

August 20

Whom therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you. Acts 17:23

THE apostle's *method* is worthy of imitation. All wise people distrust novelty, and incline to say that whatever is valuable has long been. We, like the apostle, should endeavor to show that the true gospel is not a

THE PLAN GRADUALLY UNFOLDS YET IT IS AN OLD THEOLOGY

(The Gospel was preached to Abraham over 4000 years ago.)

Gal 3:8 KJV "The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."

R217 "THE GOSPEL TO ABRAHAM

The word gospel signifies *good news*. There are parts or elements to the *good news* however; there are first principles of the gospel of Christ (Heb. 6:1.) and there are more advanced doctrines also... "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Rom. 4:3. What *good news* did God communicate which he believed? "In thee shall all nations be blessed." The *process* by which all nations were to be blessed was not understood by Abraham except that it should be through his offspring, but he believed the *fact* without knowing how..."

R5905 "Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see My Day; he saw it and was glad."—John 8:56. Abraham knew that God's promise to bless all the families of the earth was sure to be fulfilled. He saw the Day of Christ—the Millennium—and its glorious work by the eye of faith. Similarly he saw the great Messiah the King by the eye of faith; yea, more, by the same eye Abraham saw the millions of Adam's race blessed of God by the Messiah, His Seed, during the Millennium."

Jas 2:23 KJV "Abraham believed God, and...he was called the Friend of God."

R217 "There is another phase of the *good news* (gospel) which belongs exclusively to this Gospel Age. Something "which in other ages was *not made known* unto the Sons of men.... This special *good news* is, that since Jesus' sacrifice, God is calling out from the world of humanity, some to become "the *Bride*, the Lamb's wife" -- to "become partakers of the *divine nature*," (2 Pet. 1:4) to cease to be *men* and become "*new creatures* in Christ Jesus," (2 Cor. 5:17.) and as such to be "Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord." This is "*our high calling*".... But these prizes were not *offered* to Abraham; he was not told about the joint-heirship, nor about sitting in the throne, nor about Immortality. No, these were *not made known* in past ages." [1 Pet 1:10-12]

A23 "There came a time, however, after the apostles fell asleep, when the majority of the Church began to neglect the lamp, and to look to human teachers for leading; and the teachers, puffed up with pride, assumed titles and offices, and began to lord it over God's heritage. Then by degrees there came into existence a special class called "the clergy," who regarded themselves, and were regarded by others, as the proper guides to

new theology, but the old theology; not a new gospel, but the old gospel, -- the one foretold to Abraham...the one declared by the Lord Jesus Himself and by all His apostles. In proportion as we would show that errors prevail today, which had their origin in the "dark ages", we must show that we are not forging a new theory equally errone-

faith and practice, aside from the Word of God. Thus in time the great system of Papacy was developed by an undue respect for the teachings of fallible men and a neglect of the Word of the infallible God."

R5971 "For fourteen centuries there was no Bible Study--merely a study and worship of *creeds*. Bibles were publicly burned, and those who dared to study the Bible and accept its statements were hunted like the wild beasts.... The Reformation Movement brought the Bible forward, but its friends had much of the smoke of the dark ages still in the eyes of their understanding."

B14-15 "In the end of the age, which is the harvest time, much truth is due to be uncovered, which God did not make known in times past, even to his most faithful and devoted children. It was in the time of the end that the Prophet Habakkuk (2:3) declared that vision, concerning the glorious consummation of God's plan, should speak and not lie; and that to some of God's children it should speak so plainly that they would be able, as directed, to make it plain on tables; that through their instrumentality others might be enabled to read it clearly; and then Daniel also (12:4,9,10) declared that knowledge should be increased, and that the wise (through faith) should understand the vision.

Our object here is not to prophesy out of the abundance of human imagination, nor in any sense to be wise above what is written in the sacred Scriptures. Therefore, discarding all human inventions, we keep close to the fountain of divine truth, endeavoring to read prophecy in the light of prophecy and its manifest fulfilment; and to make plain upon tables that which God said would be sealed up, and which therefore could not be understood before this time of the end, but of which he gave assurance that it should then be understood."

R5568 "Our Lord said that at His Second Coming He would serve things "both new and old"; and this has been so. Not merely are new things coming to our attention respecting the glory of the coming Kingdom and the work throughout the thousand years of Christ's Reign, but old things are coming to us in a clearer, better light. Among these is the doctrine of Justification by Faith, about which Brother Luther preached centuries ago, and which we thought had been correctly defined and thoroughly understood. Now we find that we did not understand Justification by Faith at all. Sanctification was preached by good people, too. When we came to a Biblical understanding of the subject of Sanctification, all that we knew before seemed childish and contradictory. How beautiful and harmonious these doctrines became! Then there are the types of Leviticus, which picture all the glorious features of the Divine Plan. All these familiar subjects are now shining as new, having been brought forth by our great Master, who

ous, but that we have discarded the errors of the dark ages, and have gone back to the first principles and precepts and instructions of the gospel, as announced by the Lord and His authorized representatives, the apostles. Z.'03-29 R3139:4

is doing the serving, who is giving "meat in due season," "things both new and old."

PAUL AT ATHENS

(Example of wisdom, courage & zeal)

R1557 "PAUL AT ATHENS. III. QUAR., LESSON III., JULY 16, ACTS 17:22-31..."

Departing for Thessalonica, where he again boldly declared the truth and made many converts, and again brought upon himself the wrath of many enemies; and when persecuted in that city and no longer permitted to preach Christ, we find him escaping by night to Berea, where similar success and similar persecution awaited him. His work there accomplished, we next find him in Athens, whither he had fled alone without his companions, Silas and Timothy, who were to follow him.

While here awaiting the arrival of the brethren, he first quietly took observation of the religious conditions of this great city, far famed for its literary and artistic genius -- the city where Homer sung, where Socrates, Plato and Aristotle philosophized, where Solon promulgated his famous code of laws, and where Demosthenes held his audiences spell-bound with his eloquence. But Paul was stirred with holy zeal when, notwithstanding its marvelous crop of wise men and philosophers and all its learning and accomplishments, he beheld this famous city wholly given over to idolatry.-- *Verse 16.*

With characteristic zeal he began at once to present the profounder philosophy of divine truth... As they listened to the eloquent logic of the Apostle in the market-places they said among themselves, This is no place for such profound discourse; and they led the Christian orator to the Areopagus, or Mars' Hill, where the supreme court of Athens convened and where Demosthenes and other eloquent orators had spoken...

VERSES 22,23. The courteous address of the Apostle to the cultured audience before him is made to appear rather rude by our common translation... The Revised Version is an improvement, and shows the Apostle to have been complimentary rather than rude...

It is not wise to begin with a rude attempt to batter down prejudices, but rather we should begin with that which is already known or conceded, and then proceed by logical and Scriptural reasonings from the known to establish that which is as yet unknown to the hearer."

R2190 "PREACHING TO ATHENIAN PHILOSOPHERS...ACTS 17:22-34 --"God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Jn 4:24

We are impressed with the wisdom of the Apostle's method of procedure in addressing a congregation so cultured in error. Our Common Version (v.22) does the Apostle great injustice, by representing him as beginning his discourse by insulting his hearers; -- telling them that they were "too superstitious." What he did say to them

signified, "You are reverential to an extreme; for as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription--'To the unknown God.' Whom, therefore, you worship [admittedly] without knowledge [of his name and character], him declare I unto you." What a lesson we have here of presenting the truth with wisdom, in meekness and in love.

Our respect for the Apostle's method is increased when we know that the Athenians considered themselves so well supplied with gods that they had passed a law inflicting the death penalty upon any one who would set forth in their midst any foreign god not previously recognized in their city... The Apostle seized upon the only opportunity for presenting to his hearers the true God without risking his own life, by calling attention to the fact that *they already recognized and offered worship to the true God*, altho ignorant of his name. Such masterly wisdom must have had weight with so intelligent an audience: and apparently the Apostle received a careful hearing as he described some of the characteristics of Jehovah--far above and beyond anything which his hearers had ever claimed for their divinities.

The secret of the Apostle Paul's success, and the reason why God used him so graciously as a servant, is a lesson which all who attempt to serve the truth to others would do well to note and to apply to themselves. Was it not because he preached not himself but the Lord and his gospel? Do not many would-be teachers fail to attain results and to be more used of the Lord because their ambition really preaches self, and the gospel as a means for calling attention to self; -- and do not others combine self-glorification with the gospel, and thus obtain only partial results for the Lord? The Apostle's course was self-abandonment, as he explained, "I determined to know nothing among you save Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2.) His knowledge on other subjects was all sunk out of sight. It is for this reason that many comparatively ignorant men have been greatly used of the Lord in the gospel service--great learning in the philosophies often proving a snare, a temptation to preach these and to make a show among men rather than to preach the divine philosophy--redemption through the blood of the cross. Let us all copy the Lord and his greatly used and thus approved servant, Paul, until the expression of our every word and act will be

"None of self and all of Thee"

Athens was full of idols and temples representing the homage to deities of various degrees of distinction. Pliny, the historian, informs us that in Nero's day Athens contained more than 3,000 public statues--of gods of various grades and of notable human heroes. In one street there stood before every house a square pillar supporting a bust of the god Hermes, and every gate-way and porch had its protecting god. Paul preached (1) a God so great that he not only could not be made by human hands, but that all things, both in heaven and in earth, were his creation; (2) a God who needed no temple or house; (3) a God so great that nothing could be done for him, seeing that he himself is the Creator of the world and the author of every good gift, including life itself; (4) that all the human

family evidenced his handiwork, and all from one source or parent; and (5) that God had in general one great plan with reference to the entire human family. All this was very different from the confused ideas presented by the philosophers respecting various gods and the competition and strife between them as between human heroes.

Having set forth the character of God, the next point was to show that all God's creation should *seek* him, that he is nigh unto all that call upon him; for his power and intelligence are everywhere present. Seizing upon a truthful statement by one of their poets to the effect that all mankind are God's offspring, the Apostle endorses this, and then points out that this, being true, it logically follows that images of gold, silver and stone could not properly represent this great God.

Anticipating the question in their minds--If there is so great a God why has he not previously manifested himself to us? and why has he permitted us to look to and to worship other gods? and would he not be very angry with us, because of this false worship? the Apostle answers, No; the past period of ignorance God entirely overlooks: You are not charged with responsibility for rejecting that of which you did not know. But, *now* this great God has sent forth his gracious message, that all men everywhere should come to a knowledge of him, and should repent of sins and seek to do his will.

Here is a definite statement from an inspired source informing us that the millions who lived and died in heathen darkness prior to the coming of Christ are not held responsible and will not be punished for that ignorance. And the same principle can logically be applied to all since who have not known of Christ and of the redemption through his blood. All of these must yet come to a knowledge of the truth.

But note the Apostle's reasoning: God has appointed a day of trial ("judgment") for the whole human family, in which Christ will be the righteous Judge, and in which every man--the whole world--will have a righteous trial, a fair opportunity for accepting divine favor and eternal life, or of rejecting these and receiving the wages of sin, the second death. Here, the Apostle was able to bring Christ to the attention of his hearers. The little portion of the discourse set before us omits all mention of a redemption by the second Adam, before any blessing of life or even a trial for life eternal could be offered to any; doubtless, however, this was part of the discourse, set forth along the same lines as the Apostle's argument in *Romans 5* and in *1 Cor. 15*.

In logical order, it was necessary that the Apostle would present the doctrine of the resurrection. (1) He must show that Christ, having died for our sins, did not remain dead, but was raised up and clothed with authority and power to be the Deliverer in due time of those whom he had purchased with his own blood. (2) He must show that the ignorant ones of preceding centuries, as they had shared the Adamic penalty, would have an opportunity also of sharing the benefits of the atonement, and he must therefore show that, altho the penalty, death, was justly enforced against all, yet God purposed an awakening from death for all mankind; and a complete resurrection to the condition enjoyed by Adam before the

fall, to all who would render obedience to the Redeemer when he would be the Judge. (The mention of the high calling and the way of full consecration leading to it, he reserved for such as would accept justification.)

The Apostle held the attention of his hearers and evidently made considerable impression until it came to this last part of his discourse. But the doctrine of the resurrection ran counter to all their latest philosophical deductions which were to the effect that death is merely a change to a higher form of life. According to their philosophy there could be no resurrection of the *dead*; for they believed that there were no dead. These philosophers had become so thoroughly imbued with the sentiments where-with Satan deceived mother Eve ("Ye shall not surely die") that they were ready and willing to reject what they must have conceded was the grandest philosophy respecting the Deity that they had ever heard. This same error has been a stumbling block to many, hindering them from seeing the beauty and consistency of the divine plan.

The Apostle's efforts were not wholly without fruitage, for one of the Professors of the university, Dionysius, and a lady of note, Damaris, and some others believed, but evidently not satisfied with the prospect for future service, the Apostle departed for Corinth. Aside from the general lesson of this narrative other valuable lessons may be drawn.

(1) As Athens, the seat of learning, was full of idols, so the heart, even tho enriched with earthly wisdom, may be full of idols and wholly lacking of any proper conception of the great Creator and his plan. Many cultured minds have nevertheless idols of selfishness, passions, earthly ambitions and love of falsehoods, to such an extent as to reject the sublime testimony of the gospel, even when brought to their attention.

(2) Culture and refinement are not always accompaniments and indications of the Lord's presence and the light of his grace, but quite frequently are hindrances, in that they give a measure of satisfaction which serves as a substitute for Christ and his gospel.

(3) Forms of worship are not acceptable with God: the Athenians were worshipful and reverential to an extreme. God not only seeks worshipers who have the true spirit of worship, but he arranged also that these shall have a knowledge of the truth, so that they may worship in truth, according to the truth. Hence, the declaration, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." A knowledge of the truth is essential before we can worship in spirit and in truth. As a spirit of worship without the truth is not sufficient or accepted, much more a knowledge of truth is not sufficient nor acceptable without a spirit of worship."

CR398 "Many people worship God in an outward form and their hearts are far from Him. He does not pay any attention..."

A121 "God seeketh such to worship him as worship in spirit and in truth... His design was to make a nobler thing, an intelligent creature in his own likeness, a lord for earth, whose loyalty and righteousness would be based upon an appreciation of right and wrong, of good and evil."

R3138 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2008)
"THIS IGNORANCE GOD WINKED AT"

--ACTS 17:22-34--FEBRUARY 1--

Golden Text--"He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection."

PERSECUTION followed the Apostle to Berea, where we, in a previous lesson, left him teaching a very noble class of inquiring and searching minds. His enemies in Thessalonica discovered his whereabouts, and at once began to create a disturbance--no doubt believing that thus they were doing God service. The Apostle's own experience as a persecutor of the body of Christ must have helped him to very charitable views of those who so viciously pursued him. The evidences of coming trouble were so strong that the Berean friends feared to have him embark at a regular port, at which he might have been recognized, and the direction of his journey anticipated, and thus prejudices might have gone with him or before him into new fields; they, therefore, secretly hastened him to the near seashore where he obtained coastwise shipping for Athens. The Apostle, as the chief spokesman, "drew the fire" of his enemies to such an extent that their hatred seems to have been confined to him alone--not affecting Silas, his companion, nor Timothy, at this time his assistant or servant. The latter two were left behind, to strengthen and encourage the believers, whose faith already had been established.

Under these circumstances the Apostle arrived at Athens, once the world's capital in every sense of the word; but still its capital in respect to science and art and theology and schools of general instruction--its commercial and political influence having gone to Rome with the imperial control. To Athens came the youth of wealthy families of the world, and many others possessed of a special craving for wisdom,--to avail themselves of the teachers, studies and lectures--practically the only means of instruction at that time.

Without a miracle no other one of the apostles would have been competent to secure a hearing before the Athenian Council of the Areopagites--composed of the teachers of the various schools of learning, and generally speaking, of the reputedly wisest men of the world. That the Apostle Paul, without letters of introduction, without political or other influence, serving as such, should succeed in a few days in obtaining an invitation to address this august body of men, indicates clearly that he was a man of remarkable talent, as well as learning. These natural qualities in him were reinforced by the spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of the divine revelation, the true Gospel. The Apostle lost no time in beginning his special work: true, he first made a general inspection of the chief features of the city's attractions, noting its numerous public statues to the gods, whose number Pliny gives as over three thousand in the time of Nero. It was while making this inspection of the city and considering how best he could launch the gospel message there, that his attention was drawn to one altar erected "To the Unknown God." He kept this as a text for his principal effort when the time should be ripe, and meantime, as usual, he began his ministry by going into the Jewish synagogues; but apparently finding little interest here he resorted to the public squares and markets, and discussed religious topics with the numerous students and others who gathered there.

Amongst those who heard him were some of a cynical turn of mind who said, Let us listen to what this babler is saying; the word "babbler" signifying seed-picker, inferentially meaning that the Apostle had gained a mere smattering of knowledge, picked up some seeds of thought from others of the great teachers, and was now attempting to set himself up as a teacher. Others, disposed to persecute, said, He seems to be a setter forth of strange gods;--for to set forth any strange gods in Athens was a crime, it being held that they already had them in plenty, and that to admit that any one could present a new god of which the Athenian teachers knew nothing, would be an insult to their learning and evidently a fraud. This, together with the Apostle's talents, secured for him a hearing before the Areopagites, or Council of the Learned. It was this Council which had the power to sentence to death anyone who should attempt to set forth strange gods in Athens; and hence the Apostle's hearing before them was probably, more or less, in the nature of a trial for life, because he had been preaching Jesus--an unheard-of god amongst the Athenians up to this time--and the resurrection.

The Apostle's theme is worthy of our notice. Under the divine guidance he seemed to have a way of approaching the pith of the gospel most directly, and these words of our Golden Text, "Jesus and the resurrection," really embraced the whole of the gospel preached. The world, under divine sentence, was dead or dying: the redemption price, our Lord's ransom sacrifice, had just been paid, and the hope to be built upon his work and to be announced to the people was *the resurrection of the dead*--that our Lord's death was the purchase price for the sins of the whole world, and that as a result, in God's due time, an awakening of the dead shall come, and eventually the full raising up to the perfection of life of all who will

accept the Redeemer as their leader and guide. This is the gospel which should still be preached, but which, by reason of various errors that crept in during the dark ages, has been beclouded and forced out of its way to such an extent that remarkably few lay any stress whatever upon the grand doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; and some are even dropping from their teachings "the ransom for all" given by Jesus.

We can picture before our minds the Apostle addressing the Council of Mars' Hill, composed of "the noblest blood of Athens, the first politicians, the first orators, the first philosophers; accordingly the most august, not only of Athens, but of Greece, and, indeed, of the whole world, under whose supervision 'came the transactions of the popular assembly, religion, laws, morals and discipline.'" Now the Apostle had use for the text he had found. He must prove to these men that he was not the setter forth of a *new* theology, but an *old* one. He at once brought forth his argument, not in the discourteous language of our English Common Version, intimating that his auditors were ignorant and superstitious, but, on the contrary, in complimentary language, which we paraphrase: he said to them;--"I perceive that more than others you Athenians have respect for whatever is divine. The conviction of this came to me as passing through your city I beheld the various evidences of your devoutness, and amongst other altars noticed one with the inscription, "To the Unknown God." Information regarding this God I am setting forth. He is the God that made the world and everything therein, and is the Lord of heaven and earth, too great to dwell in any temples made with hands, for he is the Lord of heaven as well as earth; neither can he receive service at our hands, for he needs nothing which we have to give, but is the author of life and breath and all things; who himself created every nation of men dwelling throughout all the earth --and even all their affairs are subject to his regulations and appointments.

Thus did he set before them the greatness of the true God, in contrast with their numerous gods whom they feared or hated, revered or placated, and whose vices and frequent impotency they admitted. The Apostle thus brought his teachings within the rules and regulations, as being not a new teaching, but a fuller declaration of a God already recognized by his hearers. And indeed, so high, so noble, so great a thought of God, must have impressed his hearers favorably. We cannot doubt that the teachings of the Jews, supplemented by the gospel presentations, have done much to lift the minds of men out of the deep degradation which came upon them soon after the flood, as explained by the Apostle.--Rom. 1:20-32.

A God who was not merely the God of one nation or of one city or of one precinct, but who had created all races and nations, and had had to do with the rise and fall of nations, was certainly a very different God from anything that had ever been heretofore suggested to the minds of these philosophers; for although the Jews had preached the same God, undoubtedly their presentation of him as the God of the Hebrews must have favored the impression that each nation had its own god or gods, demanding its worship, reverence, sacrifices, etc.

In vs. 26 and 27 the Apostle implies that the Lord's ordering of the national affairs had something to do with the propagation of the knowledge of himself, and so we find it has been. The bringing of the world under successive empires--the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman--had tended to unify the race to some extent, and to make more possible the promulgation of the gospel. During the Grecian period the Greek language was spread abroad throughout various lands, and it still maintained its supremacy as the language of the world, although the reins of government had passed to the hands of the Romans, under whose pushing, warlike power the world in general would be brought much closer together than it had ever been from the time of the confounding of tongues at Babel. All this had occurred at the proper juncture of time as concerned God's favor to Israel, according to the flesh, the birth of Jesus, his crucifixion and the gathering of the ripe "wheat" from that nation, and the scattering of the remainder. All these things were, under divine supervision, working in the interest of mankind, "that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." The Apostle would assist his hearers in finding this true God, who was to be found of them, and whom they had indicated their desire to know when they erected the altar referred to.

Describing the true God further, the Apostle assured his hearers that none could live or move or have existence, even, aside from the power and good intent of this great God. His words are equally

truthful, whether we restrict them to the imperfect existence of the present time and the dying condition of the world, with but a spark of life, or whether we apply them in the fuller sense to the Lord's provision for the future by restitution processes and arrangements. Still wishing to offset the thought that his message was a new one, the Apostle declares that certain Grecian poets had practically expressed this thought in saying, "We are also his offspring." Carrying the mind, then, to the logical conclusion, he urges that if we are the offspring of God our thoughts respecting divinity should not lead us to make or to worship images of any kind, all of which are professedly of man's device.

^[1]The Apostle's *method* is worthy of our imitation. All wise people distrust novelty, and incline to say that whatever is valuable has long been. We, like the Apostle, should endeavor to show that the true gospel is not a new theology, but the old theology; not a new gospel, but the old gospel,--the one foretold to Abraham; the one announced by the angels on Bethlehem's plains as "good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people;" the one declared by the Lord Jesus himself and by all his apostles. In proportion as we would show that errors prevail today, which had their origin in the "dark ages," we must show that we are not forging a new theory equally erroneous, but that we have discarded the errors of the dark ages, and have gone back to the first principles and precepts and instructions of the gospel, as announced by the Lord and his authorized representatives, the apostles.

An explanation was necessary as to why this great God who had created all nations, and was directing their welfare, had neglected to send word to the Athenians until now. The Apostle did not go into a full explanation of the matter, with which his hearers would not have sympathy--he did not attempt to show how God in the past had merely been giving the world lessons in respect to the wages of sin, neither did he mention how Abraham's seed had been selected as the line through which divine blessings were to be carried eventually to all the families of the earth, and that God had been dealing with the natural seed of Abraham for the preceding eighteen centuries, making types of them and through them illustrating the progress of the divine plan as it shall ultimately be carried out. He did not explain, either, how that Christ offered himself to this nation of Israel, and (in harmony with the divine foreknowledge) had been rejected, and that now God was seeking a spiritual seed of Abraham--spiritual Israelites--to take the place of the broken-off branches of the fleshly house.--Rom. 11.

He contented himself with the bare statement of the truth, that in times past God had "winked at" or overlooked or disregarded and paid no attention to the idolatries of the world, but that now the time was come for a change of dispensation;--that now God was sending his message to them, and to all who had ears to hear, commanding repentance from sin and turning from idolatries to true worship and righteousness. Quite possibly, though the account does not state it, the Apostle explained that the foundation or basis of this call to repentance was the fact that Christ had been a propitiation (satisfaction) for the sins of the whole world--clearing men thus from the original condemnation of death and alienation from God, and permitting the return to his favor of whomsoever would.

The word "because" commencing *vs. 31* has a special significance which should not be overlooked. God calls upon all men to repent and reform, *because* he has appointed for them a day of judgment--a day of trial or testing. Not a trial for testing or judging whether or not they are imperfect and fallen, for this God already knows, even better than we do, and his Word expressly declares that "There is none righteous, no, not one." Such a trial, such a judgment day, therefore, to see if any were righteous, would be a farce. The object of the day of trial or judgment referred to by the Lord is totally different from this.

It is to be a trial day or judgment day to see, to test, to prove which of the world of mankind desire fellowship with the Lord, desire to be obedient to him, desire to walk in his ways. The Millennial Age is this trial day, and the Lord assures us that a full opportunity shall be granted to each and every member of the race to hear, to know, to comprehend his goodness, his love, his redemption of the world through Christ, and his willingness that they should come back into fellowship with him--back to a condition in which he could justly accord to them everlasting life. God could not reasonably command any to repent and return until the ransom was paid at Calvary, because it was his own law that had forbidden them to have fellowship with him, and that law must first be satisfied; and because he could not reward with life everlasting any who would seek his face, until he had made provision through the death of Christ for the payment of the death penalty against the race and through his resurrection for the times of restitution.

It is a further part of this blessed assurance that the judgment or trial of the world will be "in righteousness" --under a reign of righteousness when the besetments of the Adversary and his deceptions will be at an end, and when, therefore, a clear and explicit knowledge of the Lord and of the truth will fill the earth, as the waters cover the great deep. What a gracious gospel the Apostle had to preach! It was so good, indeed, that he had to be guarded in his expression of it;--too good for his hearers to appreciate, with their debauched ideas of the cruelty and perversity of the gods--even as it is too good to be appreciated today by those whose minds have been more or less confused by the horrible theological nightmares coming down to us from "the dark ages."

The Apostle was proceeding logically to show that the resurrection of Christ from the dead was God's assurance to all that he would ultimately carry out this great plan of blessing the world, by granting to each member of it an individual trial or judgment for life, under the favorable conditions of the Millennium; and that the resurrection of Christ was not only God's attestation to men that his sacrifice had been satisfactory, but was also necessary, that our Lord Jesus as the risen and glorified Son of God might exercise in due time "all power in heaven and in earth," and thus bring about the great Thousand-Year Judgment Day, or "times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21.) But with this his hearers, who must have been amazed with the logic of his argument, and must have wondered how their various disciples would be influenced by the new teacher, and to what extent they would lose caste, as being less logical or less lofty in their sentiments, found occasion for an expression of dissatisfaction, and of thus logically casting aside the entire argument--dismissing it as unworthy of further consideration.

Their objection rested on the resurrection, which the Apostle made so prominent, so indispensable to the carrying out of the entire plan of God; indispensable, first, as to the Redeemer, that he must rise from the dead, ere he could be the agent of Jehovah in prosecuting the work of blessing the world; necessary to the world of mankind, that they might come forth from the tomb and be granted a knowledge and opportunity of restitution or resurrection to all that had been lost by Adam's disobedience. When the resurrection was mentioned the occasion for expressions of derision was furnished, as though they would say: We knew that there could be no thoroughgoing philosophy superior to our own; we were on the look-out for the weak point in the argument of this speaker who sets himself up to be a teacher, and now we have found it;--the resurrection! Nonsense! Whoever saw or heard of a resurrection from the dead?

Others of his auditors were less violent in their expressions, but agreed that they had heard enough for the present--implying that the argument was not very satisfactory when it needed to be supported by a resurrection hypothesis which, to them, seemed very much less reasonable than their own philosophies,--that a man never died, and that when he appears to die he really becomes more alive than he ever was before. From their standpoint of view there could be no resurrection of the dead, since there were none dead,--all being more abundantly alive from the moment of apparent death. This has been the point of contest between the Scriptures and those who hold to them as the Word of God, and all other theories advanced by and backed by the Adversary and in accordance with his original deceptive statement, "Ye shall not surely die." Those who would be on the Lord's side must accept the Lord's statement, "Ye shall surely die;" must admit that it is true; must admit that it was necessary that Christ should die, as our representative and substitute, to free us from the condemnation of death, and must admit also that only by a resurrection of the dead can we come back again to life,--to absolute perfection and full harmony with God.

However, one member of the Council of Mars' Hill (the Areopagite Society) had been deeply interested in the truth he had heard; also a woman of some distinction, and others with them;--for although the Society alone occupied the place of prominence in such discussions, the people in general were privileged to surround the court. The Apostle's experience here, as elsewhere, like our own, demonstrates the fact that at the present time not many have ears to hear the Word of the Lord; not many are seriously "feeling after him if haply they might find him." The majority are blinded by the god of this world, Satan, through various traditions, heathen and Christian, so that they cannot discern the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the true gospel. At the present time it is not given to all to see and to understand (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11), but we thank God that the time is coming when all the blind eyes shall be opened, and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped; and then the preaching of "Jesus and the resurrection" will mean a great blessing, and all shall come to the knowledge of the truth, from the least to the greatest, as the Lord, through the Prophet, has declared.--Jer. 31:33,34.

[1] Aug. 20 Manna, Acts 17:23