

Agriculture

#0302

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—March 11, 1977

Let's turn to Revelation 14:6–7. Here is God's last message for the last generation. Here is the call of God in this very hour.

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” Revelation 14:6–7.

Note that this is a call to the worship of the Creator, the One who made the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them. Aren't you glad that we know Him, the One that made this world and that made us, that we know Him as Father and friend? And we worship Him because He made all things and made us.

True worship is based upon intelligent appreciation. We cannot really worship One whom we do not know. So, thank God, He has given us through His Word and His works, and through sharing with Him in work, the opportunity of getting acquainted with Him. When we hear God speak, we learn what He's like. When we look about us at the works of nature, we learn what He is like. And when we share with Him in cooperative endeavor, we learn what He is like.

One great phase of this is in the world of agriculture. Agriculture—the garden, the orchard; working with God in growing things—growing food, growing flowers, growing trees. God is interested in beauty as well as in utility. He loves to delight our eyes as well as our stomachs.

When we look back to the Garden of Eden, we see that Heaven's rich gift to our first parents was a garden modeled after the paradise of God. Doubtless there were many things in that Eden home that we do not have today. But thank God, we can still work with God in the garden.

Looking forward to the renewal of the earth, Isaiah 65 pictures the restoration of the new earth that God is going to make—the restoration of this planet. Here again, we see man working with God:

“...they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them” Isaiah 65:21.

Thank God, it's a real world. The Eden that is to be here on this earth is just as real as the Eden that was. In each case, we see God and man working together. It's a privilege to work with God, isn't it? Yes.

In between that Eden that was and that paradise that is to be, are these 6,000 years of the reign of sin. But God has not left us without His presence and without the reminder of His creative power and love. He has given us the joy of fellowship with Him, companionship with Him, and cooperation with Him.

You remember when Adam and Eve sinned—the second chapter and the third chapter of Genesis tell us the story of man's creation and man's fall. When man sinned, God had to have him leave the garden home and go out into the world and wrestle with new conditions—unfavorable ones, we would say. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake" was the divine edict.

Note two things in the statement of God: 1. The ground was cursed. 2. It was for man's sake. God did not curse man. He cursed the ground for man's sake. In other words, He made it more difficult for man to accomplish the work of agriculture. Why? Because laziness is not good for people that are trying to build characters under conditions of sin.

You remember that in Genesis 4 the ground was cursed because of the terrible crime of Cain in murdering his brother:

Then over 1,000 years later came that awful judgment of the deluge when our entire planet was covered with water. With that threefold curse resting upon it, our planet since then has been a place to wrestle with the soil in order that we might receive the blessing of sustenance. But all this, God overrules for man's good.

Now, tonight I want to share with you this wonderful fact—that in all these experiences, God's purpose has been to restore man to the Edenic happiness, Edenic character, and to restore this planet to its Edenic beauty. It is true that until Christ comes and creates all things new that we will never see things in this world as they were in Eden. But friends, God gives you and me the privilege of working with Him in the endeavor to approximate that as near as possible. It should be our endeavor in every garden to get as near to the Garden of Eden as possible. Does that sound idealistic? It's ideal but it's practical.

I want to share with you some interesting statements tonight:

"Through disobedience to God, Adam and Eve had lost Eden, and because of sin the whole earth was cursed. But if God's people followed His instruction, their land would be restored to fertility and beauty. God Himself gave them directions in regard to the culture of the soil, and they were to cooperate with Him in its restoration. Thus the whole land, under God's control, would become an object lesson of spiritual truth. As in obedience to His natural laws the earth should produce its treasures, so in obedience to His moral laws the hearts of the people were to reflect the attributes of

His character. Even the heathen would recognize the superiority of those who served and worshiped the living God” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 289.

Someone says, “Well, Brother Frazee, I don’t see much going on like that.”

Listen, friends. How many perfect characters do you see? If you understand the Gospel, does that keep you from walking in the road that leads to perfect characters? Oh, no. We keep laying hold of those promises:

“...that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” Philippians 1:6.

“...that [He] is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” Jude 1:24.

And note that this culture of the soil and the culture of the soul are linked together. Each teaches us lessons about the other. Sharing with God in working with the soil gives us experiences that enable us to be laborers together with Him in the restoration of the soul. The same laws, the same principles run through both operations.

Let’s turn to Ezekiel 36:34–35. God’s people were in captivity in the days of Ezekiel because of their sins. The land of Canaan that God had given to His people as a demonstration laboratory was lying waste. But God had wonderful plans of restoration.

You remember that in the 25th verse on to the 29th we’re given great promises of spiritual restoration, the promise of the new heart and cleansing from sin. As the result, He says in the 30th verse:

“...I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field...” Ezekiel 36:30.

“And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the Garden of Eden...” Ezekiel 36:34–35.

Isn’t that wonderful? This is God’s ideal; this is what He’s leading us into.

Israel never entered fully into God’s plans and purposes. At different times they experienced a certain amount of God’s blessings and made a great demonstration, but they never reached the ideal. Let me read to you a heartening statement, a thrilling statement in *Prophets and Kings*:

“That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today” *Prophets and Kings*, pages 713–714.

That opens up vast visions of great possibility. Let me read it again:

“That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today...These witnesses for God are numbered among the spiritual Israel, and to them will be fulfilled all the covenant promises made by Jehovah to His ancient people” *Ibid.*

That’s why these things were written in the Bible, friends. They’re written for our admonition, upon the ends of the world are come. Thank God, before the Savior returns, every promise He has made will be fulfilled, His plan will be gloriously vindicated, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. I want to have a part in it, don’t you? The ultimate fulfillment of all of it will be when God makes the world new, and Heaven will bloom on earth. We shall see Eden in all its glory restored.

There are conditions to God’s promises; *all* of God’s promises have conditions. Turn to Deuteronomy 7. We will note some conditions to these promises of agricultural success—good crops utterly depend on:

“Thou shall therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He swore unto thy fathers: And He will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: He will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which He swore unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shall be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness...”
Deuteronomy 7:11–15.

Quite a program of restoration, isn’t it, for body, mind, and soul? But notice it’s all dependent upon keeping God’s commandments. This is no arbitrary idea. It’s simply that God has made in His universe the laws of cause and effect, the law of sowing and reaping. If we do certain things, then He gives certain results, and He keeps that a regular, orderly arrangement so that you and I will know what to do.

If we drop something from our hand, we know it goes down. That’s the law of gravity. If we plant seed, we know that what we get back will be like what we planted. So obedience to God’s commandments is one of the great prerequisites to success in cooperation with God in growing things.

Turn to Malachi 3:8–12; we’ll see a specific example of this. Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets. The people of God were in a sad condition.

They had been looking after their own affairs and letting the things of God be secondary. As the result, they were not experiencing the prosperity that God wanted them to have. He says:

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation” Malachi 3:8–9.

Does this matter of being faithful to God in tithes and offerings have anything to do with the returns in agriculture? Note the 10th verse, all together, read:

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” Malachi 3:10.

In the 11th verse, He promises to rebuke the devourer who would destroy the fruits of our ground and give us blessed returns from the orchard and vineyard, and other crops.

So you see, recognizing God as Creator by being faithful in returning to Him His appointed portion is one of the conditions to success in working with God in agriculture, or in anything else for that matter.

Now let's turn to Deuteronomy 15, and we'll see another condition. Not only was Israel to return the tithe to God, that's 10 percent, and then liberal offerings besides, but God had another plan in addition to this plan:

“If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God gives thee, thou shall not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shall open thine hand wide unto him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wants” Deuteronomy 15:7–8.

Now notice the results in the 10th verse:

“Thou shall surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him” Deuteronomy 15:10–11.

Isn't that an interesting expression? Help your poor brother and don't feel bad about it. This is echoed in the New Testament, where Paul says the Lord loves what? A cheerful giver. I do too. I'd hate to have somebody give me something that they were wishing they didn't have to—I'd rather get along without it.

“Thou shall surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works,

and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto”
Deuteronomy 15:10.

I want you to just look at this for a minute: here is a man who goes out here now and he works—a wheat farmer, or in an orchard. He has his apples coming along or his grapes in the vineyard, whatever. Now, after all his hard work, he has his reaping—there it is.

God says, “The first thing I want you to do is to return the tithe.”

“You mean that out of every ten bushels of wheat, one goes over here to the sanctuary to the priest?”

“That’s right. But that’s only the beginning. Then there’s a second tithe set apart for religious purposes. Then there are special offerings. And then besides all that,” God said, “I want you to take some of that and help the poor, people that didn’t get such good crops. Whatever was the problem, whatever their condition, whatever the reason, they need help—I want you to help them.”

“But what am I going to do?”

The Lord says, “If you just do all that, I’ll bless you.”

Do you know what that takes? That takes faith and that takes love. It takes both, and that’s all it takes—faith and love; faith to believe what God says, and love enough for God and our fellowmen.

Now, Deuteronomy 24:19—here is another one on this point. When they reap their fields or went over their orchards, God said, “Now, don’t be careful to get the last little bit of everything. Encourage the poor to come in and glean in the field.

“When thou cut down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shall not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beat thine olive tree, thou shall not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gather the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shall not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow” Deuteronomy 24:19–21.

In other words, in all the agricultural activities, God intended that the poor should be able to come in and have a part in reaping the benefits.

Wasn’t that a wonderful plan, friend? And God intends that you and I shall carry the spirit of this into all our activities today, so that whenever God blesses us with something, whatever it is—money, or gifts of various kinds, or the results of our work in the orchard or the garden, however He blesses us, that we think first of Him and the tithe and we think of offerings, and then we think of helping those less

fortunate than ourselves. And if any of you don't know somebody that needs help more than you do, Jesus will help you find them. Job says he went searching and found somebody that needed help.

Now let's turn over to 2 Chronicles 7:14, and here's another condition to prosperity. Here's a wonderful promise God made to Solomon at the time of the dedication of the temple. You know, we're in a time when the world is waxing old like a garment, and all sorts of strange weather conditions are around us. As the result—and more and more of this will happen—millions of people over this world will be facing starvation. But listen to God's promise. What's the first word in this 14th verse? If:

“If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Does the land need healing? As surely as human bodies need healing, the soil needs healing. It's been cursed three times because of Adam's sin, because of Cain's sin, and through the flood; then it's had all these thousands of years of leaching and poor practices by the people that have burned over things and leached out the soil, allowing it to be leached out with rain and so forth without caring for the ground. Now God says, “I want to heal your bodies; I want to heal your land.” Let's work with Him to do it. What do you say?

I found in the *Bible Commentary* on Leviticus 25 a wonderful promise:

“The tithing system was instituted by the Lord as the very best arrangement to help the people in carrying out the principles of the law. If this law were obeyed, the people would be entrusted with the entire vineyard, the whole earth”
Bible Commentary, Volume 1, page 1–2.

You see God's plan for Israel that they should be so prosperous in carrying out God's instructions, that other people in other nations would want to join them, and finally it would spread over the whole earth. The whole earth would be carrying out God's way of life. That was God's intention, but of course Israel failed in that.

“Men were to cooperate with God in restoring the diseased land to health” *Ibid*.

I want you to ponder over that. The people that are here tonight are interested in health and medical missionary work. Am I right? But this goes back further than the physiology of the body. It goes back to the production of food, and dealing with the soil, from where all food comes from. If you're eating anything that didn't come from the soil, you may need to take a look at your menu.

“Men were to cooperate with God in restoring the diseased land to health, that it might be a praise and a glory to His name. And as the land they possessed would, if managed

with skill and earnestness, produce its treasures, so their hearts, if controlled by God, would reflect His character” *Ibid.*

Let me just throw this in parenthetically, and yet to somebody here tonight, it may be the most important sentence in the study. There are all kinds of ideas about righteousness by faith today, friend. If people would try out their theories of righteousness by faith in the garden, they’d find out which ones work and which don’t—that’s right. The same principles are in gardening and in character building. That’s what this says, that’s the way it works, and that’s the way God works.

“In the laws which God gave for the cultivation of the soil, He was giving the people opportunity to overcome their selfishness and become heavenly-minded. Canaan would be to them as Eden if they obeyed the Word of the Lord. Through them the Lord designed to teach all the nations of the world how to cultivate the soil so that it would yield healthy fruit, free from disease” *Ibid.*

They were to be the world’s teachers, not merely in spiritual things, but in matters of health and in matters of agriculture.

“The earth is the Lord’s vineyard, and is to be treated according to His plan” *Ibid.*

There are three things that God is deeply interested in: One is the soul, the character. Fundamental to that, the body of man. Christ paid the redemption price for our body. He’s interested in our physical health. And basic to all that is the soil. Man was made from the soil in the beginning. Our food, as we’ve seen, comes from the soil. All of it—the characters of men, their bodies, the soil, have been cursed by sin, haven’t they? And the Gospel is the great message, the good news of restoration—restoring the spiritual experience, restoring health, restoring the fertility of the soul.

“The earth is the Lord’s vineyard, and is to be treated according to His plan. Those who cultivated the soil were to realize that they were doing God’s service” *Ibid.*

It isn’t just when we come to meeting that we are doing God’s service. When we get out into the garden with the hoe and rake, we are doing God’s service. We are laborers together with God.

They were as truly in their lot and place as were the men appointed to minister in the priesthood and in work connected with the tabernacle” *Ibid.*

Oh friends, I thank God for His instructions. What do you say?

Jesus told His disciples once:

“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them”
John 13:17.

Every promise has at least one “if” and this one has two. The only reason for knowing these things is if we do them. And you will understand that there’s a particular appropriateness in studying this lesson in the spring of the year. But remember that God has something more in mind than getting some food on our tables. He’s interested in you and me developing a fellowship with Him as we cooperate in restoring the earth, restoring our health, and restoring our characters to His original design.

When Jesus was here and worked among the people, revealing the Father in Heaven, revealing His character of love, He not only gave His life for us in service, but He crowned it by giving His life in sacrifice. Let us face it, dear friends, without the sacrifice of the cross, there would be no message of restoration for body or soul or soil. It is the atonement that makes possible bringing this planet back to its Edenic perfection; bringing our bodies back to full health, and bringing our characters back to the likeness to God.

Isn’t it wonderful to know that Heaven is that much interested in us? How valuable then is this gift that’s offered to us—this opportunity to cooperate with God. As we work in the garden, as we seek to build up our health, and bring our daily practices into harmony with the laws of life, and as we seek to get acquainted with God on the spiritual plane, let us remember we are working with God in a partnership that makes Him happy. Aren’t you thankful for that? How many of you would like to send Him the word tonight that we appreciate His invitation to be a partner with Him?

[Testimony service]

Dear Lord, we love Thee tonight, and we thank Thee for Your wonderful plan to let us have a part in cooperation. Help us as we work with the soil. Help us as we seek to have better health. Help us as we seek to enter in to the character development for which Jesus died. Look into every heart, see every upraised hand, and bless every soul. For Jesus’ sake, amen.

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