

Chapter 21. The Last Generation

THE final demonstration of what the gospel can do in and for humanity is still in the future. Christ showed the way. He took a human body, and in that body demonstrated the power of God. Men are to follow His example and prove that what God did in Christ, He can do in every human being who submits to Him. The world is awaiting this demonstration. (Romans 8: 19) When it has been accomplished, the end will come. God will have fulfilled His plan. He will have shown Himself true and Satan a liar. His government will stand vindicated.

There is much spurious doctrine concerning holiness taught in the world today. On the one hand are those who deny the power of God to save from sin. On the other hand are those who flaunt their sanctity before men and would have us believe that they are without sin. Among the first class are not only unbelievers and skeptics but church members whose vision does not include victory over sin, but who accept a kind of compromise with sin. In the other class are such as have no just conception either of sin or of God's holiness, whose spiritual vision is so impaired that they cannot see their own shortcomings, and hence believe themselves perfect, and whose conception of religion is such that their own understanding of truth and righteousness is superior to that revealed in the Word. It is not easy to decide which is the greater error.

That the Bible inculcates holiness is indisputable. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thessalonians 4:3. The Greek word *hagios* in its various forms is translated "sanctify," "holy," "holiness," "sanctified," "sanctification." It is the same word which is used for the two apartments of the sanctuary, and means that which is set apart for God. A sanctified person is one who is set apart for God, whose whole life is dedicated to Him.

Forgiveness and Cleansing

The plan of salvation must of necessity include not only forgiveness of sin but complete restoration. Salvation from sin is more than forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness presupposes sin and is conditioned upon breaking with it; sanctification is separation from sin and indicates deliverance from its power and victory over it. The first is a means to neutralize the effect of sin; the second is a restoration of power for complete victory.

Sin, like some diseases, leaves man in a deplorable condition-weak, despondent, disheartened. He has little control of his mind, his will fails him, and with the best of intentions he is unable to do what he knows to be right. He feels that there is no

hope. He knows that he has himself to blame, and remorse fills his soul. To his bodily ailments is added the torture of conscience. He knows that he has sinned and is to blame. Will no one take pity on him?

Then comes the gospel. The good news is preached to him. Though his sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. All is forgiven. He is "saved." What a wonderful deliverance it is! His mind is at rest. No longer does his conscience torment him. He has been forgiven. His sins are cast into the depths of the sea. His heart wells with praise to God for His mercy and goodness to him.

As a disabled ship towed to port is safe but not sound, so the man is "saved" but not sound. Repairs need to be made on the ship before it is pronounced seaworthy, and the man needs reconstruction before he is fully restored. This process of restoration is called sanctification, and includes in its finished product body, soul, and spirit. When the work is finished, the man is "holy," completely sanctified, and restored to the image of God. It is for this demonstration of what the gospel can do for a man that the world is looking.

In the Bible both the process and the finished work are spoken of as sanctification.' For this reason the "brethren" are spoken of as holy and sanctified, though they have not attained to perfection. (1 Corinthians 1: 2; 2 Corinthians 1: 1; Hebrews 3:1) A glance through the Epistles to the Corinthians will soon convince one that the saints there mentioned had their faults. Despite this, they are said to be "sanctified" and "called to be saints." The reason is that complete sanctification is not the work of a day or of a year but of a lifetime.

It begins the moment a person is converted, and continues through life. Every victory hastens the process. There are few Christians who have not gained the mastery over some sin that formerly greatly annoyed them and overcame them. Many a man who has been a slave to the tobacco habit has gained the victory over the habit and rejoices in his victory. Tobacco has ceased to be a temptation. It attracts him no more. He has the victory. On that point he is sanctified. As he has been victorious over one besetment, so he is to become victorious over every sin. When the work is completed, when he has gained the victory over pride, ambition, love of the world-over all evil-he is ready for translation. He has been tried in all points. The evil one has come to him and found nothing. Satan has no more temptations for him. He has over come them all. He stands without fault before the throne of God. Christ places His seal upon him. He is safe, and he is sound. God has finished His work in him. The demonstration of what God can do with humanity is complete.

Thus it shall be with the last generation of men living on the earth. Through them God's final demonstration of what He can do with humanity will be given. He will take the weakest of the weak, those bearing the sins of their forefathers, and in them show the power of God. They will be subjected to every temptation, but they

will not yield. They will demonstrate that it is possible to live without sin-the very demonstration for which the world has been looking and for which God has been preparing. It will become evident to all that the gospel really can save to the uttermost. God is found true in His sayings.

The last year of the conflict brings the final test; but this only proves to angels and to the world 'that nothing that the evil one can do will shake God's Chosen ones. The plagues fall, destruction is on every hand, death stares them in the face, but like job they hold fast their integrity. Nothing can make them sin. They "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

Throughout the history of the world God has had His faithful ones. They have endured affliction and great tribulation. But even in the midst of Satan's buffetings they have, as the apostle Paul says, through faith "wrought righteousness." "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Hebrews 11:37, 38.

And in addition to this galaxy of faithful witnesses, many of whom were martyrs for their faith, God will have in the last days a remnant, a little flock," in and through whom He will give to the universe a demonstration of His love, His power, His justice. Which, if we exempt Christ's godly life on earth and His supreme sacrifice on Calvary, will be, the most sweeping and conclusive demonstration of all the ages of what God can do in men.

It is in the last generation of men living on the earth that God's power unto sanctification will stand fully revealed. The demonstration of that power is God's vindication. It clears Him of any and all charges which Satan has placed against Him. In the last generation God is vindicated and Satan defeated. This may need some further amplification.

Rebellion in Heaven

The rebellion which took place in heaven and introduced sin into the universe of God must have been a fearful experience both for God and for the angels. Until this time all had been peace and harmony. Discord was unknown; only love prevailed. Then unholy ambitions stirred the heart of Lucifer. He decided that he wanted to be like the Most High. He would exalt his throne above the stars of God; he would sit "upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north." (Isaiah 14:12-14) This declaration of intent was tantamount to an attempt to depose God and usurp His place. It was a declaration of war. Where God sat, Satan would sit. God accepted the challenge.

We have no direct Biblical statement as to the means used by Satan in winning over to his side a multitude of angels. That he lied is clear. That he was a murderer

from the beginning is likewise indisputable. (John 8:44) As murder has its beginning in hatred, and as this hatred found its fruition in the killing of the Son of God on Calvary, we may believe that Satan's hatred was directed not only against God the Father, but also-and perhaps especially-against God the Son. In his rebellion Satan went further than a mere threat. He actually did set up his throne, saying boastfully, "I am a God, I sit in the seat of God."

Ezekiel 28:2.

When Satan thus established his government in heaven, the issue was clear cut. The angels understood clearly the issue. All must take their stand for or against Satan.

in the case of rebellion there is always some grievance, real or fancied, given as the cause. Some become dissatisfied, and, failing to have matters remedied, they resort to rebellion. Those who sympathize with the rebel cause join it. The others remain loyal to the government, and must, of course, take their chance on its survival.

It apparently came to just such a pass in heaven. The result was war. "There was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against, the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels." Revelation 12:7. The outcome could have been foreseen. Satan and his angels "prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Verses 8, 9.

Though Satan was defeated, he was not destroyed. By his act of rebellion he had declared God's government at fault, and by the setting up of his own throne he had made claim to greater wisdom or justice than God. These claims are inherent in rebellion and in the establishment of another government. God could ill afford not to give Satan an opportunity to demonstrate his theories. To remove every doubt in the minds of the angels-and later of man-God must let Satan go on with his work. And so Satan was permitted to live and set up his government. For the last six thousand years he has been giving the universe a demonstration of what he will do when he has the opportunity.

Satan's Demonstration

This demonstration has been permitted to continue until now. And what a demonstration it has been! From the time Cain killed Abel there have been hatred, bloodshed, cruelty, and oppression in the earth.' Virtue, goodness, and justice have suffered; vice, vileness, and corruption have triumphed. The just man has been made a prey; God's messengers have been tortured and killed; God's law has been trampled in the dust. When God sent His Son, instead of honoring Him, evil men, under the instigation of Satan, hanged Him on a tree.

Even then God did not destroy Satan. The demonstration must be completed. Only when the last events are taking place, and men are on the point of exterminating one another, will God interfere to save His own. There will then remain no doubt in the mind of anyone that, had he the power, Satan would destroy every vestige of goodness, hurl God from the throne, murder the Son of God, and establish a kingdom of violence founded in self-seeking and cruel ambition.

What Satan has been demonstrating is really his character and the lengths to which selfish ambition will lead. In the beginning he wanted to be like God. He was dissatisfied with his position as the highest of created beings. He wanted to be God. And the demonstration has shown that when he set his mind upon this goal he would stop short of nothing to attain it. Whoever stands in the way must be put out of the way. If it be God Himself, He must be removed.

The demonstration shows that high position is not satisfactory to the ambitious individual. He must have the highest, and even then he is not satisfied. Often a person in a lowly position is tempted to believe that he would be satisfied if his position were improved. He is at least sure that he would be satisfied if he had the highest position possible. But would he? Lucifer was not. He had the highest position possible. But he was not satisfied. He wanted one still higher. He wanted to be God Himself.

In this respect the contrast between Christ and Satan is pronounced. Satan wanted to be God. He wanted it so much that he was willing to do anything to attain his goal. Christ, on the other hand, did not consider it a thing to be grasped to be like God. He voluntarily humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He was God, and He became man. And that this was not a temporary arrangement only for the purpose of showing His willingness, is evidenced by the fact that He will ever remain man. Satan exalted himself; Christ humbled Himself. Satan wanted to become God; Christ became man. Satan wanted to sit as God on a throne; Christ, as a servant, knelt to wash the disciples' feet. The contrast is complete.

Lucifer

In heaven Lucifer had been one of the covering cherubs. (Ezekiel 28:14) This refers to the two angels who in the most holy apartment of the sanctuary stood on the ark, covering the mercy seat. This was doubtless the highest office an angel could occupy, for the ark and the mercy seat were in the immediate presence of God. These angels were the special guardians of the law. They watched over it, as it were. Lucifer was one of them.

Ezekiel 28:12 contains an interesting statement concerning Lucifer: "Thou sealed up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." The meaning of the expression, "Thou sealed up the sum," is not entirely clear. The reading is capable of varied interpretations. It seems evident ' however, that the intent is to show the high

position and exalted privilege that were Satan's before he fell. He was a kind of prime minister, a keeper of the seal.

As in an earthly government a document or law must have the seal attached to it in order to be valid, so in God's government a seal is used. God seems to have apportioned to the angels their work, the same as He has given to man his work. One angel is in charge of the fire. (Revelation 14:18) Another angel has charge of the waters. (Revelation 16:5) And there has charge of "the seal of the living God." Revelation 7:2. Although, as stated above, the reading of Ezekiel 28:12 is not entirely clear, some feel justified in translating it, "Thou attached the seal to the ordinance." If this position is tenable, if Lucifer were prime minister and keeper of the seal, it gives an additional reason why he should wish to substitute his own mark for that of God's seal when he left his first abode.

That Satan has been very active against the law is evident. If God's law is a transcript of His character, and if this character is the very opposite of Satan's, Satan stands condemned by it. Christ and the law are one. Christ is the law lived out, the law become flesh. For this reason His life constitutes a condemnation. When Satan warred against Christ, he warred also against the law. When he hated the law he also hated Christ. Christ and the law are inseparable.

An interesting statement is found in the fortieth psalm. Christ speaking, says, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Verse 8. Though this is doubtless a poetic expression and should not be pressed too far, it is interesting, nevertheless, as an indication of the exalted position of the law. "Thy law is within My heart." A stab at the law is a stab at the heart of Christ. A stab at the heart of Christ is a stab at the law. At the cross Satan so intended. But God meant the outcome to be otherwise.

The death of Christ was a tribute to the law. It immeasurably magnified the law and made it honorable. It gave men a new vision of its sacredness and worth. If God would let His Son die; if Christ would willingly give Himself rather than abrogate the law; if it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one jot or tittle of the law to fail, how very sacred and honorable the law must be!

When Christ died on the cross He had demonstrated in His life the possibility of keeping the law. Satan had not succeeded in leading Christ into sin. Possibly he did not expect to be able to do that. But if he could have induced Christ to use His divine power to save Himself, He would have accomplished much. Had Christ done so, Satan could have claimed that this invalidated the demonstration God intended to make, namely, that it was possible for men to keep the law. As it was, Satan was defeated. But till the very last he continued the same tactics. Judas hoped Christ would free Himself, thus using His divine power to save Himself. On the cross Christ was taunted: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." But Christ did not falter. He could have saved Himself, but He did not. Satan was baffled. He

could not understand. But he knew that when Christ died without his having been able to make Him sin, his own doom was sealed. In His death Christ was victor.

But Satan did not give up. He had failed in his conflict with Christ, but he might yet succeed with men. So he went to “make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 12:17. If he could overcome them he might not be defeated.

God's Demonstration

The demonstration which God intends to make with the last generation on earth means much, both to the people and to God. Can God's law really be kept? That is a vital question. Many deny that it can be done; others glibly say it can. When the whole question of commandment keeping is considered, the problem assumes large proportions' God's law is exceedingly broad; it takes cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It judges motives as well as acts, thoughts as well as words. Commandment keeping means entire sanctification, a holy life, unswerving allegiance to right, entire separation from sin, and victory over it. Well may mortal man cry out, Who is sufficient for these things?

Yet, to produce a people that will keep the law is the task which God has set Himself and which He expects to accomplish. When the statement and challenge are issued by Satan: “No one can keep the law. It is impossible. If there be any that can do it or that have done it, show them to me. Where are they that keep the commandments?” God will quietly answer, Here they are. “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12.

Let us say it reverently: God must meet Satan's challenge. It is not God's plan, or a part of His purpose, to subject men to tests that only a chosen few can survive. In the Garden of Eden, God subjected Adam and Eve to the lightest test conceivable. No one can say that our first parents fell because the test was too hard for them. If they fell, it was not because the test was hard or because they had not been provided with strength to resist. The temptation was not held before them constantly. Satan was not permitted to molest them everywhere. He had access to them at only one place, namely, at the tree of knowledge. That place-they knew. They could stay away from it if they wanted to. Satan could not follow them everywhere. If they went where Satan was, it was because they wanted to. But even if they went there to examine the tree, they need not have remained there. They could walk away. And even if Satan offered them the fruit, they need not take it. But they took it and ate. And they ate it because they wanted to, not because they had to. They deliberately transgressed. There was no excuse. God could not have devised an easier test.

When God commands men to keep His law, it does not serve the purpose He has in mind to have only a few men keep it, just enough to show it can be done. It is not in line with God's character to pick outstanding men of strong purpose and superb

training, and demonstrate through them what He can do. It is much more if harmony with His plan to make His requirements such that even the weakest need not fail, so that none can ever say that God demands that which can be done by only a few. It is for this reason that God has reserved His greatest demonstration for the last generation. This generation bears the results of accumulated sins. If any are weak, they are. If any suffer from inherited tendencies, they do. If any have an excuse because of weakness of any kind, they have. If, therefore, these can keep the commandments, there is no excuse for anyone in any other generation not doing so also.

But this is not enough. God intends in His demonstration to show, not merely that ordinary men of the last generation can successfully pass a test such as He gave to Adam and Eve, but that they can survive a test much harder than such as falls to the lot of common men. It will be a test comparable to the one Job passed through, and approaching that which the Master underwent. It will test them to the utmost.

“You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” James 5: 11. Job passed through some experiences that will be repeated in the lives of the chosen ones of the last generation. It may be well to consider them.

Job's Test

Job was a good man. God trusted him. Day by day he offered sacrifices for his sons. “It may be that my sons have sinned,” he said. Job. 1:4 He was prosperous and enjoyed the blessing of God.

Then came “a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.” Verse 6. A conversation is recorded between the Lord and Satan that concerned Job. The Lord says that Job is a good man, which Satan does not deny, but urges that Job is God-fearing merely because it pays him to be so. He states that if God will take away His mercies, Job will curse God. The statement is in the form of a challenge, and God accepts it. Satan is given permission to take away Job's property and otherwise to cause him sorrow, but not to touch Job himself, Satan immediately proceeds to do what he is permitted to do. Job's property is all swept away, and his children are killed.

When this happened, “Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” Job 1:20-22.

Satan is defeated, but he makes another attempt. At the next meeting with the Lord, without admitting defeat, he claims that he had not been permitted to touch Job himself. If he had, he claims, Job would have sinned. The statement is again a

challenge, and God accepts it. Satan is given permission to torment Job but not to take his life. He immediately departs on his mission.

All that the evil one can do, Satan does to Job. But Job stands fast. His wife counsels him to give up, but he does not waver. Under intense physical pain and mental anguish he remains steadfast. Again it is recorded that Job stood the test. "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." Job 2:10. Satan is defeated and does not appear any more in the book.

In the succeeding chapters in the book of Job we are given a little insight into the struggle going on in Job's mind. He is greatly perplexed. Why has all this calamity come upon Him? He is not conscious of any sin. Why, then, should God afflict him? He, of course, does not know of the challenge of Satan. Neither does he know that God is depending upon him in the crisis through which he is passing. All he knows is that out of a clear sky disaster has come upon him till he is left without family or property, and with a loathsome disease that nearly overwhelms him. He does not understand, but he retains his integrity and faith in God. This God knew he would do. This Satan said he would not do. In the challenge God won.

Humanly speaking, Job had not deserved the punishment that came to him. God Himself says it was without cause. "Thou moved Me against him, to destroy him without cause." Job 2:1 The whole experiment can therefore be justified only by considering it as a specific test devised for a specific purpose. God wanted to silence Satan's charge that Job served God only for profit. He wanted to demonstrate that there was at least one man whom Satan could not control. Job suffered as a result of it, but there seemed to be no other way. A reward was afterward given him.

Job's case is recorded for a purpose. While we grant its historicity, we believe that it has also a wider meaning. God's people in the last days will pass through an experience similar to Job's. They will be tested as he was; they will have every earthly stay removed; Satan will be given permission to torment them. In addition to this the Spirit of God will be withdrawn from the earth, and the protection of earthly governments removed. God's people will be left alone to battle with the powers of darkness. They will be perplexed, as was Job. But they, as did he, will hold fast their integrity.

In the last generation God will stand vindicated. In the remnant Satan will meet his defeat. The charge that the law cannot be kept will be met and fully refuted. God will produce not only one or two who keep His commandments, but a whole group, spoken of as the 144,000. They will reflect the image of God fully. They will have disproved Satan's accusation against the government of heaven.

God's Government on Trial

A serious situation arose in heaven when Satan made his charges against God. The accusations in reality constituted an impeachment. Many of the angels believed the charges. They ranged themselves on the side of the accuser. One third of the angels and that must have been millions-faced God with their leader, the highest among the angels, Lucifer. It was no small crisis. It threatened the very existence of God's government. How should God deal with it?

The only way the matter could be satisfactorily settled so that no question would ever arise again, was for God to submit His case to the ordinary rules of evidence. Was, or was not, God's government just? God said it was; Satan said it was not. God could have destroyed Satan. That would not prove His cause just but would, in fact, count against Him. There was no other way than for each side to present its evidence, produce its witnesses, and rest its case on the weight of testimony adduced.

The picture, then, is that of a court scene. God's government is at stake. Satan is the accuser; God Himself is the accused and is on trial. He has been charged with injustice, with requiring His creatures to do that which they cannot do, and yet punishing them for not doing it. The law is the specific point of attack, but the law being merely a transcript of God's character, it is God and His character that are the points at issue.

In order for God to sustain His contention, it is necessary for Him to show that He has not been arbitrary, that the law is not harsh and cruel in its requirement, but contrariwise, that it is holy, just, and good, and that men can keep it. It is necessary for God to produce at least one man who has kept the law. In the absence of such a man, God loses and Satan wins. The outcome therefore hinges on the production of one or more who keep the commandments of God. On this God has staked His government.

While it is true that many from time to time have dedicated their lives to God and lived without sin for periods of time, Satan claims that these are special cases, as was Job's case, and do not come under the ordinary rules. He demands a clear-cut case where there can be no doubt, and where God has not interfered. Can such an instance be produced?

The Last Generation

God is ready for the challenge. He has bided His time. The supreme exhibition has been reserved until the final contest. Out of the last generation God will select His chosen ones. Not the strong or the mighty, not the honored or the rich, not the wise or the learned, but common, ordinary people will God take, and through and by them make His demonstration. Satan has claimed that those who in the past have served God have done so from mercenary motives, that God has pampered them, and that he, Satan, has not had free access to them. If he were given full permission

to press his case, they also would be won over. But he charges that God is afraid to let him do this. "Give me a fair chance," Satan says, "and I will win out."

And so, to silence forever Satan's charges; to make it evident that His people are serving Him from motives of loyalty and right without reference to reward; to clear His own name and character of the charges of injustice and arbitrariness. And to show to angels and men that His law can be kept by the weakest of men under the most discouraging and most untoward circumstances, God permits Satan in the last generation to try His people to the utmost. They will be threatened, tortured, persecuted. They will stand face to face with death in the issuance of the decree to worship the beast and his image. (Revelation 13:15) But they will not yield. They are willing to die rather than to sin.

God removes His Spirit from the earth. Satan will have a greater measure of control than he has ever had before. True, he may not kill God's people, but that seems to be the only limitation. And he uses every permission he has. He knows what is at stake. It is now or never.

God, to make the demonstration complete, does one more thing. He hides Himself. The sanctuary in heaven is closed. The saints cry to God day and night for deliverance, but He appears not to hear. God's chosen ones are passing through Gethsemane. They are having a little taste of Christ's experience those three hours on the cross. Seemingly they must fight their battles alone. They must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor.

But though Christ has finished His intercession, the saints are still the object of God's love and care. Holy angels watch over them. God provides them shelter from their enemies; He provides them with food, shields them from destruction, and supplies grace and power for holy living. (See Psalms 91) Yet they are still in the world, still tempted, afflicted, tormented.

Will they stand the test? To human eyes it seems impossible. If only God would come to their rescue, all would be well. They are determined to resist the evil one. If need be they will die, but they will not sin. Satan has no power-and never has had-to make any man sin. He can tempt, he can seduce, he can threaten; but he cannot compel. And now God demonstrates through the weakest of the weak that there is no excuse, and never has been any, for sinning. If men in the last generation can successfully repel Satan's attack; if they can do this with all the odds against them and the sanctuary closed, what excuse is there for men's ever sinning?

The 144,000

In the last generation God gives the final demonstration that men can keep the law of God and that they can live without sinning. God leaves nothing undone to make the demonstration complete. The only limitation put upon Satan is that he may not kill the saints of God.. He may tempt them, he may harass and threaten

them; and he does his best. But he fails. He cannot make them sin. They stand the test, and God puts His seal upon them.

Through the last generation of saints God stands finally vindicated. Through them He defeats Satan and wins His case.. They form a vital part of the plan of God. They go through terrific struggles; they battle with unseen powers in high places. But they have put their trust in the Most High, and they will not be ashamed. They have suffered hunger and thirst, but now “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Revelation 7:16, 17.

They “follow the Lamb whither so ever He goes.” Revelation 14:4. When at last the doors of the temple shall swing open, a voice will sound forth: “Only the 144,000 enter this place.” - Early Writings, page 19. By faith they have followed the Lamb here. They have gone with Him into the holy place; they have followed Him into the most holy. And in the hereafter only those who have thus followed Him here will follow Him there. They will be kings and priests. They will follow Him into the most holy, where only the High Priest can ever enter. They will stand in the unveiled presence of God. They shall follow Him “whither so ever He goes.” They will not only be “before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple,” but they will sit with Him in His throne, even as He also overcame, and is set down with His Father in His throne. (Revelation 7:15; 3:21.)

The matter of greatest importance in the universe is not the salvation of men, important as that may seem. The most important thing is the clearing of God's name from the false accusations made by Satan. The controversy is drawing to a close. God is preparing His people for the last great conflict. Satan is also getting ready. The issue is before us and will be decided in the lives of God's people. God is depending upon us as He did upon Job. Is His confidence well placed?

It is a wonderful privilege vouchsafed this people to help clear God's name by our testimony. It is wonderful that we are permitted to testify for Him. It must never be forgotten, however, that this testimony is a testimony of life, not merely of words. “In Him was life. And the life was the light of men.” John 1:11. “The life was the light.” It was so with Christ, it must also be so with us. Our life should be a light, as His life was. To give people the light is more than to hand them a tract. Our life is the light. As we live, we give light to others, Without life, without our living the light, our words abide alone. But as our life becomes light, our words become effective. It is our life that must testify for God.

May the church of God appreciate the exalted privilege given here “You are My witnesses, said the Lord.” Isaiah 43: 10. There must be “no strange god among you: therefore you are My witnesses, said the Lord, that I am God.” Verse 12. May we be witnesses indeed, testifying what God has done for us!

All this is closely connected with the work of the Day of Atonement. On that day the people of Israel, having confessed their sins, were completely cleansed. They had already been forgiven; now sin was separated from them. They were holy and without blame. The camp of Israel was clean.

We are now living in the great antitypical day of the cleansing of the sanctuary. Every sin must be confessed and by faith be sent beforehand to judgment. As the high priest enters into the most holy, so God's people now are to stand face to face with God. They must know that every sin is confessed, that no stain of evil remains. The cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven is dependent upon the cleansing of God's people on earth. How important, then, that God's people be holy and without blame! In them every sin must be burned out, so that they will be able to stand in the sight of a holy God and live with the devouring fire. "Hear, you that are far off, what I have done; and, you that are near, acknowledge My might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walks righteously, and speaking uprightly. He that despises the gain of oppressions, that shakes his hands from holding of bribes, that stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high. His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Isaiah 33:13-16.

Chapter 22. The Judgment

THERE is a growing tendency to disbelief in a bodily resurrection. Higher critics have long ago discarded the idea, and even Christians of the more conservative type are tending the same way. They can see no need of a resurrection of the body if the future existence is wholly spiritual.

For the same reason they consider a future judgment unnecessary. If the soul is already enjoying the bliss of ethereal existence, or if it is already experiencing the tortures of the damned, it would seem incongruous to interpose a judgment. That should have taken place before the future state was decided upon, not after. Belief in immediate bliss or damnation after death makes a future judgment at the end of the world not only unnecessary but inconsistent.

The Bible is plain in its statements concerning these two subjects. There is a bodily resurrection. There is a judgment. The Bible teaches both. As we are here chiefly concerned with the judgment, we shall confine our study to it, only remarking in passing that it seems so much more satisfying to believe that the future existence of the saved will be molded somewhat on the original plan of the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve enjoyed existence on a plane not unlike our present one, yet without sin. It seems reasonable to believe that God has not abandoned His original plan. If He has not, there must be a resurrection of the body.

The idea of a judgment at the end of the world presupposes that men do not enter upon their punishment or reward at death. This seems reasonable quite apart from being supported by Bible evidence. Let us consider this a little more in detail.

Taking for granted a belief in punishment and reward, we would first remark that no man's record can be completely made up at death. His life is closed, but his influence continues his "works do follow" him. If we are responsible for our influence-and this must be admitted-the record cannot be made up fully until the end of time.

In saying this we do not wish to infer that a man has not sealed his destiny when he dies. We believe he has. All we wish to affirm is that unless the judgment presupposes identical punishment or reward for all, the record cannot be made up at death. It may, indeed, be argued that, it is known Whether a person is saved or lost, and that therefore he may provisionally be admitted to one place or another. This may be granted, but does not solve the difficulty. Even in earthly courts the outcome of a committed crime is awaited before judgment is pronounced. If, in a shooting fray a man is wounded, judgment is based not on the immediate effect but on the final outcome of the shooting. The wounded man may linger for a week or two, or even a month. The criminal cannot demand an immediate trial and judgment, based, as it would have to be, on the fact that the wounded man has not as yet died, and that hence the criminal was not guilty of murder.

A man is responsible for more than the immediate effect of his acts. It seems altogether more reasonable that the judgment be delayed until all the facts are in, at which time a just estimate can be arrived at. If we admit that some will be punished with many stripes and some with few (Luke 12:48), the judgment cannot and must not take place until all factors can be considered. This can be done only at the time God designates the end of the world. In harmony With this is the statement that God will "reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." 2 Peter 2:9.

The Saints Are Judges

The wicked are to be judged by the righteous. "The saints shall judge the world The world shall be judged by you." 1 Corinthians 6:2. As the angels have their work to do in heaven, so the redeemed will have theirs. God makes His plans known to His own, and gives them responsibilities to bear. The saints are given both the privilege and the responsibility of judgment. Humanly speaking, God does not want to run any risk of dissatisfaction or questionings. It is conceivable that some persons will be lost who others thought should be saved. If someone is missed in heaven, a question might come up concerning him in the minds of others as to why. It may be a person who was dear to us, whom we loved and for whom we prayed. Now he is lost. We don't know the circumstances; we don't know why.

If we have had a part in the judgment. If we ourselves have looked into the case and examined the evidence. If after weighing all the factors, we have at last

concluded that the man did not want to be saved and would not be happy in heaven, no question will ever arise in our minds as to the justice of what was done. We had a part in the judgment; we know. We were there. We are satisfied. Moreover, this arrangement assures both a just and a merciful judgment. Some of those who will be lost we have loved. We have prayed for them. We will be kind to them till the last. No one will be punished more than he deserves. God's plan assures that.

It should be noted that the saints are to have a part in judging those whom they have known. If one purpose of God in allowing us to have a part in the judgment is to make sure that no doubt will ever arise in our minds, the saints must judge their own generation and their own acquaintances. This is both fearful and good. God must not run the risk of having someone say or think: "Some of my friends are lost, and I never had a chance to find out just what happened. I thought they would be saved. I understood them better than anyone else. I wish I had known a little more of their case." Such a thing, of course, will never happen. God will see to that. Everyone will be satisfied as to the justice and the mercy of God. God's plan is rightly arranged. We shall know why certain people are lost. We shall have a part in their judgment.

No Judgment at Death

If what is said here is correct, there can be no judgment at death. A group of Christians are praying for a wayward young man. Day after day, year after year they pray, but without result. Then suddenly the young man dies. What about the judgment? Those who know him, those who have prayed for him, are still living. If the young man is to be judged by the saints immediately, they would all have to die immediately if they are to have a part in his judgment. Otherwise he would have to be judged by others, who did not know him. This holds true of all the wicked who have ever lived. They could not ordinarily be judged until a generation after their death, if they are to be judged by the saints. But not to be judged by the saints, or to be judged by others unknown to them, would frustrate God's plan and jeopardize it. We therefore hold that if the wicked are to be judged by the saints, they cannot be judged at death. God says the wicked are reserved unto the judgment at the end of the world.

While it is true that each generation best understands itself and should be judged in the light of its own knowledge, so that an Old Testament sinner should not be judged by New Testament standards, it is also true that before any consistent judgment can take place, there must be some knowledge as to general guiding rules and principles. This presupposes instruction and education, and this instruction must be based upon all factors involved. Christ's death must be reckoned with, also His atonement and teaching. just how, in view of this, could the saints of the first generations on earth have judged the wicked of their generation? It is evident that the idea of the saints having any part in the judgment must be given up if the judgment takes place at death. It is an admirable plan as God has conceived it. To

have the saints take part in the judgment makes heaven a safe place and raises an effective barrier against further questionings and doubts.

Investigative Judgment

What about the judgment of the righteous? It is evident that some kind of investigation must take place before they are permitted to enter into eternal bliss. It must be decided whether their life and attitude warrant entrusting them with eternal life; and this decision must be arrived at before the Lord comes to take them home. It is no more reasonable to save the righteous and afterward have a judgment than to damn the wicked and afterward place them before the bar. But there is one difference. The wicked are not destroyed until the end of the thousand years. (Revelation 20A, 5) That gives abundant time to judge them after the Lord comes. But not so with the righteous. If they are to be judged at all, if any reward is to be meted out to them, their cases must be decided before the Lord comes. When He comes, His reward is with Him. (Revelation 22:12) Hence their status must be determined beforehand.

Some have objected to this teaching. They do not believe that there will be a judgment of the righteous before the Lord comes. Yet this seems only consistent. The cases of the righteous must be settled before the Lord comes—else how can it be known who is to be saved? If the objection be to the phrase investigative judgment which has been used, let another which is better be found. We are willing. It is not an executive judgment. The Bible calls it the “hour of His judgment” as contrasted with the day of judgment. (Revelation 14:7; Acts 17:31.) We believe investigative judgment best fits the case in regard to the judgment of the righteous.

It seems eminently fitting that when the question of who are to be saved comes up, the angels should be present both to give their testimony and to follow the proceedings. (Daniel 7:9, 10) They have been vitally concerned in our welfare; they have been ministering spirits. Throughout the ages we are to associate and be with them, and they have a right to know who are to be admitted to the celestial abodes. This also is God's plan. The angels have experienced some of the results of sin. They have seen Lucifer apostatize. They have seen millions of angels go with him. They have seen the Savior suffer and die, and they know the misery which sin has caused. They are vitally interested in knowing who are to have eternal life. They have no desire to repeat the experience with sin through which they have passed. It is therefore God's wise plan that they have a part in the proceedings.

The Day of Atonement is a fit type of the day of judgment. It would be well for the reader to review the chapter on the Day of Atonement in the light of the present discussion. On that day there was a separation between the righteous and the wicked. The decision hinged entirely on who had confessed their sins and who had not. Those who had brought their offerings and complied with the ritual had their sins blotted out. The others were cut off.

We do not know of any record being kept in the sanctuary on earth as to who appeared during the year with a sacrifice. While possible, it is hardly likely that such a record was kept. We do know, however, that the blood placed on the horns of the altars (Jeremiah 17:1) in itself constituted a record. God had commanded sacrifices to be brought. We believe He respected His, own command and took notice of those who served Him in truth and uprightness. In His book they were recorded as faithful.

Of the judgment of the last day is written this: "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:15. This text speaks definitely of the book of life, and says in effect that only those whose names are found in it are saved. Note the reading: "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life." This suggests an examination of the book to find which names are there recorded. "Whosoever was not found." What is this but an investigation? It is as though the command were given: "See whether this name is found in the book." The report comes back, "I have found it," or, "I have not found it." Either report indicates an investigation. The expression, "Whosoever was not found," justifies the contention that there is an examination of the record, resulting in a separation for salvation or condemnation.

Angels Have Part in Judgment

It seems so clear that there ought to be and must be an investigation of the record kept in heaven before the Lord comes, that the wonder is that any can seriously or honestly doubt it. It is true that God could in a moment, should He so desire, settle all questions as to the future destiny of everyone. With unerring accuracy He could consign one portion of mankind to be damned and another to be saved. But God could not do this, and at the same time allow angels and men to have a part in the judgment. And this is vital. God' must place every safeguard around the future existence. Men must, from their own investigation, be assured as to the justice of the punishment meted out. Angels who have been ministering spirits must be present when the saints are judged. For this reason books are kept. For this reason millions of angels are present at the judgment. (Daniel 7:10) God takes every step needed to make the future safe. Heaven and earth must be protected. God will not suddenly admit millions of human beings to the bliss of heaven and the privilege of eternal life without taking the angels into His confidence and counsel.

We say this reverently. The angels have passed through some sad experiences because of sin. They have seen millions of their fellow angels lost. They have seen Christ die on the cross. They have known of the sorrow of the Father because of sin. And should they not be interested in the question of the admittance of millions of redeemed sinners to eternal life? Should they not have some assurance that admitting men to heaven does not mean admitting sin? We speak after the manner of men. We believe they should have such assurance. And we believe that God gives it to them. They are present when the cases of the righteous are decided, as the saints have part in the judgment of the wicked. This constitutes an assurance for

the future. No question ever will or ever can arise in the mind of anyone. God has seen to that.

The Thousand Years

The thousand years are a time of judgment. "I saw thrones," said the revelator, "and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." Revelation 20:4. During this time the angels will have opportunity to become better acquainted with those who are to be heirs of salvation. We shall work with them in the judgment, which will concern both men and angels. As the little time before the coming of the Lord was an investigative judgment which concerned the righteous, so the thousand years are an investigative judgment which concerns the wicked. Their fate has already been decided, but other considerations made such a judgment necessary. Both men and angels have fellow creatures who will be lost and in whom they are interested. God safeguards all interests so that sin will not arise the second time. The angels have kept the record. Shall they have no part in the examination of the record when final decisions are made? They will have a part in the execution of the judgment (Revelation 20:1-3; 18:21; Ezekiel 9:1-11) At its conclusion they will give their testimony as to the justice of the decisions made. (Revelation 16:5, 7) This they can do only because they know the factors involved.

"The Father loves the Son, and hath given all things into His hands." John 3:35. We may not be sure why the Father has given all things into the hands of the Son, but the statement occurs so many times that it is clear God wants us to know it. In addition to the statement quoted above, note the following: "Thou has put all things in subjection under His feet." Hebrews 2:8. "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." Matthew 11:27 (Luke 10:22). "Thou has given Him power over all flesh." John 17:2. This power includes judging. "The Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." John 5:22. Christ is "ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead." Acts 10:42. God will "judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." Acts 17:31. This includes the execution of the judgment, for the Father "hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man." John 5:27. This granting of authority to the Son may all be summed up in the sweeping statement of Christ Himself: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Matthew 28:18. This leaves no doubt as to the extent of the power given Him. It is till power in heaven and earth.

These statements become interesting in view of their wording. The Father was in possession of all these powers, but for some reason He bequeathed them to the Son. Notice how God has "given," "put," "delivered," "committed," "given . . . authority" to, "ordained," His Son. All that the Father had He gave to the Son. God at some time in the past put all things under Christ, told Him to reign, to execute judgment, and gave Him all power in heaven and earth.

The whole controversy reveals a trait in the character of God that is most comforting. God could have treated the rebels differently. He would not have needed to heed the charges placed against Him by Satan. But He submitted His case to be decided upon the basis of the evidence presented. He could afford to wait and let created beings decide for themselves. He knew that His case was just and that it could stand investigation. He was eminently fair and just in all respects.

This gives us ground for believing that the judgment to come will be conducted along lines that will measure up to the highest conceptions of justice and right, not to say mercy. God is not revengeful. He is not waiting for an opportunity to “pay back.” He wills that all men be saved and come to repentance. He takes no delight in the death of the wicked.

There are some things, however, that God cannot do. He would be happy to save all, but it would not be best to do so. For this there are several reasons. Many do not wish to be saved on the terms that alone can ensure life. The rules which God has laid down for our guidance are the rules of life, and not arbitrary decrees. Society cannot exist, either here or in heaven, if men do not stop killing one another. That seems so evident that no one will attempt to dispute it.

Killing has its root in hatred. It would not be safe to permit one who hates his brother-or who hates anyone-to live in heaven with others. To expect peace and harmony under such conditions would be folly. Men have abundantly demonstrated that hatred leads to murder. It needs no more demonstration. If God expects to have a peaceful heaven, He must exclude murderers. That means He must exclude all who hate.

But it means more. Love is the only effective antidote for hate. Only he who loves is safe. Absence of love means hatred sooner or later. Hence, love becomes one of the laws of life. Only he who loves complies with the law; hence only he has the right to live. That right should not be jeopardized by permitting hatred to flourish. Those who cherish hatred in their lives, violate the law of life. It would not be safe to save such, even should they want to be saved. There must be no murderers in heaven, no violators of the commandment which says, “Thou shall not kill.” The same argument holds true with respect to all the other commandments.

When God therefore admits men and angels to sit in judgment, He does more than merely take them into partnership. This is important. For the sake of the future it is necessary. We need the assurance that a personal part in the judgment will give us. But more is involved. When God admits saints and angels to a part in the judgment, they are in reality passing upon God's work. The rules, the principles, the laws governing men and angels, come under scrutiny. In a certain sense God is being judged. (Romans 3A.)

In the light of these statements the fact that men and angels at the end of the controversy express their belief in the justice of God takes on added significance.

The great question always has been: Is God just, or are Satan's accusations true? At the end of the controversy the angel of the waters says, "Thou art righteous, O Lord." Revelation 16:5. Another angel says. "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments." Verse 7. "Much people in heaven" say, "Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments." Revelation 19:1,2. Those who have been victorious over the beast and the image say, "Just and true are, Thy ways, Thou King of saints." Revelation 15:3. And as God resumes the throne, "a great multitude" "as the voice of mighty thundering" shout, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns." Revelation 9:6. But God does not reign alone. When "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Revelation 11:15), when the accuser is finally cast down, then the throne of God and the Lamb shall be set up. Glorious consummation of our hope! (Revelation 12:10; 22:5)