

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE SUPPORT OF HIS WORK

Introduction Matt. 28 : 18-20: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations."

These words have been called "The Church's Marching Orders". Christ was commissioning His disciples to embark on the spiritual conquest of the whole world.

Think of the staggering magnitude of this task! Think of the vast resources of man-power and money needed to keep it going! How natural that men should ask: "Where do all the millions of dollars come from to support and extend the Church's world-programme? Is this left to chance methods—like lotteries, raffles, bazaars, fairs, etc.—or does God have a definite plan for financing His work?"

Luke 14 : 28-31: "Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost?"

God is a wise Planner, and we would expect Him to devise some master-plan which would be consistent with His own principles, and yet adequate for the needs of His Church's world-wide task.

God has devised such a plan. It is based upon the giving of a specified proportion of our income, but not a specified amount. It does not favour the rich man, nor does it impose hardship upon the poor man. It is like a chain with three indispensable links.

Discussion 1.—THE FIRST LINK—OWNERSHIP

God's ownership of all things is the most fundamental fact of human existence, and the most fundamental doctrine of the Bible. It is the foundation of all Divine claims and promises, and of all human duties. It is therefore the ultimate starting-point for any discussion of His plan for the support of His work. This primal fact helps us to see the whole plan in true perspective.

Where is the Bible evidence that God owns all?

Ps. 24 : 1: God owns the world.

Ps. 95 : 5: God owns the sea.

Ps. 50 : 9-12: God owns the cattle, the wild beasts, and the birds.

Haggai 2 : 8: God owns the silver and the gold.

I Cor. 6 : 19, 20: God owns our bodies.

We cannot make any progress towards an understanding of God's plan for financing His work unless we first recognise this sovereign fact that God owns all. Humbling it may be, but it is inescapably true that whatever means are needed for the support of God's work must ultimately come from Him!

I Tim. 6 : 7: "We brought nothing into this world, and can take nothing out."

I Chron. 29 : 14: "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee."

An appreciation of this first fact revolutionises our whole approach to life, and helps to prepare us for the second link, which follows logically.

2.—THE SECOND LINK—STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship takes its meaning from, and grows out of, ownership. Unless there were first an owner, there could never be a steward.

Stewardship means "the responsible management of entrusted property". "Ownership" describes God's relation to man. "Stewardship" describes man's relation to God. As God's stewards, we are the managers, caretakers, or trustees of His property.

What does the Bible teach about stewardship?

Matt. 25 : 14-30: The parable of the talents.

We are all God's stewards, entrusted with a fair proportion of His assets, according to our several abilities.

I Cor. 4 : 2: A steward is required to be faithful.

Matt. 25 : 27: A steward is expected to invest his master's assets.

Matt. 21 : 34: A steward is expected to make due returns to his master.

Luke 16 : 2: A steward is obliged to render an account of his trading.

Gen. 2 : 16, 17: A steward is obliged to respect his master's reserved portions.