

The Dawn

A Herald of Christ's Presence

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When Jesus Ascended

*“Touch me not; for
I am not yet
ascended to my
Father: but go to
my brethren, and
say unto them, I
ascend unto my
Father, and your
Father; and to my
God, and your
God.”*

—*John 20:17*

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, many earnest Christians memorialized Jesus’ death on the evening of April 13, by partaking of the “bread” and the “cup,” as he requested his apostles to do while in the “upper room” with him on the night before he was crucified. (Mark 14:15; Matt. 26:26-29) The date of this annual commemoration of our Lord’s death is in accord with the Jewish lunar calendar, and occurred on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, the same day as the typical Jewish Passover lamb was killed. Jesus fulfilled that picture, becoming “Christ our passover,” the “lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—I Cor. 5:7; John 1:29

Using the same lunar calendar reckoning, the morning of April 16 corresponded this year to the time of our Lord’s resurrection from the dead, which the Scriptures declare occurred on the “third

day.” (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19) Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus ascended to his Father—this year corresponding to May 26. (Acts 1:3) Ten days thereafter, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the waiting disciples in Jerusalem—June 5 being the equivalent date in 2014. (Lev. 23:4-16; Acts 2:1) Thus, the month of May roughly corresponds to that period following Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, during which he appeared on various occasions to his disciples, and then ascended to the Father—the month ending just a few days prior to the Day of Pentecost.

Regardless of the annual lunar calendar calculations of the above events, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, along with the subsequent giving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, were vitally important features in the outworking of God’s plan of salvation. Each year at this season, as our hearts and minds dwell more particularly upon them, we are blessed by recalling various precious texts of Scripture relating to these events, and by meditating upon the important lessons of truth which are conveyed. We recall that meaningful prophecy of Jesus’ resurrection, recorded in Psalm 16:10, which expresses his own confidence that his soul would not be left in hell—that is, his being would not be left in the condition of death—in the grave.

During the period of his earthly ministry, Jesus had made no claim of an ability to raise himself from the dead, but was confident that, if he was faithful, the Heavenly Father would not leave him in death. Thus, in his last words upon the cross, he said to his Heavenly Father: “Into thy hands I commend my spirit”—my life, my existence. (Luke

23:46) The Apostle Peter, speaking on the Day of Pentecost, said, "This Jesus hath God raised up."—Acts 2:32

The Apostle Paul likewise refers to the mighty power of God which was exercised to raise Jesus from the dead, and to exalt him to his right hand. He informed the brethren at Ephesus that he was praying for them that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened to know the hope of their calling and "exceeding greatness" of divine power which was exercised in the resurrection of Jesus. This same power, he says, is also available to "us-ward who believe." (Eph. 1:17-22) It is because the eyes of our understanding are enlightened that we are able to look at the things "which are not seen," the things which are eternal in the heavens.—II Cor. 4:17,18

In our meditations on this subject, we also think of Paul's admonition in Colossians 3:1-3, where he says that if we are "risen with Christ" we would "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." To know that Christ was so highly exalted, and to be assured that we can attain to heavenly glory with him, is surely blessed to contemplate.

Paul gives us another reason we should be overjoyed to know that Jesus has been highly exalted to the right hand of God. It has to do with our imperfections, and the possibility that we might be discouraged by them. He says, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:34) Again, in Hebrews 7:25, Paul writes that Jesus "ever liveth to make intercession."

The disciples were happy to be assured that Jesus had been raised from the dead. However, it was not until after Pentecost that they understood this precious truth with respect to his appearing in the presence of God for them, and for all who follow faithfully in his footsteps—the “little flock” to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom.—Luke 12:32

EARTHLY HOPES

The wonderful bond of friendship with Jesus developed by his little band of followers—including the faithful women—was chiefly on a human basis. They did not, as yet, understand spiritual things. They believed wholeheartedly that he was the promised Messiah, and that he would establish the long-promised Messianic kingdom. In his many miracles, they saw evidence of the earthly blessings he would bestow upon all through the agencies of that kingdom.

Shortly before Jesus’ death, when Martha met him returning to Bethany after her brother, Lazarus, had died, she said to him, “If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” (John 11:21,22) Jesus then answered her, saying, “Thy brother shall rise again,” to which Martha replied, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Then “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: . . . Believest thou this?”—vss. 23-26

Indeed, Martha did believe, as did Mary and all the disciples. Upon the basis of the miracles they had seen Jesus perform, and because of his marvelous

teachings and the gracious words which he spoke, they believed that he was the Messiah. How they must have been thrilled with the thought of being the disciples of one in whom was inherent such power that even a touch of his garment healed the sick.

They loved their Master, and affectionately so. When he was taken from them and crucified, their sorrow was deep and bitter, and their hopes, which had been centered in him, were frustrated. It is no wonder, then, that when Mary Magdalene discovered the empty tomb, and reported to Peter and John that his body had been stolen, they hastened to see for themselves. It is little wonder also that Mary, crushed in spirit by her disappointment at not seeing the body of her Lord, and then suddenly realizing that Jesus was standing before her, cried, "Rabboni; which is to say, Master," and apparently sought to embrace him.—John 20:16

It must have seemed more than a little strange to her, when Jesus said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." (vs. 17) The Greek word here translated "touch" is the one which is used in every instance in which reference is made to individuals "touching" Jesus or his garments for the purpose of being healed. It is also the same word as used in the accounts which tell of his "touching" various ones in connection with his miracles of healing.

Professor Strong defines the Greek word as "attach," and from most of its uses in the New Testament it seems clearly to indicate a vital attachment, resulting in blessings of healing. Throughout their association with Jesus, the disciples, including

Mary, had witnessed the miraculous result of his touch. They had also seen that when others reached out and touched him in faith, believing that they would be healed, his “virtue [power]” went out to them, and they regained their health. (Luke 6:19) For days Mary Magdalene had been distraught with grief over the death of her beloved Master. Now, suddenly realizing that he was no longer dead, but alive, and standing beside her, she reached out in an attempt to attach herself to him that she might never again be deprived of the blessings which she felt he alone could give her. It was a natural thing to do, but it was a human blessing which she sought.

Mary was unable at the time to understand the reason Jesus gave for not wanting her to touch him—“I am not yet ascended to my Father.” The risen Lord commissioned Mary, however, to go to his brethren “and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” Mary had not been in the upper room the night before Jesus was crucified. Unless some of those who were there had told her that Jesus had spoken about going to his Father, she would not be able to derive any meaning from his statement, especially as a reason for her not touching him and receiving a much-sought blessing.

In the upper room, Jesus had told his disciples that he was going to his Father, and that then he would send the Comforter—the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth—which “proceedeth from” the Father. (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7) When Mary carried the message to them from Jesus saying that he had not yet ascended to his Father, they probably

remembered his promise. However, they did not yet comprehend its meaning, nor was it possible for them to do so until after the promise was fulfilled, and they had actually received the Holy Spirit to enlighten and comfort them.

FROM EARTHLY TO SPIRITUAL

From this side of Pentecost, and especially at this end of the age when our returned Lord has served the household of faith with “meat in due season” (Matt. 24:45), we can see clearly what Jesus meant in that statement to Mary, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” It was a way of saying that his relationship to her, and to all his disciples, was now to be on an entirely different basis. No longer was she to think of him in terms of human friendship, nor merely as a mighty one to heal physical diseases and infirmities. He was saying to her, in effect, that from that time forward, the blessings to flow out to his followers from him would reach them through the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit could not be sent to them until he had ascended to his Father.

Mary and the disciples were to learn that their relationship to Jesus was no longer to be on a human basis. While he miraculously appeared to them a few times after his resurrection, when he did ascend to his Father and to their Father, his relationship would be through faith, and through the enlightenment and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Even before Jesus ascended to his Father, his limited association with his disciples during the forty days which intervened between his resurrection and ascension was designed to help them realize

that a great change had occurred, and that they could no longer be with him and enjoy his companionship in the same manner as they did before he was crucified. While he was doubtless personally with them—though invisibly so—most of the time during those forty days, they saw him only a few times, and each appearance in their midst was so different from the others that they did not and could not become familiar with him.

At the same time, the fact that he could appear and vanish at will, even when they were behind closed doors, would help them to understand that he was no longer hampered by fetters of flesh. This, together with his announcement that “all power” had been given to him “in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18), would help to prepare them for what the Holy Spirit later fully revealed to them—namely, that while he had been put to death in the flesh, he had been made alive in the Spirit. As Paul states it, he had been “made a quickening spirit.”—I Cor. 15:45

Perhaps now the disciples began to realize, vaguely at least, the meaning of what the Master had said to Nicodemus, when he explained to him that those who are “born of the Spirit” can go and come as the wind—invisibly—able to exercise mighty power. (John 3:8) When he was with them in the flesh, he at times became physically weary, and would say, as on one occasion, “Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest awhile.” (Mark 6:31) Hanging and suffering on the cross, he said, “I thirst.” (John 19:28) Now, however, although they saw little of him, there was nothing in his demeanor to indicate that he was in any way subject to human

limitations, or experienced any physical suffering or weariness.

ASCENDED—“OUT OF THEIR SIGHT”

Jesus' last visit with his disciples after his resurrection was most impressive along this line. After telling them that they would receive power through the Holy Spirit, he instructed them to be his witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.” (Acts 1:8,9) This, they knew, was something far beyond the ability of a mere human to accomplish.

It is not surprising that the disciples “looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up.” (vs. 10) What a dramatic climax this was to the series of experiences through which they had passed during the six weeks since their Master was arrested and put to death. The two angels who appeared after Jesus had left them, asked, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?” (vs. 11) The angels did not wait for the answer, for they knew that these “men of Galilee” were at the moment so overcome by their emotions, so surprised, and so utterly unable to comprehend the meaning of the events to which this was such an amazing climax, that they were probably unable to answer.

Then the angels explained, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (vs. 11) It is the “same Jesus” whom they had seen go into heaven, who returns. In fact, he

was the same loving and understanding personality with whom they had been associated during his entire earthly ministry. However, he was now no longer a human being whose literal “touch” healed the sick, or whose “virtue” went out to heal those who would but touch the hem of his garment.

Jesus, with whom they had been so well acquainted, whose companionship they had enjoyed, was the “man Christ Jesus.” (I Tim. 2:5) It was the man Jesus who said he would give his flesh for the life of the world. (John 6:51) The one who was to return would be the highly exalted Jesus, who, since his resurrection, seemed so different. Indeed, he was different, for now he was “born of the Spirit,” having been made a quickening, life-giving, spirit being by the mighty power of God. The resurrected Jesus could enter the room while the doors were closed and locked, and appear and vanish at will. He could be with his disciples for forty days without being seen except when he appeared to them. It was he who was miraculously taken up into the heavens and vanished from their sight behind a cloud. It was this Jesus who was to return, and in the same manner as he had gone away. That is, he would be unobserved by the world, with just a few of his closest friends, his brethren, being aware of it.

From “the mount called Olivet,” where Jesus appeared to his disciples for this last time, they returned to Jerusalem—a sabbath day’s journey away—and abode in an upper room where they “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” (Acts 1:12-14) It was not necessary for them to tarry long, for in ten

days the Master's promise to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, was fulfilled. It was under its enlightening influence that they were now able to fit their experiences into a pattern that was understandable and inspiring. It was in the light and through the power of the Holy Spirit that Peter was able to preach his stirring sermon in which he pointed out the fulfillment of prophecy about the death and resurrection of Jesus—a sermon so powerful that “three thousand souls” were caused to be “pricked in their heart.”—Acts 2:37,41

We are not to think of that mighty manifestation of the Holy Spirit which occurred at Pentecost as being the complete fulfillment of Jesus' promise to send the Comforter. It was, in fact, only the beginning. Neither were the blessings of the Holy Spirit to be limited to the few, specially chosen apostles. In the “upper room” where the brethren had waited in prayer, the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and the brethren were present—a number totaling one hundred and twenty.—chap. 1:13-15

Among those present was undoubtedly Mary Magdalene, to whom Jesus had said, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” As a result of his ascension and appearing in heaven for his church, the Holy Spirit came upon them. Mary would then understand how much more precious and enduring were the blessings he was now able to shower upon her, and upon all his brethren, than were possible while he was in the flesh.

Now, instead of laying hold of his physical being in the hope of obtaining virtue and strength, Mary knew that she could go to the throne of heavenly grace, there to obtain mercy and find grace to help

in every time of need. Beginning at Pentecost, the Spirit-enlightened disciples understood that when Jesus returned to his Father two great blessings for them were made possible. He appeared in the presence of God to “make intercession” for us, and the Holy Spirit was “shed forth” for the enlightenment and comfort of his followers. (Heb. 7:25; Acts 2:33) Mary would now understand this, and would rejoice in the spiritual fellowship with the Father and with the Son which thereby was made possible.

Before his crucifixion, Jesus had said to his disciples, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, . . . shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”—John 14:25-27

Beginning at Pentecost, the disciples experienced the fulfillment of this promise. Puzzled and discouraged when their Master was crucified, now, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as a Comforter sent from God, they had peace. It was a peace which passed human understanding, born of confidence in the Father’s wisdom and love in directing and caring for them. They knew now that the one who had said to Martha, “I am the resurrection, and the life,” had been given “all power . . . in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18), and that, having appeared in the presence of God for his brethren, the power of the Holy Spirit had been made available for them.

Daily they experienced, and saw manifested in their lives, the power of the Spirit. It opened the

eyes of their understanding to behold the glory of God as it is revealed through his loving plan for the redemption and salvation of mankind. The power of the Holy Spirit, in calling to remembrance the wonderful words of life which Jesus had ministered to them before he was crucified, reminded them of his promise that those who left all and followed him into death would have “treasure in heaven.” (Matt. 19:21) Now they knew what that “treasure” was.

Indeed, the apostles knew and taught that we may hope to live and reign with him, conditional upon dying sacrificially with Jesus, and that we will be made like him and see him as he is. They also recognized, however, that this glorious heavenly reward would not be attained until the Master returned, so his promise that he would “come again” and receive them and all his people unto himself, was the basis of a most blessed hope.—John 14:3

Moreover, the apostles clearly understood and instructed the brethren that their hope of life immortal depended upon the resurrection of the dead. They knew that all mankind is lost in death unless there is a resurrection. They discerned that Jesus, by his own death, made possible the resurrection of both the church and the world, and that his resurrection by the Father guarantees that, through him, all may have life.

By the power of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the enlightened apostles, these truths became plainly understood in the Early Church. Today they flood our minds and inspire our hearts, as once again, in a special way, we call to remembrance that he who said he was the “resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), could not be held in the grave,

because his Heavenly Father used his mighty power to break the bands of death. How we rejoice in the assurance that he who was made alive in the Spirit, and appeared in the presence of God for us, has now returned, and soon, if faithful, we will be with him in glory and see him as he is. ■

“God hath . . . given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:9-11

OBITUARIES

The following brethren have recently finished their Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to their family and friends in the loss of these dear ones.

Sister Marie Lewis, Kalispell, MT—March 15. Age, 77

Sister Margaret Young, Connellsville, PA—March 21. Age, 93

Sister Helen Szuba, Buffalo, NY—March 23. Age, 96

Brother Lowell Cohmer, St. Petersburg, FL—April 2. Age, 74

Sister Vera Owczarski, Milwaukee, WI—April 3. Age, 75

Sister Danuta Kuc, Vancouver, BC, Canada—April 3. Age, 62

Brother Mike Balko, West Newton, PA—April 7. Age, 88

Sister Frances Crandall, Waterbury, CT—April 7. Age, 86

Brother Paul Cooper, Boise, ID—April 10. Age, 90

Jesus Resists Temptation

Key Verse: “*He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*”
—*Matthew 4:4*

Selected Scriptures:
Deuteronomy 6:1-16;
Matthew 4:4-11

FOLLOWING HIS BAPTISM, Jesus departed into the wilderness for a season of solitude in order to determine the Father’s will before commencing his public ministry. He also fasted for forty days, as he contemplated the meaning of various prophecies which forecast his suffering and death. In addition, he spent time laying the foundation for the work of the apostles and others who would proclaim God’s coming kingdom. Our Lord was so absorbed in study and communing with God that he did not partake of any food for the entire duration of his wilderness experience. Noting his diminished vitality, the devil attempted to entice Jesus into using his spiritual powers to assuage his hunger.—*Matt. 4:1-3*

As noted in our Key Verse, the Master promptly rejected the Adversary’s suggestion that he miraculously convert stones into food for his personal consumption. He quoted from the Old Testament, which asserts that obedience to God’s Word was of paramount importance, and therefore, he would not use his power in a manner which would be contrary to his covenant of sacrifice.

“Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”—vss. 5,6

Again, our Lord promptly and correctly dismissed Satan’s challenge to defy the laws of nature and seek divine protection. For him to do so would be to tempt the Father by making a misapplication of Scripture.—Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:7

In a final effort at deception, the Devil suggested if the Master would acknowledge his supremacy, it would not be necessary for him to give his life in sacrifice to redeem the human family. “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”—vss. 10,11

As consecrated followers of Christ, there is an important lesson that we can glean by reflecting upon how our Lord conducted himself during his trials in the wilderness. Satan has long sought to achieve his own goals by rebelling against divine authority. “Thou hast said in thine heart, . . . I will be like the most High.” (Isa. 14:12-14) Although he failed in his attempts to have our Lord render allegiance to him, he has sought to thwart the completion of the body of Christ by presenting to our minds various allurements that if acted upon, would tend towards fleshly self-gratification and impede our progress in the narrow way.

May we redouble our efforts in submitting to the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures, always bearing in mind the following admonition: “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—Luke 14:11 ■

Jesus' Mission on Earth

Key Verse: *“He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”*
—Luke 4:21

Selected Scripture:
Luke 4:14-21
on the Sabbath and read a portion of Scripture from the book of Isaiah the prophet.—Luke 4:14-17

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”—vss. 18,19

After Jesus read these words from Isaiah, the account says that he closed the book and sat down, with the eyes of all gathered there fastened on him. (vs. 20) Our Key Verse then states the Master affirmed the passage he read was fulfilled at that very time and in the hearing of those in the audience.

The initial reaction to our Lord's words was that of admiration, as his hearers recognized his expressions were filled with grace. (vs. 22) However, as he continued

AFTER DEPARTING FROM the wilderness where he abode following his baptism, Jesus, with the power of the Holy Spirit, commenced his public ministry, teaching in the synagogues regarding the kingdom of God. Later when he arrived in Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he also went into a syna-

gogue

to speak, his utterances rebuked their unrighteousness, and their former attitude of praise towards him turned to wrath, because he would not perform any of his miracles “in his own country.” (vss. 23,24) They then sought to throw him over a cliff, but he passed through them unharmed before departing for another location.—vss. 28-30

By the end of Jesus’ ministry, he had been fully consumed in the doing of God’s will. Although rejected by the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, the Master was well received by the common people, who heard him gladly. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and fed the multitudes—on one occasion five thousand and in another instance four thousand. Nevertheless, despite all of this marvelous testimony, he knew that the time of his earthly departure was near. Our Lord began to give some truths that were extremely powerful, and which indicated that he was seeking only those who would desire to follow him at any cost, with the prospect of being associated with him in his Father’s kingdom.—John 6:56-68

As believers, we also have a mission to promote the kingdom message. (Matt. 24:14) Let us fulfill our commission as we witness to God’s plan, in the hope of being used as an instrument to locate the remaining members of the body of Christ. The following prophetic testimony might well be used as a guide for our actions at this time: “And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.” (Isa. 6:9-11) What a blessed privilege is ours! ■

Jesus' Teaching on the Law

Key Verses: *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”*
—Matthew 15:8,9

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 15:1-11,-
15-20

saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”—Matt. 15:3-6

The Lord also quoted from Isaiah to point out the

THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES came as a delegation from Jerusalem to investigate the teaching and works of Jesus. They relied upon the tradition of the elders to question him as to why his disciples did not follow a ritualistic washing of their hands before eating meals, even though such a practice was not a part of the Scriptures.

In upbraiding these leaders for their hypocrisy, Jesus responded to their inquiry by questioning them. “He answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded,

shallow nature of their complaints. (Isa. 29:13) In doing so, he reminded them that they merely paid lip service to God's Word by advocating reliance upon the traditions of men. Our Key Verses contain Jesus' quotation of the prophet, and affirm the general tenor of his rebuke of these false teachers, whose erroneous doctrines nullified God's Word.

Throughout his ministry, our Lord had many occasions to rightly criticize the religious guides of the Jewish people, who twisted the meanings of Scriptures to suit their own ends. Here is another such example: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."—Matt. 5:43,44

The words "ye have heard that it hath been said" implies reliance upon the human tradition of the elders to which the Pharisees adhered. They ignored both the letter and the spirit of the Law as respects the Master, whom they hated. The depth of their degradation can well be illustrated by the fact that after Jesus raised Lazarus—because many people then believed on him—they conspired to not only put Christ to death, but Lazarus also.—John 11:45-53; 12:9-11

We are not under bondage to specific laws as epitomized in the Ten Commandments, nor are we in any degree subject to the religious traditions of men. Rather, we are under the law of liberty. Our love for God is demonstrated not only by avoiding those things that the Scriptures forbid, but also by sacrificing our human rights and privileges in the service of the Truth for the Lord and for the brethren.

Attaining the spirit of love in our words and deeds is evidence that we have been engrafted into Christ. May the transforming influence of the Holy Spirit enable us to fulfil God's law in our lives.—Matt. 22:36-40; John 13:34,35 ■

The Greatest Commandment

Key Verses: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”*
—Mark 12:30,31

Selected Scriptures:
Leviticus 19:18;
Deuteronomy 6:4-9;
Mark 12:28-34

rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, which he accurately predicted. It was evident that the Jewish leaders understood the meaning of the Lord's words.—vs. 12

OUR LESSON BEGINS WITH

Jesus' stinging indictment of the Jewish religious leaders through the use of parables. They were guilty of rejecting him as the Son of God. The Lord explained that it was God who planted the house of Israel and provided them with the divine law. He had also given them the testimony of various prophets to keep the nation separate from all the surrounding heathen influences. Thus, it should have been expected that with such tender care and supervision, through gratitude and obedience, the Jews would have been prepared to accept Jesus as their Messiah.—Mark 12:1-11

Regrettably, the same hardness of heart which caused the nation to reject God's law and the warnings issued by righteous prophets, also would lead to the

Jesus also encountered opposition from the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection. They referred to a stipulation in the Mosaic Law (Deut. 25:5-10), whereby if a man died childless, his brother should marry the widow to maintain the family name and property interests. In posing a hypothetical case, the Sadducees asked Jesus if a woman married seven brothers who died one after the other, whose wife she would be in the resurrection.—Mark 12:18-23

Jesus indicated that God had power to raise the dead, but also that marriage then would no longer exist. Additionally, Jesus reminded the Sadducees that when appearing to Moses at the burning bush, the Heavenly Father revealed himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If there were no hope of a resurrection, no such an assertion would have been given. A scribe who had heard the Master's response to the Sadducees appreciated his answer and then inquired of Jesus what was the greatest of all commandments.—vss. 24-28

In our Key Verses, our Lord asserted that supreme love for God and loving one's neighbor summarized the intent of the Decalogue. This scribe manifested sincerity of heart and agreed with Jesus that sincere worship of God with one's entire heart, soul, and strength, as well as loving one's neighbor as himself, would be the most important things anyone could do—more so than the ceremonial offerings and sacrifices of the Law. Jesus acknowledged his right attitude of heart by saying, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."—vs. 34

As consecrated believers in Christ, let us always manifest both aspects of the Master's response in our lives in all that we say and do. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."—I John 4:20,21 ■

Workers Together with God

“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”

—II Corinthians 6:1

OUR PRIVILEGES AS WORKERS together with God begin in the present life, as we follow in Jesus’ footsteps of sacrifice and develop the “mind of Christ.” If faithful, our work will continue into the future, and will include the awakening of those who are asleep in death, as well as teaching them during God’s kingdom, under the leadership of Christ. This is a blessed hope, and we rejoice in the assurance that the Heavenly Father will preserve his people who are now coworkers with him—that he will help them in their every time of need.

Paul points out in our lesson, however, that we have responsibilities in this matter. We are to give “no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.” (vs. 3) The matter of giving “no offence” pertains primarily to our relationship with the Lord. We are to conduct ourselves and our ministry in a manner which will be approved by God, according

to the standards laid down in his Word. We cannot do this perfectly, but we have the blessed assurance of the wonderful provision he has made for us through the blood of Christ, whereby our imperfect works are made acceptable to him.

By contrast, we cannot hope to receive the approval of the world in general. Rather, from the world we expect to receive ridicule, misunderstanding, tribulation, and perhaps even hatred. The world responds to us even as it did to Jesus. However, we are not to give the world any just cause for reviling or hating us. Jesus did not, yet he had tribulation in the world, and indicated that this would also be true with us. To the extent that we receive the disapproval of the world, it should be for the same reason that Jesus did—namely, that we are faithful in letting the light of truth shine out for the blessing of those to whom the Lord may give a hearing ear.

“In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God.” (vs. 4) From here through verse 10, Paul mentions many items associated with our being approved as ministers of God. In the same verse, he lists four of these: “in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses.” Being a minister of God—a worker together with him—is not an easy task. First, Paul says it requires “much patience.” This will be needed to meet the daily problems which may confront us. Since ours is a vocation which is a lifetime in length, it requires patient endurance, lest we become weary in well doing.

If we are faithful to the ministry we will also encounter a certain number of “afflictions.” Paul ministered in “labours more abundant,” and testified of suffering “stripes above measure, in prisons

more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”—II Cor. 11:23-27

Paul was indeed an example of an ambassador for Christ and a worker together with God, and because of his faithfulness, he suffered “afflictions,” “necessities,” and “distresses.” In the seemingly more tolerant world in which many of the brethren live today, it may be difficult to imagine how so much tribulation could touch the life of one servant of God. One reason for it was Paul’s wholehearted determination to be faithful to the cause for which he had been called and chosen by God, and to which he had gladly dedicated his life.

The apostle continues enumerating his afflictions, showing that they were all related to his being an approved minister of God: “In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings.” (chap. 6:5) Paul could have avoided all these simply by settling down in his home town of Tarsus. Perhaps he could have enjoyed to a point the wonderful vision of truth which the Lord had given him. He knew, however, that this was not why the Lord had called him, so he went forth into the ministry, not turning aside for anything, even though he knew many times that suffering and

perhaps death awaited him. He was willing to suffer physical pain, to become weary of flesh, to go without sleep and food, that he might be faithful to the ministry to which he had been called.

ASPECTS OF AN APPROVED MINISTRY

Beginning with II Corinthians 6, verse 6, Paul sets forth various facets of an approved ministry. We not only need to endure patiently the many afflictions and distresses which come upon us in the world, and from our great Adversary, the Devil, but we are also to regulate our own lives in keeping with the Lord's provisions for us, and in harmony with the righteous principles of his laws.

Paul says that we approve ourselves as ministers of Christ and workers together with God "by pureness." We must shun those things which God, through his Word, has declared to be impure. Here we must be guided by the divine standards, not by the standards of the world. How ineffective our ministry would be, and how displeasing to the Lord, if we did not carry on our ambassadorship in the spirit of purity.

"By knowledge," Paul continues. How important it is that we have a clear knowledge of the one with whom we serve as coworkers. We must understand the plans and purposes of our Heavenly Father, the author of the great plan which his Son, Jesus, executes. It is a mistake to suppose that a knowledge of the Truth is not essential for those who are workers together with God. How many there are who, not knowing the truth of the Father's Word, think they are serving him by preaching eternal torture for the wicked, and other erroneous doctrines.

“By longsuffering.” It is not enough that we are to be faithful in this ministry today, and when circumstances are favorable. Our consecration is until death, and we are to be faithful to our covenant of sacrifice regardless of the hardships we may encounter. In terms of human tranquility and ease, the ministry of reconciliation to which we have been called is a costly one. Notice again in the earlier verses of this chapter how costly it was to Paul.

The Lord gave Paul strength and courage to endure the suffering which came upon him because of his faithfulness, and he testified that he could endure all things through Christ who gave him strength. The same is true with us. Though our trials may not be so severe as those that came upon Paul, still they are more than we could bear without the Lord’s help. However, with his help we can endure and suffer “long,” even unto death. Indeed, it is those who are faithful unto death who receive the crown of life.

“By kindness.” The true minister of God and of Christ must be kind. To testify to the Gospel in any other manner than the spirit of kindness would render our ministry very ineffective so far as those to whom we witness are concerned, and very displeasing to the Lord. The Gospel of Christ beautifully reflects the loving-kindness of our God, and how out of place it would be to present it in an unkind manner.

“By the Holy Spirit.” It is by the Holy Spirit of anointing that we are authorized to proclaim the glad tidings of the kingdom. It was written of Jesus, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings

unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”—Isa. 61:1,2

This same anointing has come upon us as members of Christ’s body. It is this anointing that constitutes us his ambassadors, and ministers of reconciliation. Since we carry on his ministry by the authority of the Holy Spirit, it is implied that this work will be conducted in keeping with the Spirit of the Lord—that is, humbly, patiently, and lovingly. No other attitude would be pleasing to God and result in a ministry approved by him.

“By love unfeigned.” Love, an unselfish desire to bless and help others, must be the motive for a ministry approved by God. Paul says it is to be an “unfeigned” love—sincere in its motivation. It would be possible to deceive our brethren, or any to whom we minister, as to our sincerity, but not the Lord. He knows whether or not there is any element of selfish or worldly ambition in the sacrifices we make to promulgate the glad tidings. Paul stated it correctly when he said that though we may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, if we have not love, it profits us nothing.—I Cor. 13:1-3

“By the word of truth.” We are not to preach our own opinions, or the opinions of others. The Word of truth, the Bible, contains the Gospel of Christ which we are to proclaim. We should be able to prove what we proclaim by a “thus saith the Lord.” Otherwise our preaching would be in vain. The truth of God’s Word as it is centered in Christ Jesus our Lord is the “word of reconciliation.” It is by this

that people are drawn to the Heavenly Father, and it is under the influence of the Word of truth that they are led to dedicate themselves to his service.

“By the power of God.” A ministry of the Truth which is conducted solely by the power of oratory, or the influence of numbers, or on the basis of human prestige, is not acceptable to God. The power of God—his Holy Spirit—also works through the hearts and lives of those who, so far as their natural talents are concerned, can speak only, as it were, with a lisping, stammering tongue. Where his servants humble themselves and allow his power to work in and through them, their ministry is approved, regardless of their abilities and talents, according to the flesh.

“By the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” In Ephesians 6:13-17, Paul urges us to put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil in this evil day. He also identifies the various parts of this symbolic armor. He speaks of the girdle of truth, and the “breastplate of righteousness.” He says that we should have our “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” “Above all,” he admonishes, “taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

Another item of the Christian’s armor mentioned by Paul is the “helmet of salvation.” Since the helmet was worn on the head, it suggests our knowledge of the Truth—the things we know about God and his glorious design for the recovery of the lost race from sin and death. Another point we should by all means know is that “all things

work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28) This knowledge is essential in order to conduct a ministry which requires much patience and longsuffering.

The last item of the armor mentioned by Paul is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Every part of the armor represents one application or another of the truth of God’s Word. The sword is chiefly an offensive weapon. However, we are not to slay others with the Word of God. Chiefly, it should be turned toward our own imperfections, and when used in the ministry of reconciliation, it should be with the thought that through imparting a knowledge of the Truth, our enemies may perchance appreciate it and become friends. The sword of the Spirit is directed against error, not personalities. When used properly, as it should be in our ministry of reconciliation, it will help to reveal the length, breadth, height, and depth of God’s love.

IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

Continuing our lesson from II Corinthians 6, Paul points out, beginning in verse 8, various situations in which we will find ourselves, and admonishes preparation to meet them in the spirit of the Gospel which we proclaim: “By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true.” There is, on occasion, some honor attached to the ministry. Even some in the world appreciate the message up to a point, and respect us as we present it to them. However, we are not to become puffed up in these experiences. Neither should we be discouraged when

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(Continued from page 31) our message is rejected, and we find ourselves looked upon with dishonor. Both the evil reports and the good reports are to be accepted as of the Lord.

When Paul speaks of our being “deceivers, and yet true,” he is not implying that followers of the Master will actually practice deceit. Rather, it is the Truth that is looked upon by those in darkness as being deceitful and untrue. We may well be referred to as “false prophets,” yet in reality, if we are conducting a ministry which is based upon the Word of God, it will be true, for it is the Gospel of Christ, which is “the power of God unto salvation.”—Rom. 1:16

“As unknown, yet well known.” The Lord’s people, as a rule, are not well known. Often, however, through circumstances brought about by faithfulness in the ministry, we may for a time stand out in the eyes of our neighbors. As true Christians, we should accept both of these situations with the constant desire that, regardless of what people may think of us, our Heavenly Father is to be glorified. How we rejoice to know that in God’s due time the knowledge of his glory will indeed fill the whole earth “as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9

“As dying, and, behold, we live.” We are dying daily with Christ—sacrificially—yet we live because Christ lives in us. Additionally, by faith we rejoice in the hope of living with him in the kingdom, and sharing in the great future work of blessing all the families of the earth.

“As chastened, and not killed.” As we are “workers together” with God, and conduct our share in the

ministry of reconciliation, we are being trained for the future and glorious work of the kingdom. God may well use our trials in connection with the present ministry to thus chasten or train us, but we will not be “killed” by these, for we will realize that they are among the “all things” which are working together for our good.

“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” In this chaotic world of suffering and death, if we are truly a tenderhearted Christian, we are sure to view with a measure of sorrow the plight of the groaning creation around us. Even our own experiences as an ambassador of Christ are bound to make us sorrowful at times. However, shining above these conditions, which might tend to discourage and sadden us, are the promises of God. These are a source of joy to us which the world can neither give nor take away. Thus, we should be able to rejoice, not in ourselves, nor in our surroundings, but in the Lord.

“As poor, yet making many rich.” We are all “poor” in the sense that, as consecrated followers of Jesus, we have laid our all on the altar of sacrifice. If we are sacrificing our lives in the Lord’s service, however, we are sure to be making others rich. We do not make others rich in worldly goods, but in their knowledge of God and of his plans. We provide riches by giving the promise that in God’s plan there is an assurance of health, happiness, and the opportunity for everlasting life for all mankind. If any embrace this message fully, and accept the invitation to the High Calling, then they too will partake of the legacy of joy which Christ left for his followers, which will make them rich indeed.

“As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” As followers of the Master, and as workers together with God, we should realize that nothing which we seem to possess really belongs to us. The earthly goods which the world treasures so much, we have laid upon the altar of sacrifice. We possess much, however, of the spiritual things of God. We have his promises, his assurance of care and guidance, the hope he has provided to us of a part in the heavenly phase of the Messianic kingdom. How boundless are the possessions—“all things”—which belong to us, if we have made a covenant of sacrifice.

ENLARGED HEART

In the items of truth which we have considered from II Corinthians 6, it is evident that Paul desired to present us with various details involved in living wholly for the Lord, devoting our all to his service, and doing this in a way that the “ministry” will have divine approval. It would seem that as Paul considered these truths, one by one, he became awestruck with their grandeur, and exclaimed, “O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.”—vs. 11

Paul had labored much toward the brethren at Corinth. Unlike the brethren at Philippi, for whom he had no words of correction, there was still much to be desired from the Corinthian brethren. In his first epistle to them, he reminded them of their carnality as reflected in the divisions among them which were based upon personalities—some claiming to be the follower of one, and some of another of God’s messengers. In addition, there was moral

laxity in the ecclesia which Paul condemned, and instructed them to remedy.

In his second letter, there is evidence that much improvement had been achieved. Perhaps Paul had some of this in mind when he said that his heart was “enlarged” toward them. How glad he was to be able to speak to the brethren at Corinth of their having made significant spiritual progress. It was for this joy that his heart had grown in love on their behalf.

This attitude on Paul’s part reveals his own maturity as a Christian. Whatever the Corinthian brethren had done in the past, he loved them, and in his heart a great joy welled up as he instructed them in the ways of the Lord more perfectly, and saw their positive response. Sometimes we may be slow to show such enthusiasm toward brethren who in the past, perhaps, had a wrong viewpoint on some point of truth, or some other defect which was displeasing to us. Let us, however, follow Paul’s example, who was genuinely joyful when his brethren showed progress in the narrow way.

Paul spoke these words as he concluded his lesson: “(I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.” (vs. 13) The details of an approved ministry, as presented by Paul, must have tended to enlarge the Corinthian brethren’s hearts, as they did his. These great truths of the Word, which reveal the wisdom and love of God, should enlarge our hearts as we, too, lay down our lives in his service. Therefore, let us rejoice at every evidence of spiritual progress in our lives, and in the lives of our brethren, as we continue to develop the mind of Christ and become workers together with God. ■

Lessons from the Epistle to the Hebrews

*“Let us run with
patience the race
that is set before
us, Looking unto
Jesus the author
and finisher of
our faith.”*

—*Hebrews 12:1,2*

THERE IS MUCH IN THE Epistle to the Hebrews which indicates that the ones to whom it was written were showing tendencies toward lack of faith in God and his son Christ Jesus, and a cooling of their zeal for the doing

of the Heavenly Father’s will. In the opening of the second chapter, the Apostle Paul writes, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” In chapter 3:12, he says, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

The fourth chapter commences with these words: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” In chapter 5:12 is revealed the

lack of progress these Hebrew Christians had made. The apostle says, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."

In the sixth chapter of Hebrews, Paul emphasizes the need for being rooted and grounded in the Truth, and for one to have his anchor of faith firmly fastened within the veil, "Whither the forerunner is for us entered." (vs. 20) In chapter 10:23, he admonishes, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)." From these and other statements in the epistle, it seems clear that it was written to encourage this particular group to a greater steadfastness in the Truth, and a more enduring zeal in their endeavor to follow in the footsteps of the Master.

THE CAUSE OF CHRISTIAN SUFFERING

A careful analysis indicates that one cause for the cooling zeal of these Hebrew brethren was the ignominy and suffering that continued upon them as a result of their being followers of Jesus. They had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. To any believing Jew, the Messiah was one who was destined to fulfill all the wondrous kingdom promises of the Old Testament. They probably were not surprised that a cause so young would meet with some measure of opposition, so in the beginning they "took joyfully the spoiling of [their] goods." They had willingly been locked in the stocks, and rejoiced in the privilege of being the companions of those who were so used.—chap. 10:32-35

However, as time went on they probably began to wonder why the Messianic cause continued to be subject to so much opposition and persecution. Perhaps they had not understood clearly those doctrinal truths pertaining to the “sufferings of Christ”—that only after this suffering was complete could the glory be attained. Perhaps they thought that the suffering of Christ was to have ended at Calvary, and now that his followers also were suffering might indicate that there was some question as to whether Jesus was truly the Messiah. Whatever their reasoning may have been, the apostle makes it plain in the second chapter that it pleased God “in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”—Heb. 2:10

Here was information showing that while many sons were to have positions of glory in the Messianic kingdom, yet they all, like their Captain, must attain to that position by way of suffering. This would help them to understand why some of them had been made a gazing-stock and why they had had their goods spoiled as a result of their association with the Messianic cause. If they had been wondering why their suffering was necessary, here was an explanation.

Later, in the 12th chapter, a further reason is given for Christian suffering. Here it is shown to be a part of the necessary discipline by which we are trained as sons of God for the high position to which we have been called. Those whom the Lord truly loves as his children, the apostle explains, should expect to be chastened. Indeed, if they lack such experiences they have reason to doubt their sonship standing before God.—vss. 6-8

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

We sometimes speak of a faith that will enable us to “walk in the dark with God,” which is very good. However, in order to have such a faith, it is necessary for us to know that God is with us in the dark, and that he is holding our hands in his. To be walking in the dark without the certain knowledge that God is with us is another matter. If the Hebrew brethren were looking for the glory of the kingdom, but did not understand why they were called upon to endure so much suffering, they were walking in the dark without knowing whether God was with them. Without this necessary knowledge, they might think their suffering meant that they had espoused a counterfeit Messianic cause.

This would seem to explain why the apostle dwelt at length on the point of sacrifice and suffering, as it had been illustrated in the Tabernacle services. Paul pointed out to these Hebrew brethren that it was their privilege, and quite in harmony with the divine arrangement, to go to Jesus “without the camp” and share in his reproach and suffering. (chap. 13:10-13) If they could understand that their suffering was truly a part of the Messianic purpose in which it was their privilege to share, this would surely fortify them for whatever experiences they might be called upon to bear.

It is in harmony with this thought that the apostle writes, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (chap. 11:1) The word “substance” is translated from a Greek word meaning “support” or “foundation.” Having support or a foundation for things hoped for would also imply having “evidence” of things unseen. The

Hebrew brethren had come to understand part of this “substance.” They had accepted Jesus as their Messiah, and hoped to share in the Messianic glory. Now they needed to realize that their suffering with Christ was another important part of the foundation of their hope. A proper understanding of this would constitute one of the strong evidences of the unseen glory for which they were striving. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,” Paul states in another of his epistles.—II Tim. 2:12

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Throughout the 11th chapter of Hebrews the apostle tells about the faith-life of the Ancient Worthies. They, too, were associated with the Messianic cause. Their faith in that cause, and their loyalty to it, also resulted in suffering and death. They did not partake of the suffering of Christ in the same sense as do his footstep followers of this Gospel Age. Their sacrifice was not represented by the brazen altar in the court of the Tabernacle. Nevertheless, it was fully in keeping with, and just as zealously rendered, as the “better sacrifices” of this age.

It took a life of faith on the part of the Ancient Worthies in order for them to continue to be pleasing to God. By their faith they “obtained a good report,” the apostle says. (vs. 2) He then tells us about various such worthy ones, and of what their faith enabled them to do and endure. By faith Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. By faith Noah built an ark. By faith Abraham, in obeying God, left the city of Ur and journeyed to the land of promise, not knowing whither he was

going. Faith enabled this class to suffer and to die. It enabled Moses to decide that the “reproach of Christ” was more to be esteemed than the “treasures in Egypt.”—vss. 24-27

Through faith they “subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”—vss. 33-38

What a “cloud of witnesses” is here produced as evidence before the Hebrew brethren. All of these, as servants in the Messianic cause, had gladly suffered and died in that hope. Truly, the house of sons, now being prepared for still greater glory, could not expect to attain the high position offered to them without suffering. Indeed, the “Captain” of their salvation also suffered and died, and in his life and death the follower of Christ is furnished with the best of all examples of faith and obedience. How logical that the apostle in this wondrous admonition to faith and zeal, should step from the martyrs of the Old Testament, to the Chief Martyr of the New Testament—Jesus.

“LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT”

After mentioning the Old Testament “cloud of witnesses,” and as he introduces Jesus as the greatest of all examples of faithfulness, Paul shows that the life of a Christian is, in some respects, like that of one who trains for and runs in a race. “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us,” he admonishes. He also gives us some helpful suggestions as to how this can be done successfully: “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.” Laying aside these hindrances, we are to look “unto Jesus”—that is, be guided by his example and inspired by his faith and devotion.—Heb. 12:1,2

We are to “lay aside every weight.” Part of the training of ancient marathon runners was that of purposely weighing down their feet over a period of time prior to the race for the purpose of developing the muscles of their legs. Also, when these weights were removed their feet would seem unusually light by comparison, enabling them to run faster as well as longer distances. Perhaps the apostle had this in mind when admonishing the brethren to lay aside their weights.

Followers of the Master do not, of course, purposely weigh themselves down in training for the Christian racecourse. We are burdened with many weights without the necessity of specially adding them. It is true, however, that only as we lay aside these weights can we run successfully in the narrow way. In order to lay the weights aside we must first recognize them. All of us were by nature weighted down with sin and imperfection. The Hebrew brethren first to be addressed in this epistle had

this weight specially emphasized by the Mosaic Law. All their lives they had been struggling toward righteousness, weighed down so heavily with this burden that no real progress could be made.

With or without the Law, however, Adamic imperfection is a weight to those who are seeking to know and do the will of God. When we enter the Christian racecourse and lay aside this weight in accepting by faith the imputed merit of Christ, a tremendous burden is lifted. The poet's words, "Ceaseless struggling after life, weary with the endless strife," well express the experience of all who seek after righteousness apart from Christ.

We lay this weight aside by full consecration to do God's will, based on faith in the precious blood of Jesus. Doing so justifies us and gives us peace with God. (Rom. 5:1) What a burden is thus lifted, and how free and openhearted it leaves us as we look "unto Jesus," seeking to "run with patience" the race that is set before us. We are not to burden ourselves again with this weight after we lay it aside. This is what we would be doing if we attempt to justify ourselves before God through the merit of our own works, or if we permit our unwilling imperfections to discourage us from pressing forward in the race.

How foolish it would have been for ancient runners, once they had lightened their feet for the race by removing the weights, to start putting them on once again after the race had started. Yet, this is what followers of the Master are sometimes tempted to do. The weight, or hindrance, of Adamic imperfection is removed by the blood of Christ—if we have faith to believe it fully.

We should avoid taking on other weights also. If we permit ourselves to be overcharged with the cares of this life, these cares become a weight which impedes our progress. (Luke 21:34) There are certain responsibilities of life which the Scriptures impose upon us, and these we must carry out. They cannot be construed as weights, because, being proper, the Lord helps us to bear them. We are scripturally exhorted to provide for our own. To do this faithfully is to perform a part of the Lord's will for us. It is a part of the "all" things which are to be done to the glory of God. (I Cor. 10:31) To be "overcharged," however, and to be carried away with the lure of earthly goods, comforts, and joys in this life, is likely to add weights which are sure to hold us back from final victory in the narrow way.

Therefore, it is a necessity that we lay aside whatever weights we may have before starting the race, and we must keep laying them aside as often as we find ourselves becoming burdened by them. The love of money, the love of ease, the desire to make a fair showing in the flesh—any or all of these might easily become weights. If we keep our affections set upon things above, determined that we will be interested in and do only "this one thing," then we will remain free from the weights which might otherwise rob us of a victorious conclusion of the race.

THE BESETTING SIN

We are also to lay aside "the sin which doth so easily beset us." Every follower of Christ undoubtedly has one or more weaknesses or imperfections which serve to handicap him in his effort to do

the Master's will, but this does not seem to be what is referred to here. If we can judge from the general subject matter of the epistle, the besetting sin to which the apostle refers is evidently that of the lack of faith, and consequent lack of zeal.

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," the apostle tells us. (Rom. 14:23) One of the chief sins of natural Israel was their lack of faith in God and in the promise of his overruling providences on their behalf. In chapters three and four of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul reminds us of this, and exhorts that we strive to enter, by faith, into the rest which God has provided for us through Christ. "Without faith it is impossible to please [God]," the apostle says, showing further that those who draw back through lack of faith cannot have divine approval. (Heb. 11:6) This sin of a weak faith is the besetting one, and one which every disciple of the Lord should endeavor earnestly to set aside by grasping more firmly and more resolutely all the exceeding great and precious promises by which he is assured of victory.—II Pet. 1:4

"RUN WITH PATIENCE"

"And let us run with patience," the apostle adds. Cheerful endurance is the thought here in the Greek word translated "patience." The trials of the way make it necessary to endure, but the endurance should be cheerful. Going to Jesus "without the camp, bearing his reproach," is not a cheerful thing in itself—it is something rather to be "endured." However, if we have the proper knowledge of what is involved, and strong faith in the promises of God as they pertain to both the

present and the future, we should be able to endure cheerfully.

It will help us to endure cheerfully if we look “unto Jesus; . . . who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.” (Heb. 12:2) God’s design for all of his intelligent creatures is that they may be happy. When the divine plan of redemption and restitution is complete, all sorrow, sighing, suffering, and trials, will have fled away. This does not mean, however, that the immediate objective of the Christian’s life is to be free from suffering. Indeed, we can by faith enter into the “joy of the Lord,” but this joy is not based upon present ease and freedom from suffering.

The joy that meant the most to Jesus, and which enabled him to endure the cross, was the “joy that was set before him” by the promises of God. This same joy must be ours if we are to endure faithfully while we go to him without the camp bearing his reproach. It is the joy of anticipation—the joy of faith. It can be thought of as a down payment of that “fulness of joy” which will be ours when, through faithful and cheerful endurance of present trials, we attain a place at God’s right hand where there are “pleasures forevermore.”—Ps. 16:11

“CONSIDER HIM”

“Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself,” the apostle adds. (Heb. 12:3) The Ancient Worthies endured many hardships. The Hebrew brethren had their goods spoiled and had been locked in the stocks. Neither of these groups, by comparison, however, had endured as much as Jesus. Moreover, they were all imperfect,

and to some extent their suffering may have been due to their imperfection, but not so with Jesus. He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Yet he suffered—not for himself—but on behalf of others, that even those who caused him to suffer might be blessed.

It is hard for anyone to endure contradiction, but the perfect man Jesus had the main facts of his life contradicted and was put to death because of it. Jesus was the Son of God, and the King of kings, yet he was subjected to a campaign of contradiction from the very beginning of his ministry, culminating only when he finished laying down his life and died upon the cross. Hanging there as the world's Redeemer, the challenge was hurled at him to come down and thus prove that he was the Son of God. In derision the inscription was placed above his head: "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." (Matt. 27:37) "He saved others; let him save himself," the crowd shouted. (Luke 23:35) They did not realize that by enduring this contradiction and refusing to save himself, he was providing salvation for all mankind—even those who hated him.

Surely here is something to consider as we endeavor to walk in the Master's footsteps. We are called to a heavenly calling, to reign with Christ in his glorious kingdom, but to attain this we must "suffer with him," and endure with him. (II Tim. 2:12) We, too, must endure "contradiction." When we are contradicted pertaining to things wherein we are right, and take it patiently, we are enduring in some small degree that which Jesus endured. We are also to endure cheerfully, and even to seek opportunities to bless those who contradict us. We

are never to endure with grumbling, nor seek occasion to “get even” with our accusers.

RESISTING UNTO BLOOD

Then follows the apostle’s climax: “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” (Heb. 12:4) This is another way of saying, “You have not yet died for the Messianic cause.” The Hebrew brethren had been faithful to a degree. However, they had not as yet “resisted unto blood”—they had not followed the Master all the way into death. Until they had done this, the joys which had been set before them could not become realities, so they were to continue “looking unto Jesus,” and to be inspired by the promises that motivated him, until they had reached the full end of the way.

Like the Hebrew brethren, we too, as followers of the Master, must “hold fast the profession” of our faith, watch that we do not “let . . . slip” what we have learned, and not “draw back.” We must “endure chastening” as sons, and safeguard ourselves against failure by having faith’s anchor fastened securely “within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” (chap. 6:19,20) Only thus may we hope to victoriously reach the end of the race-course marked out for us by Jesus, who ran before to show the way. Not until we have “resisted unto blood” will we have reached the end of that way. Only those who are “faithful unto death” may hope to receive “the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) We cannot win the prize by running only half or three-quarters of the way. We must continue to run all the way—stopping short of nothing, but determined to continue faithfully to the end of our journey. ■

General Convention Bulletin

July 19-24, 2014

THE 2014 GENERAL CONVENTION will be upon us in less than three months. If you have not yet made plans to attend, now is the time to do so. We encourage as many as are able to join in the blessings of this annual gathering of the Lord's people. The convention will be held on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family style apartments (also air conditioned) with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities are available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge in their own sleeping bag if both beds are occupied.

The convention program appears in this issue of *The Dawn*, on the pages following the General Convention registration form. Included on the program is a panel discussion on the subject, "We Are Children of God," based on Romans 8:16 and I John 3:2, which we believe will be of special interest and an encouragement to the Lord's people as they contemplate the important relationship that they have with the Heavenly Father.

All room and meal costs for children 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. In addition, 100% of the cost of those from ages 13 through 17

will be refunded if the young person attends at least 75% of the studies for his or her age group. This subsidy does not cover meals paid in cash at the door.

The convention will provide one shuttle bus leaving the Pittsburgh airport in the early evening for the college on Friday, July 18. There will also be shuttle bus service leaving the college in the morning hours for the Pittsburgh airport on Friday, July 25. There will be a \$10 charge per person each way for this service.

We encourage you to make your plans now to attend and participate in the blessings of this year's convention. ■

	Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast		\$7.00	\$6.00
Lunch		9.00	8.00
Dinner		12.00	11.00
Total, three meals		\$28.00	\$25.00
Lodging (per night)			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$35.00	\$30.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$30.00	\$28.00
**single occ (LLC)		\$65.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$35.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$360*	\$325*
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$230*	\$195*
**single occ (LLC)		\$520*	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$270*	n/a
If no breakfasts, deduct—*\$35 **Air conditioned ***100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group.			

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707

E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com (407) 670-4189

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 18, 2014				
Saturday, 19th				
Sunday, 20th				
Monday, 21st				
Tuesday, 22nd				
Wednesday, 23rd				
Thursday, 24th				
Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals <input type="checkbox"/>				
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts) <input type="checkbox"/>				
Check: <input type="checkbox"/> private bath or <input type="checkbox"/> shared bath				
<input type="checkbox"/> double occupancy <input type="checkbox"/> single occupancy				
<input type="checkbox"/> interested in APTS				
Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)				
Address:				

Saturday, July 19

Chairman: Ernie Kuenzli, *Orlando FL*

- 9:30 Morning Devotions
9:45 Orientation by College
10:00 **Welcome Address**
Robert Gorecki, *New York NY*
10:45 Intermission
11:15 Discourse Tom Gilbert
Southern Wisconsin
12:00 Close of Morning Session
2:00 Discourse Robert Gray
New Brunswick NJ
2:45 Intermission
3:15 Discourse Doug Rawson
San Francisco Bay Area
4:00 Intermission
4:30 Discourse Jim Parkinson
Los Angeles CA
5:15 Close of Afternoon Session
7:00 **Psalm 16:11**
The Path of Life
Ed Byrd, *Pittsburgh PA*
Fullness of Joy
Peter Karavas, *Chicago IL*
Pleasures Forevermore
Brian Montague, *Highland Park NY*
8:15 Songs in the Night

Monday, July 21

Chairman: O. B. Elbert, *Delaware Valley PA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse Homer Montague
Highland Park NY

10:30 Intermission

11:15 Discourse Kent Humphreys
Phoenix AZ

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse George Passios
New York NY

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony Jonathan Benson
New London CT

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Erwin Kalinski
Chicago IL

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Ordering Harvest Prophecies**

 Len Griehs, *Delaware Valley PA*
 David Stein, *Allentown PA*

8:00 Songs in the Night

8:15 Elders' Meeting

Tuesday, July 22

Chairman: Chris Kuenzli, *Milwaukee WI*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 **Baptismal Discourse**

Carlton Chandler
Portland OR

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Immersion Service**

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony Michael Colletti
Orlando FL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 **“Behold, I have told you before.”**

—**Matthew 24:24,25**

Rick Suraci, *New Haven CT*
Dan Wesol, *Albuquerque NM*

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Mark Nemesh
Detroit MI

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

Wednesday, July 23

Chairman: Mark Davis, *Los Angeles CA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Convention Business Meeting

10:45 Short Recess

11:00 Convention Business Continues

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse George Tabac
Chicago IL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony John Trzeciak
Grand Rapids MI

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Robert Goodman
Orlando FL

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **“What is That in Thine Hand?”**
Ed Fay
(1908-1980)

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Thursday, July 24

Chairman: Richard Doctor, *Chicago IL*

- 9:30 Morning Devotions
- 9:45 Praise and Testimony Edmund Blicharz
Orlando FL
- 10:30 Intermission
- 11:00 **Panel Discussion: “We are children of God.”—Romans 8:16; I John 3:2**
Moderator, David Christiansen, *Seattle WA*
Jonathon Freer, *Sacramento CA*
Rafal Niemczyk, *Vancouver BC*
- 12:00 Close of Morning Session
- 2:00 Discourse Michael Balko
Orlando FL
- 2:45 Intermission
- 3:15 Discourse Ken Fernets
The Dawn
- 4:00 Intermission
- 4:30 Discourse Randy Shahan
New York NY
- 5:15 Close of Afternoon Session
- 7:00 **Closing Discourse** Byron Keith
Seattle WA
- 7:45 Melodies of Praise
- 8:30 Love Feast

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below are invited by individual classes, or their services have been arranged by their home classes:

G. Balko		L. Griehs	
Reynoldsburg, OH	May 10	Agawam, MA	May 18
Greenfield, OH	11	Los Angeles, CA	24,25
M. J. Balko		S. Jeuck	
Los Angeles, CA	May 24,25	Chicago, IL	May 24-26
D. Christiansen		B. Keith	
Chicago, IL	May 24-26	Los Angeles, CA	May 24,25
O. B. Elbert		J. Trzeciak	
Detroit, MI	May 3,4	Detroit, MI	May 3,4

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MAY 1—"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister."—Matthew 20:28 (Z. '03-407 Hymn 28)

MAY 8—"And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."—I John 2:25 (Z. '03-175 Hymn 78)

MAY 15—"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."—Habakkuk 3:17,18 (Z. '03-94 Hymn 119A)

MAY 22—"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind."—II Timothy 1:7 (Z. '97-170 Hymn 90)

MAY 29—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."—John 14:27 (Z. '97-306 Hymn 252)

CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

METROPOLITAN DETROIT CONVENTION, May 3,4—Brighton Community Center, 555 Brighton Street, Brighton, MI 48114. Contact J. Kienast. Phone: (810) 714-2240 or E-mail: jenkienast@aol.com

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 4—Holiday Inn Hotel, 620 Wells Road, Orange Park, FL 32073. Phone: (904) 562-7400. Contact C. Hires. Phone: (904) 781-0506 or E-mail: clanky333@gmail.com

AGAWAM CONVENTION, May 18—Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA. Contact A. Alexander. E-mail: aga49@yahoo.com

CHICAGO MEMORIAL DAY CONVENTION, May 24-26—Addison Park District, 120 E. Oak Street, Addison, IL 60101. Contact A. Schneider. Phone: (847) 533-1874 or E-mail: secretary@chicagobible.org

LOS ANGELES MEMORIAL DAY CONVENTION, May 24,25—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. Contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 982-7253 or E-mail: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com. Special room rate at Ramada Inn by contacting N. Nekora. Phone: (310) 454-5248. Deadline for special rate is April 24.

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 8—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Contact R. Eldridge. Phone: (215) 949-0652 or E-mail: rugeo@comcast.net

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 14,15—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Center, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada V4W 3B8. Contact B. Smith. Phone: (604) 576-6070 or E-mail: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 20-22—Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel, 8235 NE Airport Way, Portland, OR 97220. Contact B. Hislop. Phone: (503) 691-2699 or E-mail: bwhislop@aol.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, June 22—GRBS Church Building, 830 North Park Street NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525. Contact J. Houlmont. Phone: (231) 972-4259 or E-mail: ljhoulmont@gmail.com

PRINCE ALBERT CONVENTION, June 28-30—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR 1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK, Canada S6V 5P8. Phone: (306) 764-7692 or E-mail: ahsiwak@inet2000.com

PHOENIX CONVENTION, June 29—Boys and Girls Club of Scottsdale, 8250 E. Rose Lawn, Scottsdale, AZ. Contact C. Humphreys. Phone: (480) 226-9076 or E-mail: christystcastles@gmail.com

VERNON CONVENTION, July 4-6—Schubert Centre, 3505 30th Avenue, Vernon, BC, Canada. Contact T. Fernets. Phone: (250) 558-3055 or E-mail: afernets@shaw.ca

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 19-24—See pp. 53-61, this issue, for convention registration and program.

BIBLE STUDENTS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 6-10—Orle Gnazdo Conference and Recreation Center, Szczyrk, Poland. Contact L. Griehs. Phone: (215) 953-9935 or E-mail: griehs@comcast.net

PHOENIX CONVENTION, August 10—Boys and Girls Club of Scottsdale, 8250 E. Rose Lawn, Scottsdale, AZ. Contact C. Humphreys. Phone: (480) 226-9076 or E-mail: christystcastles@gmail.com

SEATTLE CONVENTION, August 30-September 1—Seabeck Conference Center, 13395 Lagoon Drive NW, Seabeck, WA 98380. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (253) 838-3822 or E-mail: laurie@flinn.us

To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

THAT THE CHURCH IS "THE TEMPLE" OF THE LIVING GOD—peculiarly "his workmanship," that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age—ever since Christ became the world's Redeemer and the chief "corner stone" of this temple, through which, when finished, God's blessings shall come "to all people", and they find access to him.—I Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING of consecrated believers in Christ's atonement for sin progresses, and when the last of these "living stones," "elect and precious," shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD lies in the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, "a ransom for all," and will be "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," "in due time."—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5,6

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH is that she may be like her Lord, "see him as he is," be a "partaker of the divine nature," and share his glory as his joint-heir.—I John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; II Pet. 1:4

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God's witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests in the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6, 20:6

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ's millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35

The Dawn

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