

IS THIS THE ONLY DAY OF SALVATION?

***Is there a "great controversy" between God and Satan—
God doing His best to get everybody saved—Satan trying to keep
them lost—with time now fast running out on God?***

What about the hundreds of millions of people living now in countries where Christianity is suppressed? Those people did not choose to be born there. Are they lost forever because they are unable to hear the true Bible teachings? Will God condemn to an eternally burning "hell" people who died before the true Gospel was ever brought to them?

Gentiles Without Hope?

What is the eternal fate of the countless millions of Asia and Africa who are without Christ? Is this their *only* day of salvation? Are they eternally doomed when they die? Is God about to "shut the door" of salvation in their face?

Notice how Paul, in Ephesians 2:11-12, describes Gentiles. He wrote to Christian converts in Asia Minor: "Being in time past Gentiles . . . at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens . . . and strangers from the covenants of promise, *having no hope*, and without God in the world."

Clearly, people who have not heard the way of salvation and the name of Jesus Christ are now without hope of salvation—may be lost forever if there is no future opportunity of salvation.

Would God be fair to condemn them when, through no fault of their own, they cannot hear the truth?

God's Desire for Mankind

God desires that all humanity *eventually* avail itself of the opportu-

nity for salvation: "God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:3, 4). But, some will say, "Oh, so *everyone* is going to be saved—universal salvation!"

Absolutely not! The Bible does not teach universal salvation.

Notice what II Peter 3:9 says: The Eternal "is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It is God's will or wish that all would come to a knowledge of the truth so they would repent and be saved from the penalty of sin—death. But some people are not going to repent! For if all repented and met the conditions to eternal salvation, there would be no necessity for casting human beings into the lake of fire, depicted in Revelation 20:15 and 21:8, which will destroy the wicked! Malachi 4:1-3 absolutely disproves the doctrine of universal salvation derived from heathen philosophy. The wicked are to become ashes, left neither root nor branch. There will *not* be a resurrection from the lake of fire.

But does this mean there is no hope for the billions who have died in ignorance of the true Christ? No!

God is desirous that all may attain eternal life. He is "longsuffering," not being quick to judge—desirous that all will accept His way of life as revealed in the Holy Bible so we may become His spirit-born children at the resurrection. But we must choose whether we will accept His way.

The Common Attitude

"Well," many will say, "it might seem from what the Bible says, that God would not be fair if He did not give those people who lived in the Old Testament times a chance in the

future; but all of us since Christ are having our chance now, and we must be saved by the time Christ comes again or we will be lost."

Yes, that does *seem* to be the idea, and most professing Christians today believe it to be a fact. It appears to be so evident that many don't even question the matter.

Did you ever hear it questioned? No, you probably never have in your lifetime. People hesitate to investigate such subjects. "Everybody can't be wrong"—is a popular attitude!

It would appear from the common teachings that salvation is open to everyone today and that all one has to do now is to "join a church" and be "saved." But is everyone free to accept salvation and be saved any time one wishes? Or has God purposely *blinded* some to salvation in this day?

Let us see what the Bible teaches about this subject. It concerns every one of us.

Why Ancient Israel Blinded

Note what Moses said to the ancient Israelites shortly after he had led them out from Egypt: "Ye have seen all that the Eternal did before your eyes in the land of Egypt . . . those great miracles: yet the Eternal hath not given you an heart to perceive, eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (Deuteronomy 29:2-4).

God, Himself, had allowed Israel to be blinded. Observe what God said He would do to Ephraim, head of the ten tribes of Israel, after they had sinned: "For with stammering lips and another tongue will I speak to this people . . . The word of the Eternal was unto them precept upon precept . . . line upon line: here a little, and there a little; [why?]; that they

might go [not come], and fall backward [not be rescued], and be broken and snared and taken" (Isaiah 28:11 and 13).

What had the tribe of Ephraim done? It had sinned (verses 7 and 8)—and what did God do? God hid His Laws. Because the Israelites rejected knowledge (Hosea 4:6), God blinded them.

Now notice Ezekiel 20. This chapter is vitally important. It is a summary of God's dealings with rebellious Israel. Particularly take note of verses 11 and 12: "And I gave them my statutes and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths."

But what did God do when they rebelled? Verses 24 and 25 tell us: "Because they had not executed my judgments . . . had polluted my sabbaths . . . wherefore I gave them also [over to] statutes that were not good and judgments whereby they should not live." God said He gave them over to other laws by which they should not live!

All through the Bible, after it tells of God's punishments, it quotes what God said was His reason for blinding people: "That they may know that I am the Eternal." This phrase occurs over fifty times, with slight variation. Ezekiel 20:26 is an example. Yes, God wants everyone to truly know Him. Whosoever rejects knowledge will be punished in order to learn of God and His ways by hard experience.

But what was the reason for blinding Israel? Are they lost forever?

Why God Blinds

Man naturally wants to do things that are contrary to God's Laws. "The carnal mind [which we all have before conversion] is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7). Compare this with Romans 3:9-18 and then with Galatians 5:17. "The flesh [man's natural heart and mind] lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh: and they are contrary the one to the other." All have a desire—lust—to go contrary to God's Laws. (James 1:14 and Psalm 81:11-12.)

A person's carnal mind remains at enmity against God *until* that person becomes sick and tired of the results

of his own ways, repents of them, and calls on God to change him by giving him the Holy Spirit—the very mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5).

Satan has deceived man into rejecting truth and into doing what is right in his own eyes, wanting to sin—wanting to break God's Laws. It is by this means that God blinds him—not to destroy him, but to bring him to repentance. Concerning blinded Israel, Paul said: "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32).

So ancient Israel isn't lost forever. Their time of salvation is yet coming.

The Creation of Character Takes Time

Nothing that God has ever created begins to compare with the delicate thing that He is creating in man—CHARACTER. God knows that it *takes time* to do this. He, Himself, said "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always" (Deuteronomy 5:29). God is not in a hurry to save all until they have learned their lesson. That is the reason He has allowed 6000 years for mankind to learn it.

The Eternal let ancient Israel try various forms of human government, as the books of Judges and Kings explain. Human beings are blinded to the Kingdom of God because they believe that their own forms of government are right. Today, we have democracies, dictatorships, and other forms of government. None has brought happiness!

Christ Didn't Try to Convert Everyone!

Christ said to the disciples: "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: But unto them [the vast majority] that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand" (Mark 4:11-12).

Do you catch the significance of this verse? Jesus often spoke in parables so that the truth might remain hidden to outsiders, not to make the truth clearer! But why? What is the mysterious purpose of God that is taking shape before our eyes without

our realizing it? Here is the answer:

Man does not know his own inability to rule either himself or the world as compared with the ability of God. The Father wants us to develop our initiative and ability. But He also wants us to recognize that He is the One to whom we should go with our problems and that His Laws are best and that He is the true ruler of the earth. He wants us to know that we must have His very Spirit within us (Acts 2:38).

Of all material things that God has ever created, man is far superior to others in his ability to reason and to make things. But these abilities are of no value to God—indeed they are a hindrance—if man's will or desire to use these abilities is against God's will! "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). God wishes His will to be done in us.

When man has—through spiritual blindness—had an opportunity to exercise his own will and seen the evil results of it, he is ready to have his old self—his own will—killed, "buried with him [Christ] by baptism into death" (Romans 6:4), and willing to present his body as a living sacrifice to God—a living body through which God can carry out His will. (Romans 12:1.)

Are the Majority Blinded?

Paul, speaking to the Romans concerning their Gentile forefathers, said: "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a *reprobate mind* . . . being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness . . . full of envy" (Romans 1:28-29). Again, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief [all mankind] that he might have mercy on all" (Romans 11:32). The Gentiles [nations] were blinded then and they are blinded today. All nations are blinded and deceived today (Rev. 12:9).

What about modern Israel—the democratic nations of Northwest Europe and America? "Even so then at this *present* time there is a remnant [just a remnant] according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5). A few had received the chance of salvation—but notice verse 7: "... the rest [the vast majority] were blinded."

The same is true today. The few, those God chooses (John 6:44, 65), may come to God; but the vast majority won't, because they are blinded to God's truth by thinking their ways are better. Jesus never once said that everyone is called to salvation in this age. He said: "... I pray *not* for the world" (John 17:9).

Paul said: "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (I Cor. 1:26). Only those drawn by the Spirit of God can come to Christ as John 6:44, 65 proves.

In this connection some have been confused by II Corinthians 6:2, which seems to say that now is the *ONLY* day of salvation. But the word "the" in the King James Version is actually misleading, because *it is absent in both the Hebrew and the Greek*. Actually, II Corinthians 6:2 was quoted by Paul from the Old Testament. Paul is quoting Isaiah 49:8. But the Hebrew text of Isaiah 49:8 does *not* have a definite article. Neither does the Greek text of II Corinthians 6:2. The first part of the verse is more correctly rendered as follows: "I have answered thy prayer, he says, in a [not the only one] time of pardon, I have brought thee help in a [not the only one] day of salvation" (Knox translation).

Certainly, this is the day of salvation for those who have been called and whose minds have been opened to the truth by God. *Now* is their chance—their opportunity to qualify for His Kingdom. This is *the* day of salvation for them. But it is *not* the day of salvation for the vast majority. They will receive their chance—their *first* and *only* chance—at a later time. It is *a* day of salvation, but *not* the *only* day of salvation.

Consider also that if it were the *only* day of salvation in Paul's time—then it is closed to us today. But Paul was quoting a scripture hundreds of years old. Was that time—in the days of Isaiah—the only day of salvation? Obviously *NOT*. Today, as in the time of Paul, it was only one of several times of salvation.

Blinded Spiritually

So we see that the vast majority of all peoples today are blinded! "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction" (Matt. 7:13). People today are

spiritually in Babylon! Remember, it is a great religious power with its roots in the ancient city of Babylon—"Babylon the great"—not "Babylon the small"—that deceives this world (Rev. 17:2,5; 18:4).

The vast majority will continue to remain so blinded that they will even fight against Christ at His second coming—not recognizing who He is. The devil will have them so deceived that they will think Jesus is "anti-christ" (Rev. 17:13-14).

Of course, people who have been blinded to the truth can have salvation *now* if they will earnestly ask God to show them His ways and then be willing to follow those ways. How many will really do this, though?

The Bible says only a relatively small number in this age—a "*few*"! (Matt. 7:13)—will obtain salvation. These will be used to teach, rule, and judge those called later in the Millennium (Rev. 1:6; I Cor. 6:2).

But what of the vast blinded majority who never had an opportunity? Are they damned because they were blinded to the ways of salvation?

Now, as God is just, and as it is He who has permitted the majority to be blinded, then He will have to remove the blindness to give them a chance—their *first* chance—not a second chance.

He has promised to do it. "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations"—the veil of spiritual darkness (Isaiah 25:7). It is no stigma or disgrace to your loved ones or others that they are among those that are blinded now. God's plan calls for the removal of blindness from only a few now. It is His responsibility.

Salvation in the Millennium

God has allotted six thousand years to mankind here on this earth in which they can try out all methods of living which they think will bring them happiness. Look at the world today for the results! Now—in this very end time—man is writing a finish to a history of his poor attempt to rule himself without God's help—a history that all may profit by when they have their first chance. The world today is feverishly preparing to drench itself in a blood bath.

What happens after this?

"The people that walked in darkness [blindness] have seen a great light [the blindness removed] ... for unto us a child is born ... and the government shall be on his shoulder ... of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:2-7).

This tells of Christ's birth and of His taking over the rule of this earth for 1000 years at His second coming (Rev. 20:4).

This is the long-awaited Millennium.

This is the time God has set to really start to save the people. Blindness will be removed; the people will see God's mercy and love clearly. All who are blinded today, but who live into that period, will have their first opportunity for salvation. Christ will come with "ten thousands" of His saints to execute judgment and convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds (Jude 14, 15). The devil will be chained so he cannot deceive people (Revelation 20:1-3). The saints will be ruling the nations *here on earth* (Dan. 7:27; Luke 19:17; Rev. 2:26, 27; 5:10).

Christ will pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17), and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Eternal (Isaiah 11:9). God will cleanse the people and give them a new heart and a new spirit, and cause them to walk in His statutes and judgments (Ezekiel 36:25-27). The whole chapters of Isaiah 11 and Zechariah 14 describe this time more fully.

But the people who live on from this life into the thousand-year period are relatively few compared to the millions and millions that have died blinded to the truth. What about them?

When Is Vast Majority Saved?

Notice Revelation 20:5: "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Now read verse 11-12: "And I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it ... and I saw the dead, small and great, stand [a resurrection] before God, and the books were opened ... which is the book of life [there is still a chance of obtaining eternal life], and the dead were judged out of those things which

were written in the books . . .”

They are to be judged by the Word of God—the books of the Bible—in accordance with what they have done in this life and what they will do after they are resurrected to mortal life.

This scene in Revelation 20 pictures the climax of God’s plan—the great white throne judgment, when the vast number of unsaved people will be resurrected and be given their *first chance for salvation*—all those millions and billions who have lived and died since the time of Adam up through our age, and have not known the true way to eternal life.

Salvation will be open to all then resurrected, just as in the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, only now there will be many more to accept it.

This will not be a **SECOND CHANCE**. Here’s why. If they were blinded when they formerly lived, they never had a *first* chance. The ancient inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon will be resurrected and those people who were formerly blinded will be given their first chance (Matt. 11:22). Also, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah will be resurrected (Matt. 10:15), and their deceived citizens will have their first chance. God is a

just God. He is giving even the worst of the people who were blinded before Christ’s second coming their first opportunity to receive salvation.

Ezekiel 37:11-14 gives a good picture of how this physical resurrection will be accomplished for all people. Here it is speaking of Israel as a type of all nations. This shows how the spiritual begetting and growth comes about. Here are people receiving the Father’s Holy Spirit for the first time, just as a few are being called today to receive it.

People will live in the physical *flesh* for a period of time sufficient to be given a just and fair opportunity to receive salvation—eternal *spirit* life in God’s Kingdom. But they will have to *choose* whether or not to accept God’s way (Deut. 30:19).

All this information ought not come as a surprise. For anyone could and would understand this great and comforting truth if he were observing God’s command to keep the Holy Days, which show God’s plan of salvation. In Leviticus 23:34, the Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles represents salvation in the 1000-year period; and the eighth day, in verse 36, represents the great white throne

judgment period when the vast majority will be resurrected and have their first opportunity to be saved from sin.

All this is explained in our booklet *Pagan Holidays or God’s Holy Days—Which?* Write for your free copy.

No, the blinded world today does not understand that the Father is in the process of making from mortal man, here on this earth, a spirit family of His very own—a family that is being carefully trained. His family will constitute the Kingdom of God, living by and administering His laws of love which are written in the heart and mind (Jer. 31:33-34 and Heb. 8:10).

After blinded man has had a lifetime of sad experience living by his own way of life, he will be resurrected back to physical life and have his blindness removed so that he can see and practice God’s way of life—the only way that leads to happiness. Then, and only then, is God going to save the vast majority of mankind and give eternal life to those who are willing to come under His loving rule and aid Him in administering wisely the great power He will share with them. □