

~ A Restitution of All Things ~

Restitution Preached

The subject brings to mind Apostle Peter's words in Acts 3:19-21: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 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."

Much of our Christian community has been taught exclusively of a heavenly resurrection of the good, but it misses the import of Peter's words. This "Gone to Heaven" view would be in conflict with the story line of the boy returning to earth. To understand this difference, let's begin with Israel's typical restitutions.

Israel's Jubilees of Restitutions

Under the Jewish Law, Israel celebrated special jubilee periods. "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound ...And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land unto all the inhabitants ... and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." Leviticus 25:9, 10

This special year was a time of refreshing, a year of relief from laboring hard in the fields. Their land was returned to each family. More so, all debts were cancelled and families were reunited. It was a typical (a picture) year of rest and glorifying the Creator!

Israel could not keep the jubilee once the nation was taken in captivity to Babylon in 606 BC. From their last jubilee in 625 BC to Peter's words, about 657 years elapsed. Was Peter speaking of another jubilee like former ones? No, he spoke of a *grand* jubilee, not only a rest from labors, but blotting out mankind's sins and the restitution of all things from death's sting to earth's curse. Genesis 3:17-19; Hosea 13:14

Resurrection Beliefs in Jesus' Day

Israel's future restitution blessings were given in their many promises and prophecies. Gen. 22:18, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed..." Joel 2:28, "...I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh..." Ezekiel 16:53-57, "...When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate,...then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate..." Jeremiah 31:33-34, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; ...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, ...and I will remember their sin no more. Zephaniah 3:9, "For then will I turn to the people a pure language..."

Isaiah 35:1-6, "...the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose...Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees...Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the

ears of the deaf shall be unstopped...the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing..." Isaiah 35:8-10, "And an highway...the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be... found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: 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 52:10, "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

Isaiah 65:21-24, "And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

With all of these promises given to Israel directly and to the remaining generations of mankind indirectly, who would lack faith in the hope provided through the prophets? Yet, there was a small group of Jews, Sadducees, who asked Jesus about marriage in the future kingdom. The question of future marriage was merely deceitful because they did not believe in a future restitution of life. Jesus, able to read their hearts, answered, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Had pride in the instructions of their leaders blinded the Sadducees from seeing Je-

sus' restitution message? Matthew 22:23-33

The majority of the Jews shared the understanding of a future restitution, similar to the answer Martha gave Jesus at the grave of her brother, Lazarus. "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." John 11:23-24

Did Martha believe that she would see her brother in heaven? Or was her belief that in the last days – a future kingdom time – those in their graves would return to life on earth as spoken by the prophets?

If you answered "in heaven", then why would Jesus bring his good friend down from heaven to live on sinful earth again and to die again? If you answered "on earth", then you see the hope given to Israel (picturing mankind's hope), and the beauty of the future restitution work pictured by Lazarus awakening from sleep (death) in the grave, with his strength, memory, and life.

Resurrection Beliefs Today

Similar to Jesus' day, there are two broad views of life after death. One view is "NO Future Life". Another is some form of "Future Life".

For over 6000 years many generations have seen only life and death. The "NO Future Life" group has lost faith and, rather, believes that there could be no great creator or even a need for a redeemer. Differing and perplexing teachings not necessarily based on Jehovah's Word have been promulgated. The confusion resulting from the various religious messages and folklore inhibits determining fact from conjecture: "He shall die without instruction... he shall go astray." Proverbs 5:23

Of the "Future Life" group, a popular Christian belief, also held by some non-Christians, is that those who are "Saved" will be in heaven. In their view, the "others" are assigned to a fate of everlasting torment, the "Damned", or a life forever separated from God's presence and love, the "Lost".

What was the good news from Jehovah as presented by Jesus to the Jews for three and half years, and continued by the twelve Apostles to all nations?

"For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 Timothy 2:3-6

First, Jehovah foreknew of Adam's fall from grace into sin due to lack of experiences with evil, and established a plan for his redemption. (1 Pet. 1:20) Second, God desires for all mankind, from Adam to the present, to live again, now by faith, in the redeemer's blood.

Paul's third point is that after God executed a means to provide a ransoming sacrifice to satisfy Justice's demands in the gift of His son (second point), then mankind will be presented with a true understanding of God's plan of restitution and for life. In that day the errors of the Sadducees, and those preached by many of the religions today will not be spoken. Similarly, "And so all Israel shall be saved...and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11:26) To remove ungodliness from all hearts, and the blindness due to Satan's first lie, man's errors and unbelief must be removed to allow the true laws of God to be written in their hearts. (Jeremiah 31:33) God will provide a means for all to know and understand the truth. A full

and accurate knowledge will be given to all as they walk the highway of holiness. Afterwards, judgment will be made based on each individual's heart. Jeremiah 31:29, 30; Ezek. 18:20

The fourth point shows the relationship between the Divine Heavenly Creator and his creation. The function of this mediator is to intercede between God and recovering sinful mankind. Christ, the world's redeemer, will be its better mediator and teacher. Hebrews 8:6; 12:24

Apostle Paul finally informs us of the last and still very important but misunderstood point, the timing, "testified in due time". To many of our readers, their belief is *now and only now* is the day (year) of salvation based on the understanding of Luke 4:19; 19:10, and 2 Cor. 6:2. Yet if this is the only opportunity of salvation, Isaiah wrote about their day (year) of salvation in Isa. 49:8 and 61:2. When Jesus quoted Isaiah 61, was he referring to the present time period? Was he referring to the promises to Israel many years before? Yes and Yes.

Even though Israel had the promises, their hope laid in a future savior and thus they, the captives, died with that hope. Notice, Jesus spoke, "The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18, 19) Jesus announced that he was the long promised savior and he would open a new and living way. Luke 4:21; Hebrews 10:20

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) Who are or were the "lost" to be saved? Could it be Israel who died not

receiving the promises? Could it be those who hold the "NO Future Life" view? How about those who never heard the word of God? Or how about those who said, "Lord, Lord" but were not invited to heaven? (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 13:25; Philippians 3:14)

Luke recorded that Jesus closed the book and did not finish Isaiah 61:2, 3. "...and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." (Isaiah 61:1-3) The trees (peoples of the past and present nations) will realize their future hope. Yet by what Means and When?

Two Salvations – Two Resurrections

How can we harmonize God's calling of discipleship during this Gospel Age AND the unfulfilled promises of restitution life for the remainder of mankind? There is only one explanation – Two Salvations. The Means!

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept.... But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits [first Jesus – THEN, and at his return, the faithful body members – NOW]; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming [the new kingdom's latter fruits – the resurrection of remaining mankind – FUTURE]." 1 Corinthians 15:20-23. The WHEN!

Jesus told of a heavenly resurrection (now) and an earthly resurrection (future). "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath

not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matthew 11:11) John the Baptist was a great prophet, yet he died before Jesus' sacrificial death. The invitation to a heavenly calling was first made available at Pentecost to all true disciples during this Gospel Age. If the least of these resurrected ones in heaven is greater than John, where does this place John's resurrection? It is in the same future hope of Israel as expressed by Martha in John 11.

There is hope for the weary, the lost, the forgotten. If there is hope for evil Sodom, there is hope for ALL.

The promises to Abraham to bless all the nations will be fulfilled. "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:3) "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days... that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that God is with you.*" Zechariah 8:23

In that day Earth and her inhabitants will celebrate a Grand Jubilee with the restitution of ALL things. ♠

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