

DISPERSION FORETOLD

Moses, the lawgiver of Israel, foretold this scattering of the Israelites among the nations, and also their regathering as we have seen it taking place during the past century. This forecast is recorded in Deuteronomy 29:24 and 30:1-6. The latter part of the prophecy reads: "The LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

Moses also foretold how long the era of Israel's loss of independence and scattering would be. As we have seen, Israel was a nation under God, and for this reason it was subject to disciplinary measures for wrongdoing. Moses refers to certain corrective punishments to which they would be subject, and then adds, "And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins."—Lev. 26:18

This warning of "seven times more" of punishment is repeated four times.

Students of prophecy believe that this is a time measurement. A symbolic “time,” the Scriptures indicate, is a period of 360 years, and seven of these would total 2,520 years. The Biblical key to this method of reckoning is recorded in Ezekiel 4:4-6. Since Moses’ prophecy indicates that this was to be a final punishment, we believe that it is reasonable to conclude that it began with the loss of their national independence in 606 B.C., with the overthrow of their last king, Zedekiah.

Counting 2,520 years from 606 B.C. brings us to A.D. 1914. It was then that World War I began. Out of that conflict came the ejection of the Turks from Jerusalem and the land of Palestine by British General Allenby, the famous Balfour Declaration, and the opening of the ancient homeland to Jewish refugees and pioneers from all lands. This resulted in the infusion of the Zionist movement with new life and hope.

While there were temporary setbacks of one sort or another, the rehabilitation of the region by the Jews and their migration to their ancient homeland continued. Out of this came the birth of the new State of Israel in 1948. Thus seen, it was in 1914, after 2,520 years,

that the chain of events began to unfold which led to national independence for this Biblical and historic people.

TIMES OF THE GENTILES

The full significance of Israel's liberation since 1914 can be seen more clearly by noting a forecast by Jesus, who is recognized by most leading Jews today as an eminent teacher and prophet. He was questioned by his disciples concerning the end of the present age. Part of Jesus' reply was, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:24) At the time of this prophecy the Jewish nation, symbolically referred to as "Jerusalem," was being "trodden down" by the Gentiles, and this was to continue until "the times of the Gentiles" were fulfilled.

Coincidental with the overthrow of Israel's last king in 606 B.C., the Prophet Daniel, interpreting a prophetic dream which the Lord had given to the king of Babylon, foretold a succession of four world powers, beginning with Babylon. The second of these was Medo-Persia; the third, Greece; and the fourth, Rome. The division of the Roman Empire into

the various states of Europe as they existed prior to 1914 was shown by the toes of the image.—Dan. 2:31-45

To King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said, “The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.” (vs. 37) This does not mean that Nebuchadnezzar sat on the throne of the Lord, as had been the case with the kings of Israel. It was simply that, beginning then with Babylon, Gentile rulership over the earth would not be interfered with by God, and that Gentile dominion would extend even over God’s own people, the Israelites.

However, this was not to continue indefinitely. Daniel’s prophecy pointed out that it would be only until the days of the divided Roman Empire—“the days of these kings”—as depicted by the toes of the image. (vs. 44) Then the God of heaven would set up a kingdom, or government, that would “stand for ever.” This is a reference to the long-promised kingdom of the Messiah.

It is clear that the period which Jesus described as the “times of the Gentiles” is synchronous with the “seven times” of Israel’s loss of national independence. This means that the times of the Gentiles

also reached their prophetic end in 1914. Time prophecies of the Bible point out the small beginning of events to which they refer, rather than their completion. World War I, which began in 1914, marked the beginning of the complete downfall of the divided remnants of the old Roman Empire. It also led to the national sovereignty of Israel.

The nation of Israel today is a free country. No longer are the Israelites without their own government. Israel is a nation among the nations of the world, no longer a vassal to Rome or to any other Gentile power. It has a population of over six million Jews, and boasts the third highest standard of living in Asia. It is among the leading countries in the world in many areas of endeavor. The nation of Israel is not without its difficulties, having fought in several wars subsequent to 1948 in order to maintain its freedom. In spite of these, Israel remains a free country, and has even grown stronger, to the point where now, some sixty-five years later, they are considered one of the most powerful nations in the world. The incidents which led to this began at the close of the "seven times" foretold by Moses.

INTERVENING EVENTS

Many of the important experiences of the Israelites as a people during the period of their rise to freedom among the nations are also foretold in the Bible. One of the prophetic expressions describing this is that God would “bring again” their “captivity.” This expression appears in Joel 3:1,2, where the Lord says, “In those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.” It is important to note that the word “captivity” in this Scripture passage, according to *Strong’s Concordance*, means “a former state of prosperity.”

In verses 9-14 of this chapter, a war-like gathering of the Gentile nations is foretold, and “the valley of Jehoshaphat” is described as “the valley of decision.” In this gathering of the nations, there is a preparation for war in which, symbolically speaking, the nations are said to beat their “plowshares into swords,” and their “pruninghooks into spears.” We have

seen this taking place in the era beginning with 1914, and the prophecy points out that it would be during this time that the Lord would “bring again” the “captivity,” or former prosperity, of his people. It has, in fact, been the success of Israel and their relative prosperity during this period that has caused many nations to be gathered together against them.

Equally striking is the prophecy which mentions the fact that the Lord would have “a controversy with the nations” in connection with his people and their land. (Jer. 25:31) Verse 2 of Joel 3 mentions the parting—or dividing—of the land. This also has occurred, for we know that the Gentile nations did not live up to the pledges contained in the Balfour Declaration, and resolved the disputes by limiting Israel to less than half of the land which God promised. Although Israel has gained some of this land back, they still only control a portion of that which God gave to them.—Gen. 13:14,15

“FEAR” AND NOT “PEACE”

Other prophecies also reveal that the period of the regathering of Israel would be fraught with many difficulties. Jeremiah wrote: “Lo, the days come,

saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, . . . and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. . . . For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. . . . Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."—Jer. 30:3-7

The meaning of this prophecy is clear. It emphasizes that even when the time came for this historic people to be restored to their land, they were to experience fear and trembling—that it would not immediately be a time of peace and happiness for them.

To begin with, there was much rejoicing on the part of the Jews over the Balfour Declaration and its subsequent implementation by a mandate from the League of Nations. This mandate undertook to assure the Israelites a home in their Promised Land. In a very definite way the beginning of their return from their long captivity had begun.

However, not long after that the Jews in Germany, Austria, and Poland were bitterly persecuted by the Hitler regime.

This increased in intensity and continued throughout the years of World War II, during which an almost unthinkable holocaust took place, in which 6 million Jews were killed, and countless others were left homeless.

Meanwhile, because of Arab opposition, the door to their land of promise was closed to further immigration—closed at a time when this suffering people needed a homeland more than they ever needed one before. Truly it was “a voice of trembling, of fear,” which they heard, and not of peace.

Another prophecy which testifies in a general way to the same unusual combination of circumstances reads: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them.”—Jer. 16:14-16

This prophecy indicates that when the time came for the Israelites to return to their land, efforts would be made to induce them to return. The Lord said that he would send for “fishers” to “fish them.” This may well have been fulfilled by the Zionist organization, which was founded in 1896 by the late Theodor Herzl. Fishermen use bait to attract fish, and through many years the Zionist organization pointed out why Jews should go to their land, and the advantages that would accrue to them if they did.

However, not many Israelites were induced to go to the Promised Land by this method, although today Herzl is held in high esteem in modern Israel. One of the stirring sights there is the memorial garden honoring Herzl. The stone approach to his grave symbolizes the step-by-step progress of the Jewish state. Herzl’s work was not in vain.

The prophecy states that the Lord would also send for “hunters, and they shall hunt them.” Here more forceful methods are suggested. Among these undoubtedly should be included the bitter persecution at the hands of Hitler during the Holocaust. This particular driving method increased in intensity

until nearly all the Jews of Europe who were not killed were made to long for their homeland and were anxious to go there when the opportunity was offered.

Another prophecy which is very much to the point along this line reads: "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people."—Ezek. 20:33-35

There has been much "fury" manifested during the one hundred years since 1914 in connection with the efforts of the Israelites to migrate from the various countries in which they have been domiciled, and to make a new home for themselves in the land of promise. As predicted, even those who are there are in "the wilderness of the people," in the sense that they share with all people of the earth the distress and uncertainty of this chaotic time in human history. They have not yet found peace and security.

BROUGHT BACK FROM THE SWORD

In the chapter 38 of the prophecy of Ezekiel there is an outline of conditions to prevail in Israel which are still future. The people are described as being at peace and dwelling safely, or confidently, having been “brought back from the sword.” (vs. 8) Today Israel, as a nation among the other nations of the world, has attained much of her present standing in the midst of war and military strife, and still depends upon her military strength for security in this war-threatened world.

Ezekiel’s prophecy reveals that at some point in time following their return to the land an aggressive army from the “north,” under the leadership of a symbolic character named “Gog,” from the land of Magog, mounts an attack against the Israelites, which threatens their destruction. Prophecy reveals that when this occurs God will intervene on behalf of his people and deliver them from their enemies. This deliverance will be so marked and so manifestly of the Lord that it will result in his name becoming “known in the eyes of many nations.”—Ezek. 38:2,14-23

By this demonstration of God’s protection over them, the Israelites will come

to realize that their return to the land promised them has been accomplished by the providences of God. The Lord foretold, "So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel." (Ezek. 39:7) From this point onward the Israelites will look to their God for direction in their affairs, and the world in general will know that God has delivered his people and that Messiah is ruling over them.

THE NEW KING

When Israel's last king, Zedekiah, was overthrown, the Lord said: "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:25-27) The one "whose right it is" is Israel's Messiah, the next to sit on David's throne, following the overthrow of Zedekiah.

Isaiah foretold the birth of the Messiah and his exaltation to rulership over Israel and the world. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder:

and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

Prophecy further concerning the Messiah, Isaiah wrote: “A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.”—Isa. 32:1,16-18

ALL ISRAEL

Our understanding of the future blessing to be enjoyed by Israel and the world would come far short of the glorious reality set forth in the Scriptures if those blessings were to be limited to those who are living at the time the

Messiah imposes his rulership, or to those who might be born from that time forward. God's promises were made to all Israel, to every generation of Israelites. Included in those promises is Theodor Herzl, as well as the thousands of his fellow Zionists who hoped and toiled for the restoration of Israel to their land, even though these are now sleeping in death.

Throughout all the hundreds of weary years of the Dispersion there were ardent, God-fearing Jews who longed and prayed for the release of Israel from subservience to Gentile nations. The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem is a vivid reminder of the desperation with which the disconsolate Israelites endured their frustrations while they waited for some evidence that their God still loved them and in due time would deliver them. However, these too, are now all asleep in death.

The lot of Israel, even before the Dispersion, was not always a happy one. There were times when the nation enjoyed a measure of prosperity and peace, but other times when she was bled by war and oppressed. However, God's promises of Messianic blessings

were to these also, yet they died with no evidence of their fulfillment.

Moses said to the generation of Israelites of his day, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." (Deut. 18:15) This is another promise of the coming Messiah. However, those to whom it was made are all dead. However, this and other Messianic promises will be fulfilled to them, and to every generation of the Israelites, because they will be raised from the dead.

There are many promises which assure us of this. In a prayer to Israel's God, Moses said, as recorded by the psalmist, "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men." (Ps. 90:3) The Lord said to the Prophet Daniel that those who "sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." (Dan. 12:2) Restoration to life for all Israelites is promised in Ezekiel 16:55. A promise that children shall be awakened from death is recorded in Jeremiah 31:15-17.

Concerning the time of Messiah's kingdom, the Prophet Isaiah wrote: "Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob,

Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear [reverence] the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.”—Isa. 29:22-24

Like all members of the fallen and dying race, Jacob’s face waxed pale with illness and old age, and he finally died. According to Isaiah’s prophecy, however, he will be restored to life, and he will see his “children”—every generation of them, down to the present time. Then his face will not “wax pale,” since that will be the promised time of health and everlasting life, as well as peace and security for Jacob and all the Israelites, and for the whole world of mankind.

ISRAEL’S FUTURE PRINCES

In a prophecy of the Messiah already quoted, Isaiah foretold, “A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.” (Isa. 32:1) The psalmist prophesied that the “fathers” of Israel would become “princes in all

the earth.” (Ps. 45:16) The Lord foretold, “I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.”—Isa. 1:26

In this last prophecy, the Israelites are reminded of the various ways God had ruled over them. First, under the direction of Moses there were his assistants, the “counsellors.” Then there was a period of 450 years during which they were ruled by judges. Following this came the period of the kings. David set up his government in Jerusalem, which was looked upon as their capital city. In the Messianic government there will be the counterpart of the counselors and judges, who will represent the king—the Messiah. Together these will thenceforth be Israel’s “city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

Those who will serve as Israel’s “princes,” representing the Messiah, will be the ancient faithful ones from each generation who proved worthy of this high trust which will be placed in them. Outstanding among these will, of course, be their former righteous leaders and prophets—their “fathers.” These will

be eminently qualified to represent the Messiah! There was the great lawgiver, Moses, who laid down his life in service for his people. There was also Daniel who, as a Hebrew captive in Babylon, served as prime minister.

In a final message to Daniel, the Lord said, "Go thou thy way, . . . for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (Dan. 12:13) "The end of the days" here referred to is the end of the long period of persecution of the people of God. The promise is that Daniel will be restored to life and will then stand in his lot, undoubtedly as one of Israel's princes in the Messianic government.

The psalmist prophesied: "God reigneth over the heathen [the nations]: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted." (Ps. 47:8, 9) We read further concerning the "shields" or protections of the people in the Messianic kingdom, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom]: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."—Isa. 11:9

“In that day,” Isaiah continues, “there shall be a root of Jesse [the Messiah], which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”—Isa. 11:10-12

The number of Israelites now gathered in the land promised to them by God is only a small portion of the grand total whom the Lord will eventually restore. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that Messiah’s rulership is to be for a thousand years. During that time, as we have seen, even those who are now held captive in death are to be restored to life, both Israelites and Gentiles. Surely the future of Israel and the world is a glorious one—as bright as the promises of God!

NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRMATION

To the followers of Jesus, the New Testament is an explanation and a confirmation of the Old Testament, the first five books of which is the Torah of the Jews. The New Testament presents Jesus as the Messiah of promise, the one who was to sit on David's throne. (Luke 1:31-33) While Jesus died as the Redeemer of the world, he was raised from the dead by divine power, thus confirming our faith in all God's promises to restore the dead to life.—Acts 17:31

Basic to every Jew is the promise God made to Abraham that through his seed "all families of the earth" would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3; 22:15-18) The New Testament presents Jesus as this promised "seed" of blessing. Paul wrote: "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."—Gal. 3:16

The New Testament explains that Jesus, after having provided redemption for the world by his death, was not only raised from the dead, but exalted to a plane of life higher than human so that now, like the angels, and like the great Creator of the universe, he is invisible

to human eyes. Thus he will be the powerful, but invisible, ruler of the world.—Col. 1:15; I Tim. 1:17

Writing to the disciples of Christ, Paul said: “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:27-29

This simply means that the true, self-sacrificing followers of Jesus will be rewarded with the privilege of sharing in his spiritual kingdom and, together with him, take part in the work of blessing all the families of the earth, as promised to Abraham. In Hebrews 3:1-6, Apostle Paul explains that just as Moses was faithful over his “house,” so there is another “house” over which Jesus is faithful, and those in Jesus’ house are partakers of a “heavenly calling,” meaning that these are to be a part of the invisible ruling house of God.

In chapter 11 of Hebrews, Apostle Paul calls further attention to both of these groups. He names many of the ancient faithful ones and outlines some of the

hardships they endured in order to be worthy of a “better resurrection.” (vs. 35) To this he adds that “they without us [of the spiritual house] should not be made perfect.” (vs. 40) Thus, while the ancient faithful servants of God first proved their devotion and their worthiness to serve in the Messianic kingdom, they must wait, in the sleep of death, for the completion of the spiritual “seed” of Abraham before being raised to perfection of life to begin their work as “princes in all the earth.”

The earthly “seed” is made up largely of the natural descendants of Abraham, while the spiritual seed will be made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Indeed, this opportunity first went exclusively to the people of Israel, and after their rejection of Jesus it was extended to others.

The principal qualification mandatory for those who will serve in any capacity in the Messianic kingdom is heart devotion to the Lord, a loyalty to the divine principles of righteousness, for which they would be willing to die if called upon to do so. This was a characteristic of all the Ancient Worthies. It was true of Jesus, and it is true of all his faithful followers.

SETTING UP THE KINGDOM

We can understand clearly the teachings of the Bible only by taking into account, and believing, its many promises concerning the resurrection of the dead. If our faith is able to lay hold upon these promises and believe them, then the Bible has a message of assurance and comfort for us. This is particularly true with respect to its prophecies pertaining to the setting up and the work of the Messianic kingdom.

That the kingdom might become a reality, it was first necessary that Jesus be raised from the dead, for he is to be the supreme ruler in that kingdom. Then, as the New Testament reveals, those who are to share with him in the spiritual phase of the kingdom must also be raised from the dead. In each generation from Jesus' day until now, some have proved their worthiness for such a high honor. Concerning this group, we read: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: . . . they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."—Rev. 20:6

Then, as we have already noted, the Ancient Worthies, who will be the human representatives of the divine Christ,

will also need to be raised from the dead. Jesus testified concerning these: "I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 8:11) Luke's account of this adds, "all the prophets," and explains that the people would come from the north, south, east, and west, and sit down before these as their instructors "in the kingdom of God."—Luke 13:28,29

FUNCTIONING OF THE KINGDOM

Thus will be the arrangements of Messiah's kingdom, in which he will be the divinely appointed ruler—the king. The generation of Israelites regathered to their land who are living when the great miracle of divine intervention for their protection takes place will be the first to receive the opportunity of blessing under the beneficent rulership of these Messianic kingdom arrangements. Those who show their loyalty to the new regime will cooperate in extending its blessings by their example of obedience.

A prophecy pertaining to this reads: "It shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of

Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days [of the Messianic kingdom] to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.”—Zech. 8:13-17

The divine principles of righteousness here set forth, which the Israelites will need to observe and obey in order to receive the blessings of Messiah, will also have to be observed by the people of all nations, that they, too, may receive the blessings of the kingdom. Those who do will be blessed and will likewise have the privilege of cooperating in that great project of blessing which ultimately will be extended to include “all families of the earth.”

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Another precious kingdom promise reads: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake. . . . But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."—Jer. 31:31-34

A key element of this prophecy is the promise that God will put his law in the hearts of his people and write it in their inward parts. We believe that this describes the condition of man in the image of God. It was thus that Adam

was created, and God's promise is that through the agencies of the Messianic kingdom man is to be restored to this state of perfection and fellowship with God.

When originally created, man was given dominion over the earth. (Gen. 1:27,28) This dominion is also to be restored. Jesus assured us of this in one of his parables. He pictured the people of all nations being judged, some showing goatlike dispositions, while others were like sheep. To these sheep, it will be said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."—Matt. 25:34

A study of this parable indicates that the character qualification necessary for inheriting the original dominion given to man will be an unselfish interest in others. Selfishness has been a killing blight upon humanity throughout all the centuries of fallen man's experience. Under the Messianic kingdom arrangements, love will replace selfishness. Then the full meaning of the Law which God gave to ancient Israel through Moses will be recognized and accepted as the rule of life for all mankind. Moses gave that law its true meaning, saying, "Thou

shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18

With such a standard of righteousness as the guiding principle in the lives of all the people, having been redeemed from original sin and restored to perfection of life, what a glorious place this earth will be! In harmony with God's standards, those who refuse to obey and cooperate after being given sufficient time to respond positively to the kingdom arrangements, will not be permitted to live, for death will remain the penalty for willful sin. This means that there will be nothing to mar the happiness of the restored race.—Acts 3:22,23

While many of the wonderful Messianic kingdom promises are made, in the first instance, to the Israelites, the Bible assures us that they will also have a fulfillment in the people of all nations, for Israel was used by God as a prototype of the world. The Israelites regathered in their land of promise will have the first opportunity to enjoy the blessings, but all mankind is included in the mercy and love of our God.

RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS

All the prophets of God were eloquent in their forecasts of blessings coming to both Jews and Gentiles through the agencies of Messiah's kingdom. In the New Testament, Apostle Peter describes the period when these prophecies will be fulfilled as "times of restitution of all things," which, he adds, "God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:20,21

When Peter thus summed up the meaning of the united prophetic testimony concerning Messianic kingdom blessings, he was addressing a Jewish audience, so he added, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."—Acts 3:25

Here Peter explains that God's promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth is to be fulfilled by the "restitution" of all things. We know that God confirmed his promise to father Abraham by his oath, and Peter tells us that he also confirmed it by the testimony of all his holy prophets.

Restitution means restoration to a former condition, and the most important thing to be restored to the people is life. Because they transgressed the divine law, our first parents lost the privilege of living forever, and their children were born imperfect and dying. Sin and death have continued to reign over the earth ever since, causing untold sorrow and suffering among the people of all nations.

The Prophet David wrote of this long period of human suffering, describing it as a nighttime of weeping. As a prophet of God, however, David added the good news that “joy cometh in the morning.” (Ps. 30:5) In other words, the blight of sin and death is not to remain forever.

Isaiah, another of God’s holy prophets, described the future “times of restitution” as a day in which the inhabitants of the world would no longer say they were sick. (Isa. 33:24) Isaiah also wrote that then blind eyes would be opened and deaf ears unstopped. (Isa. 35:5) Additionally, he wrote that the people would build houses and inhabit them, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.—Isa. 65:21,22

Truly, the future of Israel and the world is bright. The earth is to be filled

with the glory of the Lord. (Hab. 2:14) There will be no more war, nor the fear of war. All will be economically and culturally secure, as symbolized in the prophecy of everyone dwelling under his own vine and fig tree.—Mic. 4:1-4

The ultimate and glorious result of the rulership of that world government will be peace between God and man, and among men, with the righteous laws of the Creator respected and obeyed by all mankind. The Prophet David eloquently foretold this. We quote:

“Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.”—Ps. 85:11-13

Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.

—Revelation 21:4

The Divine Plan of the Ages, p. 191

TO US THE SCRIPTURES CLEARLY TEACH

THAT THE CHURCH IS "THE TEMPLE" OF THE LIVING GOD—peculiarly "his workmanship;" that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age—ever since Christ became the world's Redeemer and the chief "corner stone" of this temple, through which, when finished, God's blessings shall come "to all people," and they find access to him—I Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING of consecrated believers in Christ's atonement for sin progresses, and when the last of these "living stones" "elect and precious," shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD lies in the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, "a ransom for all," and will be "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," "in due time."—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5,6

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH is that she may be like her Lord, "see him as he is," be a partaker of the divine nature" and share his glory as his joint-heir.—I John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; II Pet. 1:4

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God's witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests of the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6, 20:6

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ's millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35

