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"Lift up a standard for the
people" — Isa. 62: 10

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Messiah

“And without controversy, Great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory. In whom are hid all the treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge”
— 1 Tim. 3: 16; Col. 2: 3 —

THE ORIGINAL EDITION of Handel’s great oratorio *Messiah* of 1741 was prefaced by these words of Scripture, setting the scene for the presentation of the Gospel story in a way that would touch the hearts of middle-class England as no rhetorical skill from the pulpit had ever done.

Messiah was composed when Handel’s career was at a low ebb due to the waning popularity of Italian opera in England, where Handel had taken up residence. Having received at this time a suggested libretto from his collaborator Charles Jennens, he was greatly moved to read the compilation of texts from the King James version of the Bible, and felt impelled to set them to music as an oratorio. In an excess of zeal, he locked himself in his study and — amazingly — completed the work in just over three weeks. The chosen texts depict the birth, death and resurrection of Christ, the spreading of the Gospel, the day of judgment and the final victory over death. *Messiah* emerged as a gripping musical meditation on the Christian theme of redemption.

The emphasis is on prophetic Scripture and its fulfillment, rather than on a theatrical portrayal of the Life of Christ. Yet there is great drama, and Handel’s mastery in the use of musical imagery that gets to the heart of each succeeding theme is the main reason *Messiah* is so deeply embedded in the affections of Christians everywhere.

Regarded by many as a genius with a large degree of pragmatism in his makeup, it seems that Handel was indeed blessed with a kind of inspiration in setting to music the inspired words of holy Scripture, reputedly exclaiming at the time: “I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God himself.” He could not have known that his great oratorio would become the most frequently performed musical composition in the western world, or that it would sustain more than two centuries of undiminished popularity. *Messiah* is still performed in thousands of cities, towns and villages in the British Isles and throughout the English-speaking world, especially at Easter and Christmas. There are few churchgoers who would not recognize and sing along with the better known arias and choruses, some of which we will now reflect upon.

The Divine Plan of the Ages Set to Music

The Hope of Redemption

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. . . . The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (Isa. 40: 1-3). So begins the unfolding of the great drama. God gives through the Prophet a message of hope to an oppressed and captive people whose disloyalty and idolatry had lost for them the glory they had known under King David. Their period of punishment is nearing its end, and God’s compassion is reflected in the gentle words of comfort sung softly by a solo tenor voice. Though the “comfort” is primarily for God’s chosen people Israel, generations of Christians have taken it to heart and rejoiced in a personal experience of God’s mercy.

“And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isa. 40: 5). An exultant chorus bursts forth the joyful news that in due time the whole world of mankind will recognize God’s gracious love. In the Millennial Age the majesty of

His righteous character will be manifested through the Christ, reigning in Kingdom glory. The repeated affirmation of this truth, as voice follows voice in the chorus, underlines the universal significance of the revealing — to “all flesh.” But there is first a great upheaval as Satan seeks to hold on to his dominion.

“And I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come.” “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?” (Hag. 2: 7; Mal. 3: 2). The shaking is unmistakable — both in Handel’s score and in the present “Time of Trouble.” Comparatively few are aware of the underlying cause of present worldwide distress; nor in any sense can it be said that all nations consciously desire the Lord’s appearing, yet there is a subliminal yearning — a *desire* — in the hearts of most people for a “better day.” Malachi’s prophecy contains not only a rebuke for sin, but also a Divine promise of rescue. The “day of his coming” in one sense was the First Advent of the Lord Jesus, and is in a greater sense His Second Advent. As when He appeared to His own nation as their Messiah there were

Cover Picture: Notation for the bass aria, “Why do the nations [rage].” Note that Scriptures quoted in this article are in the rendering used for the *Messiah*, and do not always conform to the exact wording in the King James Version, on which they are based.

relatively few who accepted Him (John 1: 11), so in His Second Presence the great majority fail to respond. The testing time upon Israel at the First Advent and upon the world at the Second Advent reveals who can and who cannot abide, or stand, in that day.

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” “. . . God with us.” “. . . say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” “Arise, shine; for thy light is come” (Isa. 7: 14; Matt. 1: 23; Isa. 40: 9; 60: 1). In *Messiah* the alto voice heralds the birth of the Savior and the chorus joins in the exultant proclamation. When these prophecies came to fulfillment, God’s covenant people heard the announcement first, but most were unmoved. The larger fulfillment is at the arising of Christ as the “Sun of Righteousness” with healing in His wings (beams) dispelling the darkness of the night of sin and death — *“thy light is come”* (Mal. 4: 2). Handel used the darkness of the bass voice to great effect in the recitative and aria describing the hovering gloom of the human condition under the curse: *“. . . darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people”* (Isa. 60: 2). But in rising tones which lift the spirit, the same voice proclaims: *“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined”* (Isa. 9: 2). Christ is born!

The jubilant mood is expanded as the chorus joins in publishing the glad tidings: *“For 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”* (Isa. 9: 6). As the everlasting Father (and the Second Adam, 1 Cor. 15: 45-47) He gives everlasting life to all mankind, freed from the death sentence inherited from their first parents. As the Prince of Peace, He not only makes peace between God and man by meeting the requirements of Divine justice, but also establishes everlasting peace on earth — *“and war shall be no more”* (Isa. 2: 4).

Behold the Lamb of God

The chorus in solemn tones rehearses the words of John the Baptist: *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1: 29). Here an intimation of future sacrifice is given, though at the time imperfectly understood by John and the disciples. Yet the Scriptures had clearly portrayed a suffering Messiah, and in successive arias and choruses Handel illustrates with intense gravity and dramatic effect the Passion of Christ. *“He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” “He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: he hid not his face from shame and spitting”* (Isa. 53: 3; 50: 6). The smiting is heard and felt in the jagged rhythms which accompany the alto aria.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685 – 1759)

Son of a middle-class barber-surgeon, George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany. Though his mother encouraged his early musical talents, his father was initially opposed to his son’s entering what he regarded as a somewhat dubious profession, and in 1702 set him to read law at the Halle university. Young George, however, already a capable organist, soon abandoned his legal studies and became an accomplished violinist



Handel: by Balthasar Denner

and harpsichordist. His compositional skills were also developing, and in 1705 at the age of 20 his operas *Almira* and *Nero* were staged in Hamburg. He spent some three years in Italy, finding favor in Court circles and meeting the eminent musicians of the time, whose influence was reflected in his mastery of the Italian style, particularly in operatic composition.

Returning to Germany, he was appointed *Kapellmeister* to the Elector of Hanover in 1710, but soon obtained leave of absence to visit London, where he evidently found a congenial and promising environment for the advancement of his musical reputation. Deserting his duties at Hanover, in 1712 he made London his permanent home, and in 1727 became an English citizen. Ironically, on the death of Queen Anne, the Elector of Hanover became King George I of England, and generously overlooked Handel’s defection. The still popular *Water Music* was written to accompany King George and the royal party down the Thames in 1717.

Between 1710 and 1740 the majority of Handel’s works were for the stage, and in the heyday of Italian opera, he became England’s outstanding exponent of the genre. He was not then regarded as a religious composer in the accepted sense, though there were dramatic oratorios with Biblical themes, cantatas, and other church music, much of which is still performed frequently. The declining popularity of Italian opera from about 1740 shifted the emphasis, and from that time his genius found expression more in the realm of oratorio. *Messiah*, composed in 1741, was his greatest triumph, and among other favorites are *Saul*, *Israel in Egypt*, *Samson*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, and *Jephtha*.

Handel’s health declined in the 1740s, and by 1751 he had become blind. His last popular success was the *Music for the Royal Fireworks* in 1749. He died in 1759 and is buried in the Poet’s Corner at Westminster Abbey in London.

Recognition of the reason for the sufferings and death of the Messiah now follows: *“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows . . . he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed”* (Isa. 53: 4, 5). Being Himself without sin, Jesus “bore” it for others that He might be touched with a feeling of our infirmities and become a sympathetic High Priest. Death in any form would have met the requirements of Divine justice, but the sacrificial nature of Jesus’ death — the innocent for the guilty — is emphatic in Isaiah’s prophecy: *our griefs, our sorrows, our transgressions*. And in reiterating the “surely,” Handel underlines the moral certainty of Christian believers down the centuries that Christ died for the sins of the world.

Messiah continues reflecting on the sorrows of Christ's Passion, and rejoices in a recognition of its glorious outcome. "But thou didst not leave his soul in hell, nor didst thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption" (Psa. 16: 10). Though Jesus had poured out His human *soul* unto death, God raised Him to life as a Divine being. The message of salvation is spread worldwide: "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of the preachers" (Psa. 68: 11). The last members of the Body of Christ are pictured as the "feet." Their message at the time of the Second Advent is glad tidings to a groaning creation, longing for rescue from the increasing degeneracy of the human condition. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Isa. 52: 7; Rom. 10: 15). "Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom. 10: 18). Jesus Himself declared that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world for a witness, and there can be no doubt that this has been accomplished.

"Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against his Anointed" (Psa. 2: 1, 2). Worldwide commotion, discontent and perplexity are portrayed in the agitated outburst of the bass soloist. In our day men's hearts are indeed failing them for fear of those things coming upon the earth (Luke 21: 25, 26). "He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn; the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psa. 2: 4). The futile schemes of those under the control of the "god of this world" are only designed to maintain the status quo, as Satan strives to hold on to his kingdom. But the positive affirmation of Jehovah to His Anointed, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psa. 2: 9), leads to what is for many the quintessential feature of Handel's great masterpiece, the Hallelujah Chorus.

Hallelujah!

"Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. HALLELUJAH! (PRAISE YE THE LORD!)" (Rev. 11: 15; 19: 6, 16). The audience traditionally

TRIBUTES TO HANDEL:

Bach: "... he is the only person I would wish to be, were I not Bach."
Haydn: "He is the master of us all."
Beethoven: "Handel is the greatest composer that ever lived. . . I would uncover my head and kneel at his tomb."

stands throughout this stirring chorus. At the first performance of *Messiah* before King George II of England, the king rose to his feet in profound respect for the genius of the composer — and possibly also touched with a sense of being actually in the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, to whom even the monarchs of earth must pay their homage. No one sits when the king stands, and the custom is almost universally observed to this day.

The Victory

Following the exhilaration of the Hallelujah Chorus, Handel turns to the book of Job, and the simplicity of the soprano aria, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," introduces a mood of tranquil assurance, not untouched by a sense of wonder: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep" (Job 19: 25, 26; 1 Cor. 15: 20).

Added to Job's assurance of an awakening are a few words from the Apostle Paul's dissertation on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Giving His life a ransom for all, and being the first ever to rise from death to eternal life, He becomes a "first-fruit" of all those who sleep, the "firstborn" from the dead. The power of death is broken; the Redeemer lives; we too shall live.

The theme continues: "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 . . . the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15: 21, 22, 52). In exultant tones the bass voice triumphantly proclaims the good news, echoed by a soaring trumpet obligato, raising the whole shared experience to a higher plane in anticipation of the finalé. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen."

The ages to come will witness the realization of the angels' song of Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will to men (Luke 2: 14); and from every part of the universe the glorious Hallelujah chorus of Jehovah's numberless choirs, without one discordant note, shall forever and ever celebrate Jehovah and Christ, for Their glorious Persons, holy Characters, wonderful Plan and great Works. Let every lover of God and man, every lover of truth and righteousness, pray: "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as in Heaven!" Amen and Amen! * * *

HANDEL'S LONDON RESIDENCE

Handel's home at 25 Brook Street, London, was opened to the public on November 8, 2001. The refurbished interiors have been fitted out as a museum displaying musical instruments, fine arts and historic documents, including a letter from Handel to his librettist Charles Jennens regarding *Belshazzar* and *Messiah*, a 1760 biography of the composer annotated by Jennens, and Handel autographs.

THE GRACE OF GIVING

“He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” — 2 Cor. 9: 6-8

DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON most Christians delight in thanking God for our Savior Jesus Christ, the unspeakable gift of His love (2 Cor. 9: 15) and in expressing their love in giving presents to others. Strictly speaking, Jesus was not born in December, but about October 1 (for proofs, see *The Time is at Hand*, pp. 54-62; *The Bible Standard*, No. 492) and the season that has become known as Christmas was the time of the annunciation, when Jesus was begotten in the womb of the virgin Mary (Luke 1: 26-38).

In following the example of the Heavenly Father Who had compassion on the poor fallen race and Who sent His Son for their salvation, Christians can take pleasure in helping the weaker and the less able, seeking to bring all to the highest possible standard of character development as followers of Christ.

THE ALMSGIVING OF THE CORINTH CHURCH

The Apostle Paul's words to the Church at Corinth in his first epistle highlight the way in which the early churches supported one another and give us some insight into the social structure of the time (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2):

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given instructions to the Churches in Galatia, even so do ye. On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

The question arises, Why should collections have been taken for the Christians in Jerusalem any more than for the Christians at Corinth? There are at least three reasons:

- A severe famine had prevailed in the vicinity of Jerusalem;
- Jerusalem was not a commercial city, and therefore money was less plentiful there;
- Apparently those in and about Jerusalem who received the Gospel were chiefly the poor of this world.

From the open persecution of the Truth there we can readily judge that there was also a great deal of opposition to all who sympathized with the Gospel of Christ. As small shop people, they were probably boycotted; and as laborers, possibly rejected, except as necessity demanded their services.

But the cities of Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia were prosperous; and as far as we may judge, the class which accepted the Gospel was in many cases the more affluent. For instance, we recall the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the deputy governor at Paphos; that of Dionysius, one of the professors in the University of Athens; that of Damaris, of the same city; that of Justus, of Corinth; and of Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue of that city.

THE BENEFITS OF SYSTEMATIC CHARITY

The Apostle deemed it appropriate, therefore, to urge upon the Corinthian church the propriety of sending a gift to their hard-pressed brethren. Living at a time when the conveniences for transferring money were quite inferior to the methods we have today, the various congregations could send their gifts only at the hand of the Apostle when he should go to Jerusalem the following year.

St. Paul's words intimate that the suggestion which he had made to the Corinthian brethren nearly a year before had been well received by them, and the collections zealously entered upon. For this reason it was superfluous for him to write in this connection any of the particulars respecting the necessity for this collection. But he hints to them that there was a bare possibility that the work zealously begun a year before might not have been patiently carried out; and that after he had boasted somewhat to others of their love and zeal for the Lord, he would regret, when he came to them en route to Jerusalem, if it should be found that, after all, they had failed to have their donation ready. This was the Apostle's gentle application of pressure to forestall disappointment.

It was the Apostle's belief that *systematic* charity has advantages over spasmodic giving. The result generally is larger, and the influence upon the giver is more beneficial, as it keeps the need before the mind in a regular fashion. We notice, therefore, that the Apostle felt very free to recommend to the Church the grace of giving and even to press upon them the fact that their liberality, in proportion to their ability, would in a large degree be an index of their love for the Lord and for the Gospel.

Note, however, that the Apostle did not ask alms of these believers when first they received the Lord's grace, lest they should in any degree get the impression that the Gospel was being preached from mercenary motives — for filthy lucre's sake. Accordingly, we find that rather than mention money the Apostle preached to these very same Corinthians for more than a year without even a suggestion as to remuneration; that rather than be chargeable to any, he labored with his own hands at his trade of tent-making (2 Cor. 11: 7-9).

THE GOSPEL CHANGES THE HEART

At first, the Corinthian brethren were so negligent of their privilege that seemingly they never even thought of volunteering financial assistance to the Apostle while he was serving them by the labor of his own hands and receiving some assistance from believers in other places. But after the grace of God had entered more fully into their hearts, they began to appreciate the value of the Truth which they had

received and to realize that it had brought them priceless blessings of hope, joy, faith and character. Then they had a zeal, a “forwardness,” to do something financially in the Lord’s service.

Now that the Apostle was absent from them, and after his course had proved to them that he sought not their money but themselves, to do them good, he felt free to draw their attention to the great blessing which would result from liberality in the Lord’s Cause in proportion to their ability and love. To impress this matter, he gave them a parable, saying, “He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.”

This reminds us of the proverb, “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is proper, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal

PRIDE VEILS GRATITUDE

Why should the same Gospel attract the well-to-do classes in Asia Minor and Greece and yet repel those of similar standing in Judea? Apparently, many of the Jews, so long acquainted with the true God and His gracious promises of Messiah, had developed religious pride, a sense of their exclusivity. This was especially true among the wealthy and the learned. Moreover, because their religious system was in advance of every other religious system in the world, the learned attributed a like superiority to themselves *individually*. As our Lord pointed out in His parable, they “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luke 18: 9).

This was the secret of Israel’s blindness to the Gospel. The religious leaders and theologians were so self-conscious, and relied so implicitly upon their interpretations of the Divine promises as centering in themselves, that they could not regard the humble Nazarene and His unlearned followers but as upstarts and impostors. Later, when the Gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles, the opposition of the Jewish theologians increased; it was utterly contrary to every thought of their religious pride that God would accept either the humble Jews or the Gentiles to His favor, and reject them — the (supposed) leaders of His work. — John 7: 43-53.

Among the Gentiles, however, the case was very different. While the illiterate masses were firmly bound by the superstition of their various religions, those who were of an honest mind among the better educated were quick to discern that many features of their own religion were merely superstitions, accretions over time of human origin. Probably they had been somewhat attracted to the Jewish religion as being much more reasonable than their own — certainly the Gentiles readily resorted to the Jewish synagogues. Still, the Jewish religion would necessarily be unsatisfactory to them, since it would appear to be very narrow, limiting the Divine blessings in a special manner to Israelites only — a people whom the Greeks considered their inferiors in the arts of that time. But the Gospel of Christ was a different matter: it threw wide open the door of salvation to those who craved righteousness, Gentile and Jew — indeed, people of every nation and tongue.

soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself” (Proverbs 11: 24, 25). The evident lesson is that the Lord is pleased to see His people cultivate breadth of heart as well as of mind — generosity in proportion to their knowledge of Him and of His generosity to them.

OUR LORD’S ESTIMATE OF OUR GIFTS

Our Lord showed us how He measures our gifts — monetary or otherwise — not according to their value, but according to the spirit which prompts the giving. The case of the widow’s mite is an appropriate object lesson (Luke 21: 1-4). From the standpoint of His estimation, that poor widow had cast in a larger sum than had any of the wealthy who had given merely out of their abundance, and not to such an extent that they felt it. The impulse of generosity is felt keenly at this time of year. The feeling is coaxed by advertisers and many citizens in the affluent West “splurge” on Christmas gifts. But at its root, generosity (though much abused) is an outgrowth of thankfulness. The Lord’s people especially have much for which to be thankful.

The Lord loves a cheerful, or hilarious, giver (2 Cor. 9: 7). Gifts bestowed in any other than a cheerful spirit might just as well not be given; for they bring little of real blessing. The Lord cannot appreciate such giving, for it has no “odour of a sweet smell” (Phil. 4: 18). All that we do for the household of faith and others, as we have opportunity, must be done as thank-offerings, flowing out of our realization of our debt of *everlasting gratitude* to the Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. To such, the Apostle assures us, “God is able to make all grace abound” (2 Cor. 9: 8). Whoever gives anything in the Divine service — time, talent, strength, money or influence — will find himself or herself proportionately abounding in the spectrum of the Christian graces. The Apostle Paul assures such that they will have “sufficiency in all things,” as well as to “abound to every good work.”

“Sufficiency” does not mean luxury and every comfort. The Lord does not promise His people superfluous possessions, but that their bread and water will be guaranteed (Psa. 37: 25). Such fare is the sustenance of the pilgrims and strangers in the world, those who seek a “better country” (Heb. 11: 16). No, “all sufficiency” is gained only where there is “godliness with contentment” (1 Tim. 6: 6).

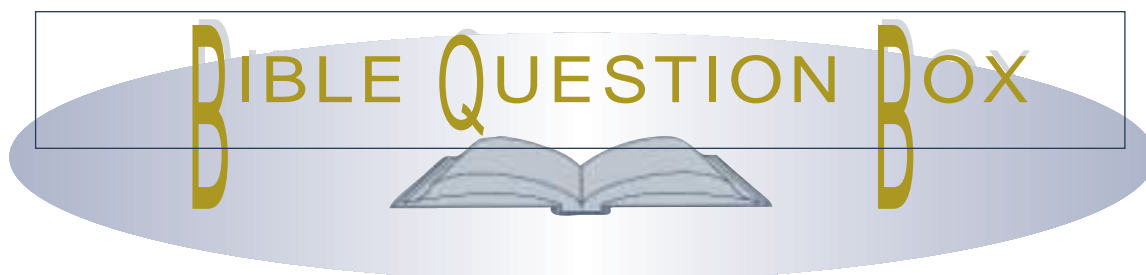
In verse 11, the Apostle speaks of “being enriched in every thing.” We are not to understand him to mean that all of the Lord’s people will be enriched financially. St. Paul himself was an example of the fact that the Lord’s people do not become wealthy. He is here speaking of the enrichment of the heart. In another place he speaks of himself and his colaborers in the Gospel work, “as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6: 10). These faithful servants of God made many rich in hope, rich in faith, rich in love and in all the various graces which these qualities imply.

JESUS THE SUPREME EXAMPLE OF GIVING

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the grandest example of self-denial in the interests of others. He was rich in the possession of the spiritual nature with all its glory and honor, yet for us He became poor, taking the human nature in order that He might redeem mankind (2 Cor. 8: 9). For this He surrendered life itself at Calvary, that through His sacrifice we might become rich — possessed of Divine favor and the riches of Divine grace in Christ. We must study to be like Him, to have His spirit and to share with others whatever He may give us of either temporal or spiritual favors — either to feed or to clothe others literally or figuratively, as circumstances require.

It is impossible for us to tell the riches of Divine grace toward us — the numberless blessings and mercies which are ours through our Lord. By and by the whole world of mankind will be in a condition to recognize that Gift and to render thanks. After Christ's Kingdom has subdued all opposition and iniquity has perished from the earth, then every creature in Heaven, on earth and in the sea shall be heard saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5: 13)! Praise and thanksgiving to the Heavenly Father for His ineffable love-gift to us.

* * *



Q In your treatment of Rev. 20: 7-9 (*The Bible Standard*, October 2001, p. 78) you state that "if a large proportion of mankind goes into the Second Death, it would appear to be something of a victory for Satan and his methods and a slight against God's Fatherly ways." This is a new thought to me. Do you have a reference that I could study further on this?

A The question to which our reader refers asked, "Do these verses [Rev. 20: 7-9] imply that the majority of mankind will eventually be destroyed in the Second Death?"

Our answer to that question stated in part: "We are told in Rev. 20: 8 that Satan will endeavor to deceive all ("the number of whom is as the sand of the sea"), but in this he will likely not succeed with the vast majority — probably with relatively few."

The "sand of the sea," though implying a very large number, does not indicate the *ratio* of the unfaithful to the faithful. An army of rebels does not usually outnumber the general population ("four quarters of the earth" — v. 8).

In our original answer, we noted that the Bible does not inform us what ratio of mankind will be won over to Satan and eventually go into the Second Death. However, based on the character of God as revealed in His Word, we believe it is reasonable to conclude that the will and power of God will have the victory over the forces of the devil. God is not willing that any perish and has accorded the most generous blessing of eternal life to those who come to Him through His Son and who remain faithful (2 Pet. 3: 9; 1 Tim. 2: 1-6).

When we consider all the beneficial arrangements that God has made, and all the experiences that He is giving and will yet give to promote man's eternal salvation, it seems unlikely that Satan could succeed in winning the majority of mankind to his own side, though — knowing the perverseness of the human heart — we allow that it may be a significant number.

The Scriptures assure us that all in heaven and earth will at some time subject themselves to Christ (Phil. 2: 9-11). Jesus Himself declares that through His crucifixion He would draw all to Himself (John 12: 32). And we catch a glimpse of the Divine compassion for mankind in Isa. 42: 3: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." That is, God and Christ will encourage every noble impulse and element of faith — no matter how fragile — to salvation, *if at all possible*. We have great faith in God's winsomeness and the principles of truth and righteousness.

The following reference may be of help on this subject. Epiphany Vol. 1, *God*, p. 88, par. 1, line 4, states:

"While the best that Divine wisdom could plan for the unbelief class is bringing a *very large majority of them* into fitness for everlasting perfect human life in earth through an experience with sin and a subsequent experience with righteousness as effective dissuaders from sin and effective persuaders to righteousness. . . ." [italics ours — *Ed.*].

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LETTERS



Dear Friends: I enjoy your publication, *The Bible Standard*. I am very glad I found your organization. You bring the truth of the Bible to mankind. Please send me a copy of the booklet, *Why Does a Loving God Permit Calamities?* Thank you very much.

Sincerely, H. B., Kentucky, U.S.A.

Dear Bro. Hedman: Christian greetings to you, Sr. Hedman, and the Bible House family!

It was a wonderful time for all at the Chicago Convention! I am so thankful to the Lord that I was privileged to attend. The fellowship was such a blessing, the discourses good, and the special joy I felt at coming apart from the world for a little while and dwelling on the blessed promises of God for this poor world were so comforting and strengthening, that I find it hard to express the feeling of peace that was given me.

I have to express my thanks to my blessed Lord for allowing me to make these trips. He really worked out things for me in a wonderful way. . . . All of the reports regarding the internet sounded marvellous . . . the Lord is using such technology to reach out to the world.

So I say, keep up the good work. The message in the magazines is grand. May God bless you and the Bible House family as you serve Him.

Christian love to all,

H. C., Georgia, U.S.A.

Dear Laymen's Home Missionary Movement,

I pray this letter finds your ministry and all who are with you — blessed in the Lord! My wife, three children, and I have all been blessed and we are staying in His Word.

I am writing today to thank you for all the booklets, leaflets and the book, *Life-Death-Hereafter*, you have sent to me. I have been sharing it with several others. We are really blessed and enlightened with the information.

I am attempting to do a weekly Bible study with others and was wondering if you could supply us with four each of all your leaflets. I am going to make two notebooks and tape a front and back of each leaflet on a page so we can cover most subjects. Also I would be interested in one each of your 24-page booklets if possible; also, your *Studies in the Scriptures* volumes. We are striving to learn as much as we can in spirit and truth! Whatever you send it will be received with much thanks and prayerful acceptance. Thank you so much for all you are doing for others. You and your helpers and fellow believers, and all the victims and those who are assisting in the terrorist tragedy, we continue to pray for.

In His service, R. F., Texas, U.S.A.

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of interest . . .

The world's most populous country, China, was officially admitted to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in early November, after 15 years of trying. In a ceremony lasting just a few minutes, the 142 members of the World Trade Organization unanimously approved China's entry. Loud applause and hugs between the Chinese delegation and the head of the WTO, Mike Moore, greeted the decision in the glittering conference hall in Doha, Qatar, where trade ministers are meeting to try and launch a new trade round. The United States was the first to congratulate China on its membership.

For its part, China pledged to work hard to ensure the success of the trade negotiations, and thanked the various heads of the WTO who have been in that post since it began its struggle for membership in 1986. But it put the WTO on notice that a trade round could only succeed if it addressed the gap between rich and poor nations — the so-called north-south divide — and if it ensured that all countries would gain from globalization. China hopes that its membership in the world body will cement its commitment to economic reform, which has led to a rapid economic expansion in the past 20 years and an explosion of inward foreign investment. However, some other countries in Asia are afraid that China may impinge on their export markets as it expands its own trade.

China's membership will be ratified 30 days after it approves the terms of membership and notifies the WTO secretariat.

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