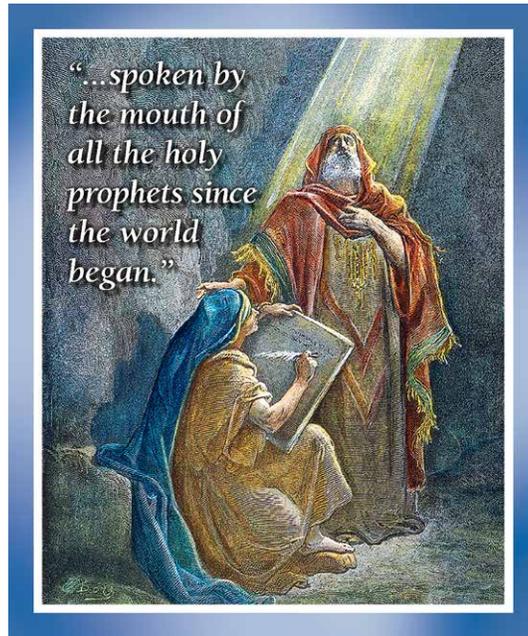


RESTITUTION: CORNERSTONE OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

“...times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord... whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” —Acts 3:19-21

Restitution, by definition, is “the restoration of something lost.” Nearly two thousand years ago Jesus declared *restitution* to be his mission: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10) But, as yet, the world moves on in its downward course — sin, sickness and sorrow triumph still, and century after century plunges successive generations into death. If Jesus’ intention was to *restore what was lost*, what does he intend to restore? Who will benefit from this *restitution of all things spoken by all God’s holy prophets*? And why is he taking so long?



Simply put, as many as have died on account of Adam’s sin will have life restored to them by our Lord Jesus. “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22) Jesus *ransomed* Adam and his posterity from death — “a life for a life.” He “gave himself a ransom for all.” Deuteronomy 19:21; 1 Timothy 2:3-6

THE ORIGINAL PENALTY AND ITS PAYMENT

Jesus came to earth as a perfect man and *voluntarily* offered to pay the penalty placed upon Adam — death. (Philippians 2:7, 8; John 1:14) As death came by the *first Adam*, so

life is provided by Christ, the *second Adam*. Everything that mankind lost through being a descendent of the *first Adam* is to be restored through the *second Adam* — Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:47) “As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Romans 5:18, 19

WHAT WAS LOST AND WHAT WILL BE RESTORED?

To truly understand what is meant by “the restitution of all things,” one must consider what was lost when sin entered the world. Adam, who stood as the first representative of our race, was perfect in mind, body and morals. As such, he had a right to lasting continuance of life on condition of obedience to God. He was privileged to enjoy all the delights of his Edenic, earthly home along with the privilege of communion with his Creator. When Adam chose to disobey God’s simple command to abstain from one tree in the Garden, all was lost — his paradise home, his happiness, his communion with God, perfect health, and life itself. Adam not only lost all of this for himself, but for his posterity as well. In having lost his right to life, he fell under the dominion of death with its successive steps of misery, depravity, sickness and pain, ending in total extinction of being, from which no fallen man could recover himself.

Therefore, “ALL things” to be restored through Christ are “ALL things” which were lost through Adam’s transgression. Adam did not lose a *spiritual* existence, but a *human* existence in an *earthly* paradise. All of humanity since that time have been denied perfection of being, communion with God and a paradise home. As God’s plan develops, these are the things which He promised to restore in His Kingdom.

It is of paramount importance to understand that the original penalty imposed upon Adam and his race was *death* — nothing more — and mankind has been paying that penalty with every funeral procession. But, many Christians have adopted the erroneous idea that God placed the human family on trial for life with the consequence being *eternal torture*. The Scriptures cannot be more clear — *death, not eternal torment*, was the penalty for sin. “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:17) “...the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:4) Death — the opposite of life (not torment) — was the penalty for sin. Therefore, Jesus paid that penalty for sin by dying — not by suffering in *torment* after death.

RESTITUTION PROMISED THROUGH FAITHFUL ABRAHAM

In Galatians 3:8 the Apostle Paul makes an astounding statement: "...foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, 'In thee shall all nations be blessed.'" The gospel message in its entirety is summarized in God's promise to faithful Abraham: "...I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore... and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed..." (Genesis 22:17, 18) Notice that this promise of blessing involves three distinct parts: (1) Abraham's heavenly seed; (2) Abraham's earthly seed; and (3) all nations of earth.

The Apostle Paul defines this heavenly seed of promise: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29) This is the key to our understanding Abraham's promise. Faithful Christians are counted by God as being Abraham's seed. These are promised a heavenly reward. The promise also states that Abraham's seed would bless all others. Thus, faithful Christians are the heavenly seed, and God's eventual purpose is for them to bless all the nations of the earth — both the living and the dead. Herein is God's merciful plan of restitution: (1) the heavenly seed of faithful Christians will bless the earthly seed; i.e., (2) Israel and (3) all families of earth!

PROMISE OF RESTITUTION FULFILLED IN PROGRESSIVE STAGES

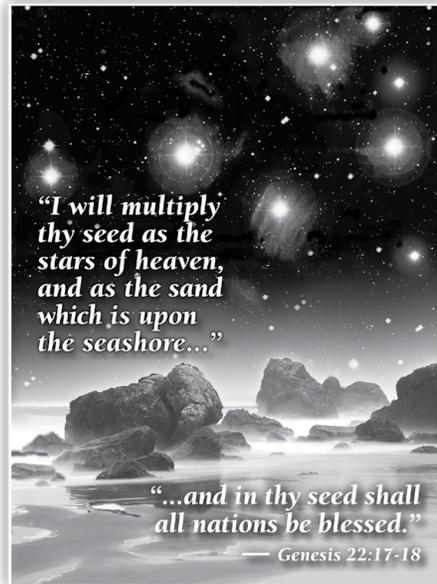
Since Abraham did not realize the fulfillment of this promise in his day, it is evident that God's plan of salvation is carried out in progressive stages. The first stage was the ransom for all given through the sacrifice of Christ which will be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:3-6) The second stage occurred after his resurrection from death. At that point, Christ's followers were invited to "run for the prize of the high calling" to be part of his Church — symbolically spoken of as his body, his bride, his little flock. (Philippians 3:14) But this offer had a limit in time. At some point, the Church would be complete. "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name [the heavenly seed or stars of heaven]... After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof [Abraham's natural seed, Israel — sand upon the seashore], and I will set it up; that the residue of men [all the nations of the earth] might seek after the Lord..." Acts 15:14-17

Thus, the third stage toward restitution will occur once Christ's faithful Church is complete. At that point, the heavenly seed will bring forth all who have ever lived from their graves and will provide an opportunity for them to "seek after the Lord." See also John 5:28, 29

In 1 Timothy 4:10 the Apostle Paul presents this as two opportunities for salvation: "...we trust in the living God who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe."

Therefore, salvation is: (1) for all men, and (2) especially for those who believe now. This gracious plan of salvation is verified in 1 John 2:2: "He is the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins [that of the Church]: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

From these Scripture statements it is clear that now is not the time for all to hear and accept salvation through Christ. God is not trying to convert the world between the first and second advents of Christ. If He were, then He has failed, for only one-third of the world's population living today even profess to be Christian. The due time for the Church to hear and believe on the name of Jesus is between the first and second advents of Christ. The due time for the residue of men to "seek after the Lord" is in the coming Kingdom of Christ. At that time, the Church "shall reign with him a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4-6) This 1,000-year reign provides the time allotted for the restitution process. It is the period of time in which mankind, as well as the earth, will be gradually brought back and fully restored to the original perfection enjoyed by father Adam in the Garden. Genesis 1:27



EVIDENCE THAT RESTITUTION HAS ALREADY BEGUN IN PART

It has been a long time since Jesus' promise to restore what was lost. But take heart! We believe that we are even now living in the early stage of these times of restitution. Note the word times. Again, God's plan of restitution is progressive.

Recall that, along with the death penalty upon Adam and his children, several other conditions would occur as a consequence of being expelled from the Garden. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said... cursed is the ground for thy sake... Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread..." (Genesis 3:16-19) As we look about us we can see this curse being lifted to a limited degree by the advent of labor-saving machinery, the increase of knowledge, communication and transportation, and advances in the area of health care, the rights of women, races, ages, children, animals and even the global environment. Daniel 12:4

In addition to these preparatory restitution blessings, we see Israel being restored from the curse upon this Nation when they rejected their Messiah. Prophecies declare this restoration to be a precursor to the restitution of all things. "Behold the fig tree, [the Nation of Israel] and all the trees; When they now shoot forth [leaves as from a dead tree], ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Luke 21:29-31

Although we see this glimmer of hope in these restitution blessings dawning, still much remains to be restored. In due

time, the Son of Man will take unto himself his great power and set at liberty the captives from the prison house of death. His own beloved Bride, the Church, are the first to come forth in the resurrection. They will awaken in heaven to *“glory, honor and immortality.”* (Romans 2:7) After this, Christ and his Church will begin to accomplish the great work of delivering *all* the captives of the tomb to life upon the earth. The Apostle Peter describes this time as a thousand-year day of judgment. *“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* 2 Peter 3:8, 9

Through God’s beloved Son, this judgment day will provide a full and fair opportunity for all to *learn righteousness.* (Isaiah 26:9) This will be accomplished by Christ and his Church when they raise mankind from the grave to a period of education, testing and then judgment. God *“hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto **all men**, in that He hath raised him from the dead.”* Acts 17:31; see also 1 Corinthians 4:5

Awakening from the sleep of death would profit mankind but little if the arrangements of that future time were not on such a scale as to permit a thorough recovery from present mental, moral and physical weaknesses. Hence the Scriptures promise that in God’s kingdom, Satan will be bound, every evil influence and every unfavorable condition will be brought under restraint, and the favor of God, through knowledge of His glorious plan, will flow as blessings to *all* people: *“...the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”* (Isaiah 11:9) *“And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it...”* Revelation 20:1-4; 22:3

All those who toiled in darkness for now over 6,000 years will receive the knowledge of the one true God and His benevolent plan of salvation by Christ Jesus. Some may ask, isn’t this giving sinners a *second chance*? No. Considering that *all* humanity has been *“born in sin, and shapened in iniquity,”* and in varying degrees of environmental disadvantage, this will actually be their *first* real opportunity to accept Jesus Christ. Once God’s kingdom is established, earth’s billions who never knew Jehovah will no longer die for the inherited sins of their fathers, but, if they fail to make progress in a world free from sin, sickness and sorrow, they will eventually die for their own iniquity. (Jeremiah 31:29, 30) Keep in mind the continuation of our theme text in Acts 3 verse 23: *“And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”* When awakened, with the advantage of having had experience with evil, which Adam

lacked, those who thankfully accept redemption through Christ may continue to live everlastingly under the original condition of obedience. Perfect obedience will be required, and the ability to obey will be possible under the righteous Messianic reign of the *Prince of Peace* and his faithful *Bride*.

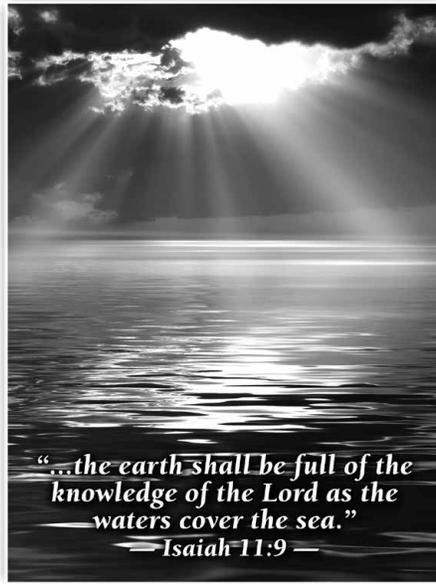
RESTITUTION WILL MAKE GOD’S FOOTSTOOL GLORIOUS!

God declares: *“The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool...”* *“...and I will make the place of my feet glorious.”* (Isaiah 66:1; 60:13) When the curse laid upon the earth is lifted, Adam and his children will return from their graves to an uncursed, blossoming earth! *“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose... And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”* Isaiah 35:1, 2 & 10

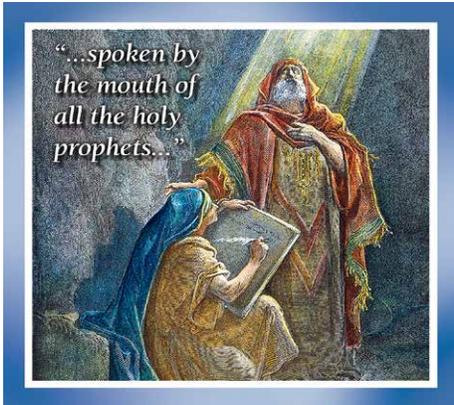
When this prophecy is in process of fulfillment, energy previously devoted toward war will be converted to agriculture. Equity, liberty for all, economic security and human dignity will be the inheritance of every individual who has ever lived: *“They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks... they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid...”* *“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.”* Micah 4:1-4; Isaiah 65:25

At the close of the Messianic kingdom, mankind will look back on their former lives and fully understand why God permitted pain, sorrow and death. They will realize it was God’s wisdom and love that permitted this experience as a lesson that will *never* need to be repeated, for it shall *never* be forgotten! (Nahum 1:9) Then, as mankind has the contrast of the blessings of peace, health and perfect life as a result of obedience in God’s kingdom, they will be able to appreciate those blessings in a way they could never have done without the lesson of the permission of evil. *“...weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”* Psalm 30:5

As some misjudge the skill and wisdom of a great architect by his unfinished work, so also many now misjudge God by His unfinished work. But by and by, when the rough scaffolding of evil, which has been permitted for man’s discipline and overruled for his good, has been removed, God’s finished work will universally declare His loving plans and character. *“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear; neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.”* (Isaiah 64:4) This promise applies not only to those who love Him now, but to all those who will learn to love Him in His Kingdom to come! Praise God that the *restitution of ALL things* is just on the horizon!



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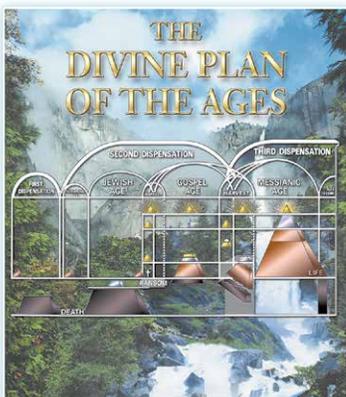
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