
by Herbert W. Armstrong

What Is Uppermost in God's Mind?

***What is most important—above all else—in the
mind of God right now?***

Does it make any difference to YOU what is IMPORTANT to God—what is important to Him above all else in your life? It should! For what is MOST IMPORTANT to Him IN YOUR LIFE will decide your happiness or unhappiness from here on; your success or failure in the remainder of your life—and far more—where and in what state you are going to spend your ETERNITY. For there IS a life after death.

One passage in the New Testa-

ment spells it out for you. This same passage summarizes the WHOLE GOSPEL—or even, broadly, the ENTIRE BIBLE. I could preach every sermon for the rest of my life—each one different—using this one passage as my text.

It is found in Acts 3:19-21: a proclamation by the apostle Peter to a huge crowd gathered at the Temple after he had healed the cripple, well-known as being lame from birth.

“REPENT ye therefore,” he admonished, “and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heavens must receive *until the times of RESTITUTION of all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

Now let's UNDERSTAND! Without a real UNDERSTANDING of this passage by the inspired apostle Peter, you cannot understand the PURPOSE of life: WHY you are on earth, WHY mankind was put here, what life is all about, what is man's fantastic, incredible potential.

When Peter said to his listeners, first, “REPENT,” he meant CHANGE—ABOUT-FACE from the way they had been living. There are just TWO principal or general WAYS or attitudes of life. One is the way of this world, which for brevity I call “GET.” The other is God's way, “GIVE.” Satan's way is “GET”—that is, vanity, lust and greed, jealousy and envy, competition, strife, violence and war, resentment against others, resentment and rebellion against any authority over one.

Peter meant they first must turn FROM that way—that ATTITUDE of SELF-centeredness—to GOD's way of “GIVE,” or LOVE, which is love first toward GOD with yielded OBEDIENCE, and then LOVE toward man, which is *outgoing* CONCERN for the good and welfare of fellow humans.

Satan's way is that of SIN. God's way is that of the BASIC LAW of His GOVERNMENT—the way of LOVE. And LOVE—divine love from God as His gift through His Holy Spirit—is

the fulfilling of God's law, obedience to His government.

Jesus Christ came in the likeness of HUMAN FLESH. Though also divine, He was tempted in all points as we are and yet He had power to RESIST SIN; resist Satan's WAY of "GET." For man, the PENALTY of sin is DEATH. All have sinned—except Christ who, though our divine Maker, was made flesh subject to death—so that He was able by giving His life to pay the penalty for the sins of all humanity who choose to turn from and repent of sin, turn to God's way, BELIEVE Christ, and thus be CHANGED—CONVERTED—their sins blotted out by Christ's death.

Notice that Peter did NOT say their sins would be blotted out immediately upon this repentance. Belief alone in the atoning DEATH of Christ does not completely change or convert one. Their sins had CUT THEM OFF from contact with God, who alone had ETERNAL LIFE to give or impart to them. But belief in the death of Christ, following repentance, would REESTABLISH their CONTACT WITH GOD, who alone has eternal life and final CONVERSION TO GIVE.

So we humans are not finally SAVED by the BLOOD of Christ; we are restored to contact with God, who has eternal life to GIVE. But WHEN does He give it? Not immediately at the time of repentance and the decision to CHANGE from Satan's "GET" way of sin to God's way of "LOVE," but "when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and HE SHALL SEND JESUS CHRIST"—that is, at Christ's second coming as King of kings to rule the world.

But where is Jesus Christ NOW? At the right hand of God, on God's (His Father's) throne in heaven.

But WHEN will God send Jesus Christ as King? The heavens have received Him, where He now is on His Father's throne as our High Priest, interceding for us *until*—let me repeat, UNTIL—the times of restitution of all things (Acts 3:21).

Did you ever look up the meaning of "RESTITUTION"? It means RESTORING something that had previously existed, then was taken away, then finally RESTORED once

again. In Acts 3:21, "restitution" refers to the government of God!

Now let me go back just a little. I said the BLOOD of Christ—His DEATH for us—does NOT finally SAVE us; rather it RESTORES our contact with God the Father, who has eternal life to give.

Notice quickly and briefly in Romans 5:8: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood..." NOTICE! Not

"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

"SAVED" by His blood. The word "justified" means our *past* sins have been forgiven because Christ paid the penalty in our stead. Our past SINS cut us off from God. Christ's DEATH (in our stead, as our Maker) did *not* bestow upon us the GIFT of eternal life and final complete salvation, which only the Father has to give; rather, it RESTORES our CONTACT with the Father, from whom our sins had cut us off.

Continuing in Romans: "Much more then, being now JUSTIFIED by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him"—that is, through CHRIST. But HOW? "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the DEATH of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we SHALL BE [notice: "SHALL BE" in the FUTURE] saved by his life."

Notice it! Justified ONLY by His blood, BUT SAVED by His LIFE—by the resurrection!

Now WHEN is the resurrection? At the time of Christ's COMING—at "the times of restitution of all things." "All things" means (as translated by

Moffatt in Hebrews 1) THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

What was once here, and taken away? The government of God. Most people do not know that angels inhabited this earth before the first humans. When God first created the earth, the ANGELS shouted for joy (Job 38:4-7). This earth was their "ESTATE," but they did not keep it (Jude 6). The angels on earth SINNED (II Peter 2:4). Their king over the earth was the super archangel LUCIFER (Isa. 14:12-15). He was PERFECT from his CREATION *until* iniquity (lawlessness—breaking the law of God's government, in which he ruled) was found in him (Ezek. 28:15). This REBELLION of the ANGELS removed the government of God from the earth.

Lucifer's name was changed to Satan. He still rules this world (Eph. 2:2; II Cor. 4:4). When Christ returns to rule, Satan will be REMOVED (Rev. 20:1-3). The government of God will be restored!

That restoration of God's government is the one great PURPOSE uppermost in God's mind.

Jesus had to qualify to replace Satan as ruler, and RESTORE the government of God by overcoming Satan (Matt. 4:1-11). If WE also qualify by overcoming Satan, we shall sit WITH CHRIST on His throne, as He now sits on His Father's throne (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21-22).

Next to restoring the government of God on earth, the most important thing on God's mind at the minute is the great commission He has committed to me and this Church as my helpers in announcing the restoring of God's government in the Kingdom of God in this very present generation, at Christ's coming. FOR THAT PURPOSE He raised up this Church of God.