

## SCRIPTURE STUDIES

## STUDY I

EARTH'S NIGHT OF SIN TO TERMINATE  
IN A MORNING OF JOY

A Night of Weeping and a Morning of Joy—Two Methods of Seeking Truth—The Method Herein Pursued—Scope of the Work—A Difference Between the Reverent Study of the Scriptures and the Dangerous Habit of Speculation—The Object of Prophecy—The Present Religious Condition of the World Viewed from Two Standpoints—Egyptian Darkness—A Bow of Promise—The Path of the Just Progressive—Cause of the Great Apostasy—The Reformation—The Same Cause Again Hinders Real Progress—Perfection of Knowledge Not a Thing of the Past, but of the Future.

THE TITLE of this series of Studies—"The Divine Plan of the Ages," suggests a progression in the Divine arrangement, foreknown to our God and orderly. We believe the teachings of Divine revelation can be seen to be both beautiful and harmonious from this standpoint and from no other. The period in which sin is permitted has been a dark night to humanity, never to be forgotten; but the glorious day of righteousness and divine favor, to be ushered in by Messiah, who, as the Sun of Righteousness, shall arise and shine fully and clearly into and upon all, bringing healing and blessing, will more than counterbalance the dreadful night of weeping, sighing, pain, sickness and death, in which the groaning creation has been so long. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the MORNING." [Psa. 30:5](#)

As though by instinct, the whole creation, while it groans and travails in pain, waits for, longs for and hopes for the DAY, calling it the Golden Age; yet men grope blindly, because not aware of the great Jehovah's gracious purposes. But their highest conceptions of such an age fall far short of what the reality will be. The great Creator is preparing a "feast of fat things," which will astound his creatures, and be exceedingly, abundantly beyond what they could reasonably ask or expect. And to his wondering creatures, looking at the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of God, surpassing all expectation, he explains: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." [Isa. 55:8,9](#)

Though in this work we shall endeavor, and we trust with success, to set before the interested and unbiased reader the plan of God as it relates to and explains the past, the present and the future of his dealings, in a way more harmonious, beautiful and reasonable than is generally understood, yet that this is the result of extraordinary wisdom or ability on the part of the writer is positively disclaimed. It is the light from the Sun of Righteousness in this dawning of the Millennial Day that reveals these things as "present truth," now due to be appreciated by the sincere—the pure in heart.

Since skepticism is rife, the very foundation of true religion, and the foundation of truth, is questioned often, even by the sincere. We have endeavored to uncover enough of the foundation upon which all faith should be built—the Word of God—to give confidence and assurance in its testimony, even to the unbeliever. And we have endeavored to do this in a manner that will appeal to and can be accepted by reason as a foundation. Then we have endeavored to build upon that foundation the teachings of Scripture, in such a manner that, so far as possible, purely human

judgment may try its squares and angles by the most exacting rules of justice which it can command.

Believing that the Scriptures reveal a consistent and harmonious plan, which, when seen, must commend itself to every sanctified conscience, this work is published in the hope of assisting students of the Word of God, by suggesting lines of thought which harmonize with each other and with the inspired Word. Those who recognize the Bible as the revelation of God's plan—and such we specially address—will doubtless agree that, if inspired of God, its teachings must, when taken as a whole, reveal a plan harmonious and consistent with itself, and with the character of its Divine Author. Our object as truth-seekers should be to obtain the complete, harmonious whole of God's revealed plan; and this, as God's children, we have reason to expect, since it is promised that the spirit of truth shall guide us into all truth. [John 16:13](#)

As inquirers, we have two methods open to us. One is to seek among all the views suggested by the various sects of the church, and to take from each that element which we might consider truth—an endless task. A difficulty which we should meet by this method would be, that if our judgment were warped and twisted, or our prejudices bent in any direction—and whose are not?—these difficulties would prevent our correct selection, and we might choose the error and reject the truth. Again, if we should adopt this as our method we should lose much, because the truth is progressive, shining more and more unto the perfect day, to those who search for it and walk in the light of it, while the various creeds of the various sects are fixed and stationary, and were made so centuries ago. And each of them must contain a large proportion of error, since each in some important respects contradicts the others. This method would lead into a labyrinth of bewilderment and confusion. The other method is to divest our minds of all prejudice, and to remember that none can know more about the plans of God than he has revealed in his Word, and that it was given to the meek and lowly of heart; and, as such, earnestly and sincerely seeking its guidance and instruction only, we shall by its great Author be guided to an understanding of it, as it becomes due to be understood, by making use of the various helps divinely provided. See [Eph. 4:11-16](#).

As an aid to this class of students, this work is specially designed. It will be noticed that its references are to Scripture only, except where secular history may be called in to prove the fulfilment of Scripture statements. The testimony of modern theologians has been given no weight, and that of the so-called Early Fathers has been omitted. Many of them have testified in harmony with thoughts herein expressed, but we believe it to be a common failing of the present and all times for men to believe certain doctrines because others did so, in whom they had confidence. This is manifestly a fruitful cause of error, for many good people have believed and taught error in all good conscience. ([Acts 26:9](#)) Truth-seekers should empty their vessels of the muddy waters of tradition and fill them at the fountain of truth—God's Word. And no religious teaching should have weight except as it guides the truth-seeker to that fountain.

For even a general and hasty examination of the whole Bible and its teaching, this work is too small; but, recognizing the haste of our day, we have endeavored to be as brief as the importance of the subjects seemed to permit.

To the interested student we would suggest that it will be useless for him merely to skim over this work, and hope to obtain the force and harmony of the plan suggested, and the Scripture evidences herein presented. We have endeavored throughout to present the various fragments of truth, not only in such language, but also in such order, as would best enable all classes of readers

to grasp the subject and general plan clearly. While thorough and orderly study is necessary to the appreciation of any of the sciences, it is specially so in the science of Divine revelation. And in this work it is doubly necessary, from the fact that in addition to its being a treatise on divinely revealed truths, it is an examination of the subject from, so far as we know, an altogether different standpoint from that of any other work. We have no apology to offer for treating many subjects usually neglected by Christians—among others, the coming of our Lord, and the prophecies and symbolism of the Old and New Testaments. No system of theology should be presented, or accepted, which overlooks or omits the most prominent features of Scripture teaching. We trust, however, that a wide distinction will be recognized between the earnest, sober and reverent study of prophecy and other scriptures, in the light of accomplished historic facts, to obtain conclusions which sanctified common sense can approve, and a too common practice of general speculation, which, when applied to divine prophecy, is too apt to give loose rein to wild theory and vague fancy. Those who fall into this dangerous habit generally develop into prophets (?) instead of prophetic students.

No work is more noble and ennobling than the reverent study of the revealed purposes of God—"which things the angels desire to look into." ([1 Pet. 1:12](#)) The fact that God's wisdom provided prophecies of the future, as well as statements regarding the present and the past, is of itself a reproof by Jehovah of the foolishness of some of his children, who have excused their ignorance and neglect of the study of His Word by saying: "There is enough in the fifth chapter of Matthew to save any man." Nor should we suppose that prophecy was given merely to satisfy curiosity concerning the future. Its object evidently is to make the consecrated child of God acquainted with his Father's plans, thus to enlist his interest and sympathy in the same plans, and to enable him to regard both the present and the future from God's standpoint. When thus interested in the Lord's work, he may serve with the spirit and with the understanding also; not as a servant merely, but as a child and heir. Revealing to such what shall be, counteracts the influence of what now is. The effect of careful study cannot be otherwise than strengthening to faith and stimulating to holiness.

In ignorance of God's plan for the recovery of the world from sin and its consequences, and under the false idea that the nominal church, in its present condition, is the sole agency for its accomplishment, the condition of the world today, after the Gospel has been preached for nearly nineteen centuries, is such as to awaken serious doubts in every thoughtful mind so misinformed. And such doubts are not easily surmounted with anything short of the truth. In fact, to every thoughtful observer, one of two things must be apparent: either the church has made a great mistake in supposing that in the present age, and in her present condition, her office has been to convert the world, or else God's plan has been a miserable failure. Which horn of the dilemma shall we accept? Many have accepted, and many more doubtless will accept, the latter, and swell the ranks of infidelity, either covertly or openly. To assist such as are honestly falling thus, is one of the objects of this volume.

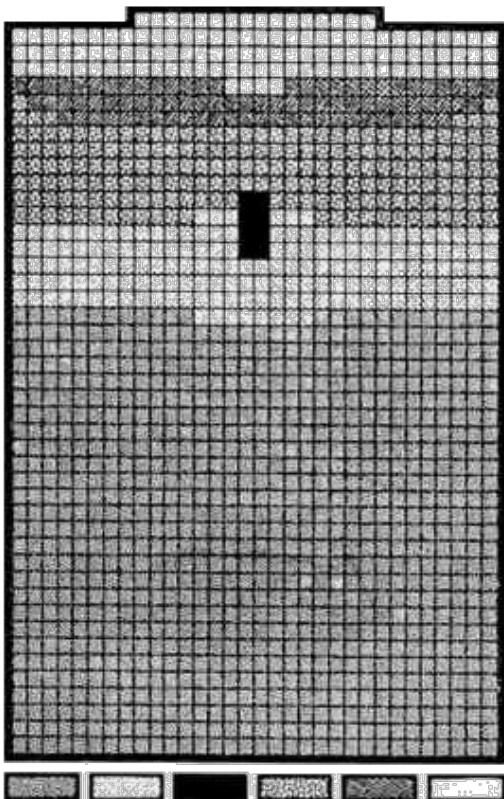
On page sixteen we present a diagram, published by the "London Missionary Society," and afterward in the United States by the "Women's Presbyterian Board of Missions." It is termed "A Mute Appeal on Behalf of Foreign Missions." It tells a sad tale of darkness and ignorance of the only name given under heaven, or among men, whereby we must be saved.

*The Watchman*—the "Y.M.C.A." journal of Chicago—published this same diagram, and commenting on it said:

"The ideas of some are very misty and indefinite in regard to the world's spiritual condition. We hear of glorious revival work at home and abroad, of fresh missionary efforts in various directions, of one country after another opening to the gospel, and of large sums being devoted to its spread: and we get the idea that adequate efforts are being made for the evangelization of the nations of the earth. It is estimated today that the world's population is 1,424,000,000, and by studying the diagram we will see that considerably more than one-half—nearly two-thirds—are still *totally heathen*, and the remainder are mostly either followers of Mohammed or members of those great apostate churches whose religion is practically a Christianized idolatry, and who can scarcely be said to hold or teach the gospel of Christ. Even as to the 116 millions of nominal Protestants, we must remember how large a proportion in Germany, England and this country have lapsed into infidelity—a darkness deeper, if possible, than even that of heathenism—and how many are blinded by superstition, or buried in extreme ignorance; so that while eight millions of Jews still reject Jesus of Nazareth, and while more than 300 millions who bear his name have apostatized from his faith, 170 millions more bow before Mohammed, and the vast remainder of mankind are to this day worshipers of stocks and stones, of their own ancestors, of dead heroes or of the devil himself; all in one way or other worshiping and serving the creature instead of the Creator, who is God over all, blessed forever. Is there not enough here to sadden the heart of thoughtful Christians?"

Truly this is a sad picture. And though the diagram represents shades of difference between Heathens, Mohammedans and Jews, all are alike in total ignorance of Christ. Some might at first suppose that this view with reference to the proportion of Christians is too dark and rather overdrawn, but we think the reverse of this. It shows nominal Christianity in the brightest colors possible. For instance, the 116,000,000 put down as Protestant is far in excess of the true number. Sixteen millions would, we believe, more nearly express the number of professing church members of *adult* years, and one million would, we fear, be far too liberal an estimate of the

"little flock," the "sanctified in Christ Jesus," who "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It should be borne in mind that a large proportion of church members, always numbered in the reckoning, are young children and infants. Specially is this the case in the countries of Europe. In many of these, children are reckoned church members from earliest infancy.



### DIAGRAM

Exhibiting the Actual and Relative Numbers of Mankind Classified According to Religion

Heathen: 856 millions

Mohammedans: 170 millions

Jews: 8 millions

Roman Catholics: 190 millions

Greek Catholics: 84 millions  
Protestants: 116 millions

But dark as this picture appears, it is not the darkest picture that fallen humanity presents. The above cut represents only the present living generations. When we consider the fact that century after century of the six thousand years past has swept away other vast multitudes, nearly all of whom were enveloped in the same ignorance and sin, how dark is the scene! Viewed from the popular standpoint, it is truly an awful picture.

The various creeds of today teach that all of these billions of humanity, ignorant of the only name under heaven by which we must be saved, are on the straight road to everlasting torment; and not only so, but that all of those 116,000,000 Protestants, except the very few saints, are sure of the same fate. No wonder, then, that those who believe such awful things of Jehovah's plans and purposes should be zealous in forwarding missionary enterprises—the wonder is that they are not frenzied by it. Really to believe thus, and to appreciate such conclusions, would rob life of every pleasure, and shroud in gloom every bright prospect of nature.

To show that we have not misstated "Orthodoxy" on the subject of the fate of the heathen, we quote from the pamphlet—"A Mute Appeal on Behalf of Foreign Missions" —in which the diagram was published. Its concluding sentence is: "Evangelize the mighty generations abroad—the one thousand million souls who are dying in Christless despair at the rate of 100,000 a day."

But though this is the gloomy outlook from the standpoint of human creeds, the Scriptures present a brighter view, which it is the purpose of these pages to point out. Instructed by the Word, we cannot believe that God's great plan of salvation was ever intended to be, or ever will be, such a failure. It will be a relief to the perplexed child of God to notice that the Prophet Isaiah foretells this very condition of things, and its remedy, saying: "Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles [heathen] shall come to thy light." ([Isa. 60:2,3](#)) In this prophecy, the gross darkness is lighted by the bow of promise: "The Gentiles [the nations of earth in general] shall come to thy light."

Not only have the continued misery and darkness of the world, and the slow progress of truth, been a mystery to the Church, but the world itself has known and felt its condition. Like that which enveloped Egypt, it has been a darkness that could be felt. In evidence of this, note the spirit of the following lines, clipped from a Philadelphia journal. The doubt and gloom, intensified by the clashing creeds of the various schools, had not yet been dispelled from the writer's mind by the rays of divine truth direct from the Word of God:

"Life! great mystery! Who shall say  
What need hath God of this poor clay?  
Formed by his hand with potent skill—  
Mind, matter, soul and stubborn will;  
Born but to die: sure destiny—death.  
Then where, oh! where this fleeting breath?  
Not one of all the countless throng,  
Who lived and died and suffered long,  
Returns to tell the great design—  
That future, which is yours and mine.



We plead, O God! for some new ray  
Of light for guidance on our way;  
Based not on faith, but clearer sight,  
Dispelling these dark clouds of night;  
This doubt, this dread, this trembling fear;  
This thought that mars our blessings here.  
This restless mind, with bolder sway,  
Rejects the dogmas of the day  
Taught by jarring sects and schools,  
To fetter reason with their rules.  
We seek to know Thee as thou art—  
Our place with Thee—and then the part  
We play in this stupendous plan,  
Creator Infinite, and man.  
Lift up this veil obscuring sight;  
Command again: 'Let there be light!'  
Reveal this secret of Thy throne;  
We search in darkness the unknown."

To this we reply:

Life's unsealed mystery soon shall say  
What joy hath God in this poor clay,  
Formed by his hand with potent skill,  
Stamped with his image—mind and will;  
Born not to die—no, a second birth  
Succeeds the sentence—"earth to earth."  
For One of all the mighty host,  
Who lived and died and suffered most,  
Arose, and proved God's great design—  
That future, therefore, yours and mine.  
His Word discloses this new ray  
Of light, for guidance on our way;  
Based now on faith, but *sure* as sight,  
Dispelling these dark clouds of night:  
The doubt, the dread, the trembling fear,  
The thoughts that marred our blessings here.  
Now, Lord, these minds, whose bolder sway  
Rejects the dogmas of today,  
Taught by jarring sects and schools,  
Fettering reason with their rules,  
*May seek, and know Thee as Thou art,*  
Our place with Thee, and then the part  
We play in this stupendous plan,  
Creator Infinite, and man.  
Uplifts the veil, revealing quite  
To those who walk in heaven's light

The glorious mystery of His throne  
Hidden from ages, now made known.

Such a blessing is now coming to the world through the unfolding of the divine purpose and the opening of the divine Word, of which blessing and revealing this volume we trust is a part.

Those who will turn away from the mere speculations of men, and devote time to searching the Scriptures, not excluding reason, which God invites us to use ([Isa. 1:18](#)), will find that a blessed bow of promise spans the heavens. It is a mistake to suppose that those without faith, and consequent justification, should be able to apprehend clearly the truth: it is not for such. The Psalmist says, "Light [truth] is sown for the righteous." ([Psa. 97:11](#)) For the child of God a lamp is provided whose light dispels from his pathway much of the darkness. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." ([Psa. 119:105](#)) But it is only "the path of the just" that "is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." ([Prov. 4:18](#)) Actually, there is none just, "none righteous, no, not one" ([Rom. 3:10](#)); the class referred to is "justified by faith." It is the privilege only of this class to walk in the pathway that shines more and more—to see not only the present unfoldings of God's plan, but also things to come. While it is true that the path of each individual believer is a shining one, yet the special application of this statement is to the just (justified) as a class. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles and saints of the past and present have walked in its increasing light; **and the light will continue to increase beyond the present—"unto the perfect day." It is one continuous path, and the one continuous and increasing light is the Divine Record, illuminating as it becomes due.**

Therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous," expecting the fulfilment of this promise. **Many have so little faith that they do not look for more light, and, because of their unfaithfulness and unconcern, they are permitted to sit in darkness, when they might have been walking in the increasing light.**

The Spirit of God, given to guide the Church into truth, will take of the things written and show them unto us; but beyond what is written we need nothing, for the Holy Scriptures are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [2 Tim. 3:15](#)

While it is still true that "darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people," the world is not always to remain in this condition. We are assured that "the morning cometh." ([Isa. 21:12](#)) As now God causes the natural sun to shine upon the just and the unjust, so the Sun of Righteousness will, in the Millennial day, shine for the benefit of all the world, and "bring to light the hidden things of darkness." ([1 Cor. 4:5](#)) It will dispel the noxious vapors of evil, and bring life, health, peace and joy.

Looking into the past we find that then the light shone but feebly. Dim and obscure were the promises of past ages. The promises made to Abraham and others, and typically represented in the law and ceremonies of fleshly Israel, were only shadows and gave but a vague idea of God's wonderful and gracious designs. As we reach the days of Jesus the light increases. The height of expectancy, until then, had been that God would bring a deliverer to save Israel from their enemies, and to exalt them as the chief nation of the earth, in which position of power and influence God would use them as his agency for blessing all the families of the earth. The offer given them of heirship in the kingdom of God was so different, in the conditions demanded, from what they had expected, and the prospects of the class being selected ever attaining the greatness promised were, outwardly and humanly considered, so improbable, that all but the few were thereby blinded to the message. And their blindness and hostility to it were naturally increased

when, in the process of God's plan, the due time came for extending the message, and making the invitation to share in the promised Kingdom applicable to every creature under heaven who should by the exercise of faith be reckoned a child of faithful Abraham and an heir of the promise made to him.

But when the gospel which Jesus taught came to be understood after Pentecost, it was seen by the Church that the blessings for the world were to be of an enduring character, and that for the accomplishment of this purpose the Kingdom would be spiritual, and composed of Israelites indeed, a "little flock" selected from among both Jews and Gentiles to be exalted to spiritual nature and power. Hence we read that Jesus brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ([2 Tim. 1:10](#)) And since Jesus' day yet more light shines, as he foretold it would, saying, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now: howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...and he will show you things to come." [John 16:12,13](#)

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 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.

Serious indeed have been the evil results brought about by this neglect of truth. As all know, both the church and the civilized world were almost wholly enslaved by that system, and led to worship the traditions and creeds of men. From this slavery a bold and blessed strike for liberty and the Bible was made, in what is known as The Reformation. God raised up bold champions for his Word, among whom were Luther, Zwingli, Melancthon, Wycliffe, Knox and others. These called attention to the fact that Papacy had laid aside the Bible and substituted the decrees and dogmas of the church, and pointed out a few of its erroneous teachings and practices, showing that they were built upon tradition, contrary to truth, and opposed to God's Word. These reformers and their adherents were called Protestants, because they protested against Papacy, and claimed the Word of God as the only correct rule of faith and practice. Many faithful souls in the days of the Reformation walked in the light, so far as it was then shining. But since their day Protestants have made little progress, because, instead of walking in the light, they have halted around their favorite leaders, willing to see as much as they saw but nothing more. They set boundaries to their progress in the way of truth, hedging in, with the little truth they had, a great deal of error brought along from the "mother" church. For the creeds thus formulated many years ago, the majority of Christians have a superstitious reverence, supposing that no more can be known of God's plans now than was known by the Reformers.

This mistake has been an expensive one; for, aside from the fact that but few great principles of truth were then recovered from the rubbish of error, there are special features of truth constantly becoming due, and of these Christians have been deprived by their creed fences. To illustrate: It was a truth in Noah's day, and one which required the faith of all who would walk in the light then, that a flood was coming, while Adam and others had known nothing of it. It would not be preaching truth now to preach a coming flood, but there are other dispensational truths constantly becoming due, of which, if walking in the light of the lamp, we shall know; so, if we



have all the light which was due several hundred years ago, and that only, we are measurably in darkness.

God's Word is a great storehouse of food for hungry pilgrims on the shining pathway. There is milk for babes, and strong meat for those more developed ([1 Pet. 2:2](#); [Heb. 5:14](#)); and not only so, but it contains food adapted to the different seasons and conditions; and Jesus said the faithful servant should bring forth meat *in due season* for the household of faith—"things new and old," from the storehouse. ([Luke 12:42](#); [Matt. 13:52](#)) It would be impossible to bring forth such things from any sectarian creed or storehouse. We might bring forth some things old and good from each, but nothing new. The truth contained in the creeds of the various sects is so covered and mixed with error that its inherent beauty and real value are not discernible. The various creeds continually conflict and clash; and as each claims a Bible basis, the confusion of thought, and evident discord, are charged to God's Word. This has given rise to the common proverb: "The Bible is an old fiddle, upon which any tune can be played."

How expressive is this of the infidelity of our times, occasioned by misrepresentations of God's Word and character by human traditions, together with the growth of intelligence which will no longer bow in blind and superstitious reverence to the opinions of fellowmen, but demands a reason for the hope that is in us. The faithful student of the Word should be able always to give a reason for his hope. The Word of God alone is able to make wise, and is profitable for doctrine, instruction, etc., "that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly furnished*." ([1 Pet. 3:15](#); [2 Tim. 3:15-17](#)) Only this one storehouse contains an exhaustless supply of things both new and old—meat *in due season* for the household. Surely no one who believes the Scripture statement that "the path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day" will claim that the perfect day came in Luther's time; and if not, we do well that we take heed to our lamp as unto "a light that shineth in a *dark place* UNTIL THE DAY DAWN." [2 Pet. 1:19](#)

Nor is it sufficient that we find ourselves now in the path of light; we must "*walk in the light*," continue to make progress, else the light, which does not stop, will pass on and leave us in darkness. The difficulty with many is that they sit down, and do not follow on in the path of light. Take a concordance and examine the texts under the words *sit* and *stand*, then compare these with those found under the words *walk* and *run*, and you will find a great contrast: Men "*sit* in darkness," and with "the scornful," and *stand* among the ungodly, but "*walk* in the light," and "*run* for the prize." [Isa. 42:7](#); [Psa. 1:1](#); [Heb. 12:1](#)

Perfection of knowledge is not a thing of the past, but of the future—the very near future, we trust; and until we recognize this fact we are unprepared to appreciate and expect fresh unfoldings of our Father's plan. True, we still go back to the words of the prophets and apostles for all knowledge of the present and the future; not, however, because they always understood God's plans and purposes better than we, but because God used them as his mouthpieces *to communicate to us*, and to all the Church throughout the Christian Age, truth relative to his plans, as fast as it becomes due. This fact is abundantly proven by the apostles. Paul tells us that God has made known to the Christian Church the mystery (secret) of his will which he had purposed in himself, and had never before revealed, though he had it recorded in dark sayings which could not be understood until due, in order that the eyes of our understanding should be opened to appreciate the "*high calling*" designed exclusively for believers of the Christian Age. ([Eph. 1:9,10,17,18](#); [3:4-6](#)) This shows us clearly that neither the prophets nor the angels understood the meaning of the prophecies uttered. Peter says that when they inquired anxiously to know their meaning, God told them that the truths covered up in their prophecies were not for themselves,

but for us of the Christian Age. And he exhorts the Church to hope for still further grace (favor, blessing) in this direction—yet more knowledge of God's plans. [1 Pet. 1:10-13](#)

It is evident that though Jesus promised that the Church should be guided into all truth, it was to be a gradual unfolding. While the Church, in the days of the apostles, was free from many of the errors which sprang up under and in Papacy, yet we cannot suppose that the early church saw as deeply or as clearly into God's plan as it is possible to see today. It is evident, too, that the different apostles had different degrees of insight into God's plan, though *all their writings* were guided and inspired of God, as truly as were the words of the prophets. To illustrate differences of knowledge, we have but to remember the wavering course, for a time, of Peter and the other apostles, except Paul, when the gospel was beginning to go to the Gentiles. ([Acts 10:28; 11:1-3; Gal. 2:11-14](#)) Peter's uncertainty was in marked contrast with Paul's assurance, inspired by the words of the prophets, God's past dealings, and the direct revelations made to himself.

Paul evidently had more abundant revelations than any other apostle. These revelations he was not allowed to make known to the Church, nor fully and plainly even to the other apostles ([2 Cor. 12:4; Gal. 2:2](#)), yet we can see a value to the entire church in those visions and revelations given to Paul; for though he was not permitted to tell what he saw, nor to particularize all he knew of the mysteries of God relating to the "ages to come," yet what he saw gave a force, shading and depth of meaning to his words which, in the light of subsequent facts, prophetic fulfilments and the Spirit's guidance, we are able to appreciate more fully than could the early church.

As corroborative of the foregoing statement, we call to mind the last book of the Bible—Revelation, written about A.D. 96. The introductory words announce it as a special revelation of things not previously understood. This proves conclusively that up to that time, at least, God's plan had not been fully revealed. Nor has that book ever been, until now, all that its name implies—an unfolding, a REVELATION. So far as the early church was concerned, probably none understood any part of the book. Even John, who saw the visions, was probably ignorant of the significance of what he saw. He was both a prophet and an apostle; and while as an apostle he understood and taught what was then "meat in due season," as a prophet he uttered things which would supply "meat" in seasons future for the household.

During the Christian Age, some of the saints sought to understand the Church's future by examining this symbolic book, and doubtless all who read and understood even a part of its teachings were blessed as promised. ([Rev. 1:3](#)) The book kept opening up to such, and in the days of the Reformation was an important aid to Luther in deciding that the Papacy, of which he was a conscientious minister, was indeed the "Antichrist" mentioned by the Apostle, the history of which we now see fills so large a part of that prophecy.

Thus gradually God opens up his truth and reveals the exceeding riches of his grace; and consequently much more light is due now than at any previous time in the Church's history.

"And still new beauties shall we see,  
And still increasing light."