam that he would return to the dust. (Gen. 3:19) The promise that those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake indicates that all who were condemned to death through Adam will be restored to life through Christ.—I Cor. 15:21-23

On more than one occasion Jesus referred to those who had died as being asleep. A ruler in Israel besought Jesus to restore his dead daughter to life. When Jesus arrived at the home, he said that the girl was not dead but asleep. (Matt. 9:24-26) Jesus restored the dead girl to life, thus, symbolically speaking, awakening her from sleep. This was an illustration of the general resurrection of the dead, when all who sleep in death will be awakened.

Jesus also referred to the dead Lazarus as being asleep and told his disciples that he was going to awaken him out of sleep. (John 11:11–14) Returning to Bethany, and to the home of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, Jesus called him forth from death, thus providing another illustration of the general resurrection.—John 11:43,44

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

The only hope of life beyond the grave is based upon the promises of God to restore the dead to life, but do you realize how many promises of the resurrection there really are in the Bible?

Who are to be raised from the dead in the general resurrection?

What is one of the words used in the Old Testament to describe the resurrection of the dead? Which prophets use this word?

Explain the illustration used in Jeremiah pertaining to the living and the dead. In this promise, how is the resurrection described?

How did the Lord describe the awakening of the dead to the Prophet Daniel, and what is implied by sleeping in the dust of the earth?

Cite and comment on two instances in which Jesus referred to the dead as being asleep.

Summary of Important Thoughts:

The Bible's teaching concerning the resurrection of the dead is not confined to the New Testament. In addition to the word "resurrection," the Bible uses several other words to convey the idea of the dead being restored to life. This promised resurrection of the dead is the only hope of life beyond the grave.

The General Resurrection

PART II

The Bible speaks of those who have died as being prisoners of death. (Job 3:17-22) In this illustration of death, the resurrection of the dead is referred to as a releasing of prisoners. (Isa. 49:9) The hell of the Bible is the state of death, and Jesus informs us that he has the keys of hell and of death (Rev. 1:18); and we are assured by the Bible that the gates of hell, the great prison of death, will be opened and that hell will give up its dead.—Matt. 16:18; Rev. 20:13

In keeping with the idea that the dead are prisoners of death, the Bible speaks of their awakening from death as a “return” from their “captivity.” Sometimes the expression, “bring again,” is used in this connection.—Ezek. 16:53; Jer. 48:47; 49:6,39

The resurrection of the dead is to be brought about through Christ (I Cor. 15:21,22); and in keeping with the thought of captives being released from prison, the Apostle Paul speaks of Christ in his own resurrection as leading a multitude of captives. (Eph. 4:8, margin) This “multitude of captives” will be awakened from death as humans to live as humans on the earth.

The “little flock” of the present Gospel Age, who will share in the “first resurrection” to “live and reign with Christ,” and the Ancient Worthies, who will be

restored to life as perfect humans to be the earthly rulers in Christ's kingdom, will all have passed their tests of worthiness for everlasting life. This is why they will be rewarded at once with perfection of life, either on the spiritual plane or the earthly plane.

But it will be different with those who participate in the general resurrection. These, we believe, will be awakened from death in much the same condition as when they died. They will not be given perfection of life at once but will have to prove their worthiness of a full raising up to life by their acceptance of God's grace through Christ and their obedience to the laws of the Messianic kingdom.

But every provision will be made for their enlightenment and help. No longer will the deceptive influences of Satan, the Devil, be permitted to blind their minds and hearts.—Rev. 20:1-3

The road to perfection of character and life is described in the Bible as a "highway" in which no one will need to lose his way and from which all hindrances to progress will be removed. (Isa. 35:8,9) However, the Bible indicates that even in that "day of uprightness" there will be some who will display willful disobedience to the laws of the kingdom; and these, of course, will make no progress toward perfection of life but, continuing in their incorrigible attitude, will ultimately be destroyed, suffering the penalty of the "second death." (Isa. 26:10; Rev. 20:14,15) The Apostle Peter refers to these and informs us that they will be destroyed from among the people.—Acts 3:23

So, at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ, all the dead will have been awakened from death, and those desirous of learning and obeying God's laws will have been restored to perfection of life as humans. These will then enjoy everlasting life in an earth made perfect, a worldwide paradise.

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

Are you assured that there is to be a resurrection of all the dead? To have such a hope makes the burdens of the present life much lighter.

Explain how the word “prisoner” is used in the Bible with respect to those who have died.

How do we know that hell will give up its dead?

In what sense will Jesus lead “a multitude of captives”?

Explain the difference between the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies and the “little flock,” and those who will come forth in the general resurrection.

In what ways will the conditions be made favorable for those who are awakened from death in the general resurrection?

What is the “highway” mentioned in Isaiah 35:8?

What will be the destiny of those who do not make progress over the “highway”?

Describe the condition of the human race at the close of the reign of Christ.

Summary of Important Thoughts:

The awakening of the unjust dead from the sleep of death will not constitute a full raising up to perfection of life. Those who then attain to perfection of human life will need to prove worthy of it.

Oneness with God Restored

Man was created in the image of God, and before Adam transgressed divine law he was at one with his Creator. This state of harmony with God is described in the Bible as being in covenant relationship with him. Adam lost his covenant relationship with the Creator when he disobeyed one of the divine requirements upon which it was based.—Hosea 6:7, margin

Those who are in covenant relationship with the Lord are his friends, and they enjoy his favor. When Adam lost the favor of his Creator he also lost life, for no one can continue living in a state of alienation from God. But God did not hide his face from his human creatures forever, for his love provided redemption through Christ, making possible a return of divine favor.—John 3:16

Alienation from God because of sin, and the consequent evils of sickness and death, are symbolized in the Bible by darkness. The whole period of the reign of sin and death is likened to a "night." Because of God's love in providing a Redeemer from sin and death, this nighttime of sorrow is to terminate in a morning of joy.—Ps. 30:5

God gave the people of Israel an opportunity to recover themselves from adamic condemnation through obedience to his Law. If they could have kept that Law perfectly, they would have gained the favor of God and life, but they failed. —Lev. 18:5; Gal. 3:12; Rom. 7:10

The failure of the Israelites to gain life by keeping the Law of God demonstrated the need of a Redeemer from sin and death, and Jesus was that Redeemer. (Rom. 3:23-26) Hence, it is through Jesus that mankind is reconciled to God; restored to harmony with him, and in a position to receive and enjoy his favor.—II Cor. 5:19; Eph. 1:10

The church class, the followers of Jesus, are, through faith in his blood, reconciled to God during the Gospel Age. These become associated with him in the work of reconciliation.—II Cor. 5:18

When the Law Covenant failed to give life because of the inability of the people to live up perfectly to its requirements, God promised to make a New Covenant with them, and this covenant will be extended to embrace all mankind. (Jer. 31:31-34; I Tim. 2:3-6) The Scriptures reveal that Jesus will be the Mediator of the New Covenant and that his church, exalted to glory with him in the First Resurrection, will be associated with him as “ministers” of that covenant.—Heb. 12:24; II Cor. 3:6

It will be through the New Covenant that the world of mankind will be reconciled to God. The New Covenant will accomplish this divine objective because, through its Mediator, God’s law will be written in “the inward parts” of the people. (Jer. 31:33) This implies restoration to the original perfection and divine image in which Adam was created.

When the New Covenant will have been fully made with all the people, both the living and those who have been awakened from death, the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth. (Isa. 11 :9) No one will then be without an accurate knowledge of God and of his will.—Jer. 31:34

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

Have you ever wondered what the world would be like if all the people loved and served the Creator, the true and living God, and were not plagued by sin and death? The answers to these questions reveal how and when such a condition will become a reality.

How do we know that Adam was in covenant relationship with the Lord before he sinned?

Can anyone live forever without God's favor?

What is one of the Bible symbols of sin, sickness, and death?

How did God give the Israelites an opportunity to escape death?

What was demonstrated by Israel's failure to keep the Law? When will the New Covenant be made, and who will be its Mediator?

What will be the ultimate and complete result of the New Covenant, and when will this be fully attained?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

Man was created in the divine image and, while obedient to the Creator, enjoyed his favor and blessing. Through disobedience he lost divine favor and was condemned to death. He has been ransomed, or redeemed, by Christ and will be restored to God's favor under the terms of the New Covenant, of which Christ will be the Mediator.

No More Death

The expression “natural death” is often used in contrast to accidental death, or death on the battlefield. Actually, however, as far as humans are concerned, death is never natural. Man was created to live and not to die. Death became a part of human experience because of sin. (Rom. 5:12) Following the transgression of divine law by our first parents, they were driven out of the Garden of Eden and prevented from partaking of the tree of life, lest they live forever. (Gen. 3:22,23) This implies that man was capable of continuing to live, had God permitted him to enjoy the blessings which had been provided for him.

Because of God's love for his human creatures, even though they had disobeyed his law, he provided a means of escape from death. This provision was Christ and his redeeming blood, which was a satisfaction for adamic sin. (Rom. 3:25; I John 2:2) This means that upon the basis of faith in the redeeming blood, life can be regained, that no one will need to perish forever.—John 3:16,17

However, the opportunity to accept Christ and receive life through him is not limited to the short span of the present dying experience. It is God's purpose to save humankind from adamic death by awakening them from the sleep of death, enlightening them with the truth that they may have a full opportunity to believe and obey.—I Tim. 2:3-6

An opportunity to accept Christ and receive everlasting life will be given to all mankind during the thousand years of the Messianic kingdom. We are

assured by the Word of God that one of the glorious results of Christ's rulership will be the destruction of death.—Hosea 13:14; I Cor. 15:25,26

In the Old Testament the kingdom of Christ is likened to a great mountain which will fill the whole earth. (Dan. 2:35,44) God's promise is that in this mountain tears will be wiped away and death will be destroyed. (Isa. 25:6-9) Sickness is part of the dying process, and the Bible assures us that in the day of Christ's kingdom sickness will be no more.—Isa. 33:24

One of the Bible's illustrations of the blessings of health and life that will be vouchsafed to the people during the reign of Christ is a mighty river—the "river of water of life." There are trees of life by this river which bear an ample supply of life-giving fruit, and we are told that the leaves of these "trees" are for the healing of the nations.—Rev. 22:1,2,17

But no one will receive everlasting life who does not obey the laws of the kingdom. All who willfully turn their backs upon divine grace through refusal to believe and obey will be destroyed in the symbolic "lake of fire," which is stated to be "the second death." (Rev. 20:14,15) The Apostle Peter confirms this.—Acts 3:23

Thus the restored race of Adam will be free from all sickness and pain. All tears will be wiped away, and there will be no further cause for sorrow, for, as the Lord assures us through the Apostle John, "There shall be no more death." And we are told that "these words are true and faithful."—Rev. 21:3-5

STUDENT HELPS

Questions:

It is difficult to imagine a world in which there is no sickness and death; but this is what the Lord has promised, as the answers to these questions reveal.

Is death a natural and inevitable experience of humans?

What assurance do we have in the Bible that those who die because of Adam's sin have not perished forever?

Is the opportunity to accept Christ limited to the present short span of life?

When will the world of mankind as a whole have their first genuine opportunity to accept Christ? What will be one of the results of Christ's kingdom?

What is one of the Old Testament illustrations of the kingdom of Christ?

What is one of the Bible's illustrations of the blessings of life as they flow out to the people during Christ's reign?

What will be the destiny of those who willfully refuse to obey?

Will there be any further cause for sorrow after the work of Christ's kingdom is complete?

Summary of Important Thoughts:

When God's plan for man is complete, all sin, sickness, and death will have been eradicated from the earth, and restored humanity will enjoy God's favor forever.