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A Herald of Christ's Presence

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Winning God's Election

“Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”
—II Peter 1:10

EACH YEAR, CITIZENS OF the United States go to the polls in early November to participate in the election of various government officials and to vote on numerous propositions, amendments, and the like, which have been put on the ballot. This year does not include a presidential election; however, hundreds of United States congressional seats, many State governor positions, and thousands of other state and local offices, will be up for vote on Election Day.

Elections of our government officials, including presidential elections, have taken place since the year 1789, two hundred twenty-five years ago. Our opening text points out that God has also been engaged in an “election” of those he has “called” to follow in the footsteps of his son Jesus. This election has been going on for nearly two thousand years, and we believe its completion is close at hand. Thus, our subject, “Winning God’s Election,” should especially commend itself to our attention. The

Bible's testimony is that before the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth God would send forth his angels to gather his "elect." This elect class, the Scriptures further state, will become joint-heirs with his beloved Son, Jesus, in the grand and glorious kingdom designed to bless all the families of the earth.—Matt. 24:31; Rom. 8:17

Becoming co-laborers with our beloved Master in the kingdom will undeniably be the most wonderful privilege ever offered to anyone. It is indeed the greatest, and most important, election to be attained in mankind's history. Thus, although there is no presidential election this year, it is nevertheless beneficial, we believe, to compare and contrast the election of one to the highest office in the land and that of a Christian running for God's election.

When we think of the grand purpose of the election to which we have been called, we should realize what an extraordinary privilege has been given to us. Nothing greater has ever been offered prior to this Gospel Age period, and never will this invitation be repeated again. We have been nominated to help restore Adam's lost dominion, taken from him when he fell from grace so long ago in the Garden of Eden. Since we have received this great and honored invitation, we must "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and . . . run with patience [endurance and constancy] the race that is set before us."—Heb. 12:1

By means of much soberness of mind, we should have ever before our spiritual vision the measures we must take to ensure that ultimately we will become members of this elect class. To "win" our election to the class described requires that we

must be of those spoken of by the Apostle John as “called, and chosen, and faithful.” (Rev. 17:14) With this in view, let us now see what we can learn from the analogy of our title.

CONVENTIONS HELD

When political parties of this country hold national conventions to nominate presidential candidates, they presume that after all the deliberations are over, the podium has been removed from the convention hall, and all the banners and balloons are gone, the delegates will go throughout the lengths and breadths of the land to capitalize on the momentum and excitement which had been generated during the sessions of the convention. It is their desire and hope that all that they planned and enthusiastically discussed together at the convention will assist them to gain the coveted prize of victory in November when the election is held.

Bible Students also come together in conventions. These gatherings are not designed for frivolity, but are serious times of spiritual refreshment. As we drink deeply from the wellsprings of truth provided by God, we are strengthened, fortified, and assisted toward the successful completion of our heavenly race. We find these assemblages very exciting as we rejoice together as members of God’s family, basking in the precious words of truth, and enjoying holy fellowship with one another. As we receive divine instruction we are immersed in spiritual reflection and introspection. In our estimation, such joy exceeds a thousandfold any pleasure men find in being caught up in the selection of a presidential candidate at a convention.

In the case of both Bible Student and political party conventions, these events are only one step toward eventually winning the election for which the candidate is running. It is appropriate, then, that we look at a number of additional areas which pertain to this subject as we compare and contrast the election of an earthly head of government, chosen to serve in that office for four years, and the election of the class which will be associated with Jesus Christ in the work of his kingdom, and who will reign with him forever.

ENTERING THE RACE

For the political aspirant, great fanfare takes place at the time when candidates announce that they are entering the race for the highest office in the country. A press conference is held so that the entire world, particularly our own nation, can hear the declaration from the candidate who is seeking the office of President. From that time until the election occurs, it is necessary to keep the nominee's name in the news in a positive way. The candidate must maintain a high profile so that people will become familiar with his interests and aims. Political ads are run on television and radio in order to bolster his run for office and promote his campaign platform.

The decision of a follower of Christ to enter the spiritual race is quite different. We have been called to run for this high office based on our desire to seek after righteousness. We are dissatisfied with our present state. We feel a lack of ease with our sinful condition, and we turn to the Lord for help. We begin a reverential study of God's Holy Word,

and find that the biblical truths satisfy our hearts as nothing else can do. As the Father continues to draw us, and we likewise draw nigh to him, we then receive God's call to run for the great prize. (John 6:44; James 4:8; I Cor. 1:9) If we accept the call by making a full and unreserved consecration to do God's will, we then testify to our decision to serve God by water immersion, as a demonstration to other consecrated believers that we are now part of the class who seek the heavenly way.

OUR OPPONENTS

The political candidate has many opponents. Everyone and anyone who would stand in the way of his winning the election and attaining the presidency is the opposition. Initially, the focus is on eliminating all the contenders within his own particular party. Once that has been accomplished, energy is devoted to defeating the standard-bearer of the opposing party.

The opponents of the Lord's people—those seeking to win God's election—are clearly defined in the Bible. They are the world, the flesh, and the Adversary. Paul admonishes us, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2) We are encouraged by the same apostle, both by his words and his example, to war against our foe, the flesh. He stated, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."—I Cor. 9:27

The Apostle Peter indicates that the Adversary, Satan, is our most formidable opponent. He tells us, “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” (I Pet. 5:8) Not only is Satan very powerful, he also uses both the world and our fallen flesh as his tools to stumble us at every opportunity. We must never underestimate this wily and crafty foe, for unless we trust in God’s almighty help, he will conquer us, for we are no match for him in our own strength.

As the New Creature battles against the world, the flesh, and the Adversary, we have the major task of keeping our own new will in a position of ascendancy, and our old will dead. We are to mortify the deeds of the flesh. We are to prevent the old man from resurrecting itself and controlling us. In addition, one of the unique features of our running in this race is that we are assisted in making our “calling and election sure” by helping others to do the same thing. The presidential hopeful, on the other hand, has no thought of assisting anyone, but sees as his chief opponents other candidates running for the same office. “Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”—II Pet. 1:10

GAINING THE PEOPLE’S SUPPORT

The presidential candidate travels the length and breadth of our nation in order to gain the support of the people. The organizational plan is that he might visit as many places as he can, to reach and influence as many people as possible in the short period of the electoral race. In the cities and areas where he cannot visit, offices are

established by a network of supporters to persuade the people of that region to vote for their candidate on Election Day.

We, as a “little flock” of Jesus’ followers, do not seek the support of the world in general, but rather to follow his example and walk in his footsteps. We read, “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”—Heb. 13:12,13

We are still in this world, but we are not of the world and its spirit of pride and selfishness. We also recognize that although we must perform our service to God in connection with spiritual things, nevertheless “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” (II Cor. 4:7) Daily we are in contact with things of the world and the influences of our own fallen flesh which would defile us. If we are faithful in carrying out our sacrificial course, resisting these influences, then we will be pleasing to the Heavenly Father.

Our sacrifice and devotion may bring reproach upon us from the world, as it did Jesus and the apostles. Laying down life itself in God’s service will not be appreciated by the world of mankind. Often, people think that ours is a foolish, wasteful life. Yet we can rejoice, knowing that these same reproaches fell upon the Master, in the same manner, and for the same reasons.

TIME PERIOD OF THE RACE

A candidate for the presidency may formally declare his intent every four years within a specified time limit governed by the laws of our nation.

In contrast to this, those entering the Christian racecourse are told that the entire Gospel Age is the “acceptable year” to run for the “mark for the prize of the high calling of God.” (Luke 4:18,19; Phil. 3:14) Individually, of course, we are limited to the span of our own lifetime. It is during this period that we may seek to make our calling and election sure as joint-sacrificers with God’s beloved Son, who first walked this way nearly two thousand years ago.

Once this “election” feature of the Heavenly Father’s plan comes to a conclusion, it will never be repeated. “They that were ready went in with him, . . . and the door was shut.” (Matt. 25:10) This signals the end of any possibility of running for the office of “the high calling of God.” We should, therefore, be spurred on to greater fervency and zeal in the doing of his will, so that we will not lose this marvelous opportunity.—Jer. 8:20

QUALIFICATIONS SPECIFIED

Those aspiring to the presidency have very specific requirements which must be met. They have to be at least thirty-five years of age. They must be a natural-born citizen of our country, and they are required to have been a resident in the United States for at least fourteen years.

Requirements as candidates to the High Calling are also specific, but much different. They are demanding, but not along the lines of age, place of birth, or residency. Footstep followers of Christ have been “redeemed . . . to God by thy [Christ’s] blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” (Rev. 5:9) Note the words of Jesus concerning the qualifications for candidacy: “If

any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16:24-26) These conditions must continue to be met throughout our entire lifetime since this electoral race ends only with the cessation of our last breath.

PROMISED REWARD

The candidate who achieves election to the presidency of the United States receives great honor from men. He will be considered by millions of people as the "leader of the free world." He will be the head of what most consider the most powerful nation on earth. Most likely, he will be sought out from around the globe for his counsel and wisdom, as leaders of all nations seek solutions to the many perplexing problems which beset our planet. In some cases, he will be called upon for military support to calm world crises, such as have occurred so often in recent decades in the Middle East, many of which continue to this very moment.

Unfortunately, however, it has been demonstrated over and over that any new president and his administration, as members of the fallen human race just as their predecessors were, do not have power to improve the world scene to an appreciable degree. Despite their most noble efforts, we know that this "present evil world" order is under the domination of Satan, the "god of this world." (Gal. 1:4; II Cor. 4:4) As a result, without God's help no real, lasting solutions can be found for the

problems which afflict mankind. Therefore, we will find that as long as Satan continues as the ruler of this world, and although every four years a new aspirant will step up and declare that he will solve the still-continuing, ever-increasing problems of mankind, no true and lasting solutions will be forthcoming.

What a contrasting picture is portrayed concerning those who win God's election. We read about the overcoming saints, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." This will be the portion of the candidates who make their election sure. The glorious results of the new government are vividly described by the revelator. He tells about a "new heaven and a new earth," the real solution to world problems, in which "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."—Rev. 20:6; 21:1-4

The wonderful privilege of administering and directing this grand, righteous government in conjunction with our Lord Jesus Christ will be our reward if we are faithful unto death. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10) The "crown of life" will include the wisdom to help guide an administration such as the kingdom of Christ. It will also incorporate the power to enforce the changes necessary to accomplish the goals of the "platform" of God's plan for the "restitution of all things."—Acts 3:21

ASSISTANTS TO THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

A new president has a vice president, a cabinet, and many staff members to assist him in the administration of the government. Individuals with peculiar talents in varied fields are placed in key positions, both to expedite reforms and changes, and also to carry out the day-to-day functions of the presidential office.

In the case of our beloved Head, Jesus, who will be the chief executive in this new order, it will be similar. We read from the words of the psalmist: "The king's daughter [the faithful followers of Jesus in glory] is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions [the Great Company] that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes [Ancient Worthies] in all the earth."—Ps. 45:13-16

The Great Company or "Multitude," the "companions" spoken of by David, as well as the "princes in all the earth," the faithful Ancient Worthies, will not be idle during the thousand-year reign of Christ. They will share a part in the administration of the government which will guide, direct, assist, and lift mankind back to perfection.—Rev. 7:9,15; Heb. 11:1-40

GAINING THE VICTORY

The successful presidential candidate must speak and proclaim those things which sound good to the ear in order to have any hope of gaining victory. He

must convince the widest spectrum of the electorate that there is something in his ideas that will benefit them personally. People residing in those states with the highest representation in the Electoral College must be particularly appealed to, so the candidate can be assured of attaining a majority of those votes. When the ballots are finally cast and counted, the candidate who has earned the required number of Electoral College votes is declared the winner of the election. Quite often, sadly, once elected to office, the new president either no longer feels compelled, or is unable, to actually carry out the promises upon which he based his platform.

Victory for the followers of Christ is gained much differently. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” (Ps. 24:3-5) The development of purity and all the fruits and graces of the Spirit is essential if we are to gain the victory.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE RACE

In the case of a presidential candidate, no harm is done if he should decide for some reason to withdraw after previously declaring his candidacy. In fact, this is a common occurrence. As consecrated followers of Christ, however, we must persevere in the race despite all odds, persecution, hardship, or trial. It is a difficult and narrow pathway we follow. The Apostle Paul confidently avowed: “I am persuaded,

that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Rom. 8:38,39

Knowing this, we are not to “cast . . . away therefore [our] confidence” in his saving power, because “if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Rather, Paul continues, “We are not of them who draw back unto perdition [utter destruction]; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”—Heb. 10:35,38,39

RESPONDING TO ATTACKS

Almost universally, the presidential candidate either directly, through his most notable supporters, or by political ads, responds in kind to attacks. Many times all three methods are employed. The attempt is made to portray his opponent in a still more unfavorable light and vilify him in any way possible. In reality, a candidate will do almost anything he deems necessary to gain the victory, stopping at practically nothing to achieve his goal. Publicly, he might indicate that he would not stoop to the level of his opposition. Secretly, however, he most often gives tacit approval to his advisors, who are adept at developing demeaning advertisements or making disparaging statements, all designed to draw a negative image of his opposition.

As members of the New Creation, we must conduct ourselves exactly the opposite in order to win God’s election. We are to follow the Master’s example. Of him it is said that no “guile was found

in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (I Pet. 2:22,23) As the footstep followers of Jesus, this must be our course. We must “speak evil of no man.” (Tit. 3:2) This is especially true concerning others striving for the same election. Paul says, “There is . . . no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 8:1) All who are running this race are covered with the robe of Christ’s righteousness, which hides defects and blemishes. We never need to respond in kind to any accusation made against us because, the apostle continues, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?”—vss. 33,34

EVALUATION OF PROGRESS IN THE RACE

We must remember that the accomplishment of any earthly goal requires an evaluation at regular intervals of the progress attained thus far. In this way we can modify those plans which need altering, so that our ultimate goal will be attained. How important this is to the Lord’s people. It is necessary for us to take inventory of our status, to determine how well we are succeeding in carrying out the principles of truth and righteousness which we have embraced.

As we begin each day, in order for our activities to have maximum benefit, we need to assess how much spiritual growth is taking place in our lives. The Truth is not a “talking” religion, but a “doing” one. Before we offer our morning prayers to God, meditate on our devotional studies, and discuss the

Truth with others, we must take stock of our hearts and minds to determine the direction we are going and the progress we are making along the way.

We offer a few questions for which we must provide our own answers, to help determine whether we are moving in the right direction, standing still, or possibly experiencing retrogression in our spiritual walk. We trust that this sort of introspection might allow us to bring our course in life more into line with what would be pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

Do I demonstrate an increasing ability to redeem the time, spending a larger percentage of it upon spiritual activities?

Has my faith in God's plan grown stronger as I apply the lessons to my life which God permits?

Am I experiencing greater purity of thought, evidenced by a life of increased holiness?

Have I rid myself of any unnecessary "weights" which I formerly carried?

Is my motivation for doing good solely from a desire to be a faithful, righteous servant of God, rather than for approval from men?

Do I habitually approach the Lord for guidance in the small affairs of life, as well as my large concerns?

Have I grown in patience? Do I make allowances for my brethren's seeming faults?

Is my love for God, the Lord Jesus, the Truth, and the brethren growing stronger, as evidenced by deeper spiritual-mindedness?

Have I taken the initiative to eliminate barriers to full fellowship with any brother or sister with whom I feel a sense of distance?

Am I spending more time in prayer?

If our answers are affirmative, we can feel certain that we are on the right course. Our campaign has a firm and good platform. With faith in God, and our hands in his, we can indeed make our “calling and election sure.” If we continue to trust in him to the end, we will surely have the privilege—with our Lord and Master, Christ Jesus—of inaugurating an everlasting government of peace, health, life, joy, and righteousness. His kingdom will bring blessings to all people, and glory to our great God. To him be praise forever and forever. Amen! ■

*O for a closer walk with God,
To glorify his name,
To let my light shine on the road
That leads men to the Lamb!*

*Lord, give me grace to walk with thee
Through pain, or loss, or shame,
That ev'ry act may henceforth be
An honor to thy name.*

—*Hymns of Dawn*

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

NOVEMBER 6—“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”—Romans 12:1 (Z. '00-170 Hymn 42)

NOVEMBER 13—“Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of.”—Matthew 6:8 (Z. '04-90 Hymn 284)

NOVEMBER 20—“If ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”—II Peter 1:10 (Z. '97-148 Hymn 130)

NOVEMBER 27—“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”—Ephesians 6:18 (Z. '01-80 Hymn 241)

God's Divine Glory Returns

Key Verses: *“The glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.”*
—Ezekiel 43:4,5

Selected Scripture:
Ezekiel 43:1-12

the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face.”—Ezek. 43:2,3

Our Key Verses describe that period when the divine presence and glory would once again be made manifest to the Jewish people, following the severe difficulties that have come upon them. These troubles came about

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

was taken captive into Babylon before the overthrow of Jerusalem. This began a long period of Jewish domination by Gentile nations, starting with Babylon during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. Today's lesson points prophetically to the Millennial reign of Christ Jesus as depicted in a vision which the prophet received. “Behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the

because they had failed to observe God's laws and rejected the opportunity of becoming a holy nation of kings and priests.

The provisions of Messiah's kingdom will not only involve the Jews, but also the entire human family. Here are the prophetic words of Jesus in this regard: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."—Matt. 25:31,32

The outcome of Christ's reign of righteousness will be the eradication of the sinful practices, words, thoughts, and motives of all the willing and obedient members of the human family. This will take place during the "times of restitution" spoken of not only by Ezekiel but also by all "the mouth of all [God's] holy prophets."—Acts 3:20,21

The success of God's plan will be facilitated by the fact that Satan is to be bound throughout Messiah's kingdom. Thus, humanity will be able to contrast the existing righteous environment which then will flourish with the evil conditions that surrounded them previously. At the end of the kingdom, Satan will be allowed to test the people on earth as to whether they will be obedient throughout eternity. All failing this test—incorrigible evil doers, including Satan—then will be destroyed.—Rev. 20:1-3,7-9,14,15

Although Ezekiel's vision is found in the Old Testament, and especially pertains to the Heavenly Father's dealings with Israel, when divine glory returns to that nation, it will ultimately extend to all who will become Israelites indeed. (Zech. 8:23) "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21: 4) What a majestic time that will be! ■

The Altar: A Sign of Hope

Key Verse: “*When these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord GOD.*”
—Ezekiel 43:27

Selected Scripture:
Ezekiel 43:13-21

and an hand breadth; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span.”—Ezek. 43:13

The focus of this study is related to the altar, which is the only piece of furniture listed in the temple described by Ezekiel. Throughout the Bible, altars and their use are mentioned many times. They were utilized as a means of offering sacrifices, sometimes for sin-atonement or

AS NOTED IN OUR PREVIOUS lesson, the book of Ezekiel contains references to Christ’s reign during the Millennium. The overall symbolism in the latter portion of this prophecy deals with a temple arrangement and how it will operate in the future. This depiction would certainly provide a sense of hope and encouragement for the Jewish people that at some future time, Israel would once again be favored by God. This seems to be shown by Ezekiel’s vision of a new temple and his description of certain features of it. “These are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit

some other specific purpose. On other occasions, altars were used to make offerings simply as expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving to God. It is, therefore, likely that the altar herein described in our lesson also is connected with sacrifice.

“He said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord GOD, a young bullock for a sin offering.”—vss. 18,19

In these and succeeding verses there is a description of a dedication ceremony relative to the altar. This is reminiscent of typical arrangements as described in the book of Leviticus, in which the Aaronic priesthood was first consecrated. Then, after the Atonement Day sacrifices were complete, typical of the sacrificial offerings of Christ and his footstep followers during the present age, the people were permitted to bring their offerings, which the priests accepted on their behalf.

It seems likely in the account relative to Ezekiel’s vision of a future temple that the “young bullock for a sin offering” also pictures Christ Jesus, who offered himself to take away the sin of the world caused by Adam’s disobedience. Additionally, there was one goat offered as a sin offering on each of seven successive days. Perhaps that might picture the seven stages of the development of the church. Their offering, included as a part of Christ’s sin-offering during this present antitypical Atonement Day, will pave the way for the benefits of the ransom to be applied during the kingdom.

Our Key Verse contains hope and encouragement for all who will then recognize that, based upon God’s wisdom, justice, love and power, a way will have been found for their recovery and restoration into a covenant relationship with their Creator. ■

A Transforming Stream

Key Verse: *“It shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.”*
—Ezekiel 47:9

Selected Scripture:
Ezekiel 47:1,3-12

of life, of which he is the fountain, was profound. It could not be fully appreciated except by those who would receive the Holy Spirit and its sanctifying influence, which would set them apart from the rest

THERE ARE MANY REFERENCES in the Scriptures which speak prophetically of the restoration of the human family as a result of the “restitution of all things” promised to transpire during the coming kingdom of God. (Acts 3:21) Very often water is used as a symbol to illustrate how such blessings will flow to mankind once the Christ, head and body, is complete in glory.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus had an encounter with a woman of Samaria. After requesting a drink of water from her at a well, he indicated he also had water to offer, and those who would partake of it would never thirst again. (John 4:7-14) Our Lord’s explanation in this account of the water

of the world of mankind.

Another reference to this same symbolic water, which is the focus of today's study, is found in these words: "It shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one LORD, and his name one." (Zech. 14:8,9) It is likely these prophetic words refer to the New Jerusalem, or spiritual phase of God's kingdom under the direction of Christ and the church, which will provide blessings of restitution to all the world of mankind who will obey the laws of that righteous government.

Our Key Verse alludes to the comprehensive nature of this arrangement. It will be an occasion when the "desire of all nations shall come," because it will bring permanent peace and happiness to a world that has been scarred by sin and its attendant evils of sickness, pain and death.—Hag. 2:7

A similar lesson is taught in John's vision recorded in the final chapter of the last book of the Bible. "He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him."—Rev. 22:1-3

Additionally, we are informed that "the Spirit and the bride" will supply refreshment from the water of life to all who willingly accept the invitation: "let him take the water of life freely." (vs. 17) How marvelous it will be when God's will is done "in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10 ■

Transformation Continued

Key Verse: *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*
—Acts 2:38

Selected Scripture:
Ezekiel 47:13-23

are also told in both the Old and New Testament that “in Isaac shall thy seed be called.”—Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:7; Heb. 11:17,18

Nearing the end of his life, Moses spoke to Israel concerning possession of the land, saying, “Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give

THIS LESSON IS INTENDED, in part, to be a continuation of matters considered in the previous week’s study. The scriptural background for our subject also comes from Ezekiel and discusses the land boundaries to be attained by Israel during the kingdom.

In the present conflict between Israel and the Arabs, there have been claims and counterclaims as to who is the rightful owner of the land. In the Bible, we are given a description as to the land rights for Abraham’s seed, and

unto them and to their seed after them.”—Deut. 1:7,8

It will be necessary for both Jew and Gentile to come into harmony with the requirements of the New Covenant in God’s kingdom. All, too, must become “Israelites indeed” in order to attain eternal life at that time. This being the case, the precise manner in which the present strife regarding boundary issues in the Middle East will be resolved in harmony with the foregoing verses may not be fully discerned at this time.

However, the glorious result of divine intervention in the affairs of man to create and maintain peace is clearly foretold in the Scriptures. “He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”—Mic. 4:3,4

In contrast to our background scriptures which describe certain features of the earthly phase of God’s kingdom, the Key Verse addresses the privileges of discipleship during this present Gospel Age. Beginning with those Jews on the Day of Pentecost who repented from sin and accepted Christ as their Savior, consecrated followers of the Lamb have continued to receive the Holy Spirit, begotten as New Creatures in Christ and partakers of a heavenly inheritance. As this priestly class is now being developed, all who have been accepted as members of the body of Christ can attest to the Lord’s strengthening influence in their lives as he waits for the completion of his bride.

May each consecrated believer be spurred on to greater fervency in his sacrificial walk by the glorious promise, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6 ■

Let Zion Rejoice

Key Verse: *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”*
—Isaiah 52:7

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 52:1,2,7-12

PRIOR TO HIS ASCENSION

to the Heavenly Father following his resurrection and various appearances to his disciples, Christ asserted to them that under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, they would have a special commission. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”—Acts 1:8

This privilege of preaching the Gospel has been an essential aspect of the consecrated believer’s responsibility, and has served as a means of strengthening the body of Christ for nearly two thousand years. As we observe conditions which exist in the world today, it is clear that there is a longing by most for peace and a respite from all the troubles faced by mankind. Yet, despite efforts by governments, scientists, and medical practitioners, it is apparent that no real solutions have been found to achieve what human hearts continue to desire.

Our Key Verse asserts that God has a plan which will satisfy all the longings of mankind. It is the privilege of Christ’s footstep followers to reaffirm the good tidings

of great joy that were announced by the angel at the time of the Savior's birth.

An important understanding as to the seeming delay in the accomplishment of God's purpose is the fact that Jesus came to earth at his First Advent for the purpose of providing a ransom price to purchase Adam and his progeny by laying down his perfect human life in sacrifice. This was the first step in the fulfillment of the Father's design. Additionally, a call has been extended throughout this Gospel Age to members of the fallen human race who have receptive hearts and hearing ears. These have been invited to devote their lives to God by following Jesus' example in sacrificing their earthly interests in exchange for a share in the coming kingdom of righteousness and blessings.

These glorious purposes have been foretold in the Scriptures. Peter said to those gathered in Jerusalem following Pentecost: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:19-21

The front cover of *The Dawn* proclaims this journal "A Herald of Christ's Presence." As such, we delight to publish our understanding that God, through the invisible presence of his exalted son, Christ Jesus, is in control of all earth's affairs during this turbulent time. (Ps. 46:1-9) When the body of Christ is completed, God will then intervene, as foretold in scripture, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." (vs. 10) Then there will be great rejoicing as his will is done on earth, and all will join in proclaiming the words of our Key Verse—"Thy God reigneth!" ■

Accepted of God, Whether “Present or Absent”

*“We are confident,
I say, and willing
rather to be absent
from the body, and
to be present with
the Lord.*

*Wherefore we
labour, that,
whether present or
absent, we may be
accepted of him.”*

*—II Corinthians
5:8,9*

THE WORDS OF OUR TEXT

and its surrounding verses express the heart testimony of the Apostle Paul and all those striving to be of the body of Christ. Each of us realizes that our ultimate goal and desire is to be “present” with the Lord and “absent” from this fallen body of flesh. Yet, it is needful for us to abide in this “earthly tabernacle” for a period of time in

order that we be tested and proven fully faithful to our vows of consecration, as well as to develop the necessary character to be part of the sympathetic high priest—the Christ, head and body—in his kingdom.

Although we may not at first have fully realized it, our forerunner, Jesus, also faced this same set of

circumstances during his life on earth, particularly as his ministry drew to a close. He told his disciples, “I go to my Father, and ye [shall] see me no more.” (John 16:10) It was his great desire to return to the presence of his Heavenly Father, with whom he had been for so long in his prehuman existence. He understood, however, the need for his earthly pilgrimage, and the many trials and testings which accompanied it. Making these circumstances even more challenging, perhaps, was the fact that while on earth he had come to greatly love and sympathize with the poor groaning creation which surrounded him.

Jesus also had a special love for his chosen disciples and others who had believed his message and grown very close to him. He had wept when seeing the sorrow of his friends at the death of Lazarus. (John 11:33,35) When gathered together in the upper room with his disciples for the last time, the Apostle John recalled, concerning Jesus, that “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”—chap. 13:1

Later that evening, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Heavenly Father with regard to what at first seemed to be a mixture of sentiments. Yet, it was with clarity that he approached the matter. He said, concerning his earthly ministry, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (John 17:4,5) He knew that it would soon be time for him to be “present” with the Father and “absent” from the flesh. Knowing that this meant he would then be physically apart

from the disciples whom he loved so much, and no longer with them in the flesh, he prayed on their behalf: “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”—vs. 11

IN THIS TABERNACLE, WE GROAN

We, likewise, are Jesus’ disciples, seeking to follow in his footsteps and develop in ourselves the “mind of Christ.” To us, the same conditions as described in our text apply. We must be “accepted” in order to be “present with the Lord” and “absent from the body.” In the first four verses of this chapter, Paul contrasts our body of flesh with our future heavenly body to be received in the resurrection. He speaks of the fleshly body as a “tabernacle” in which we live. In this tabernacle, he says, “We groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” “Not . . . that we would be unclothed,” he adds, “but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”—II Cor. 5:2,4

Paul knew that in his day, and throughout the Gospel Age, for a faithful Christian’s earthly tabernacle to be “dissolved” (vs. 1) meant being “unclothed” or “naked” in the grave, until the resurrection. He would be, to use the language of another passage, a “bare grain” sown in death, there to remain until given his new spiritual body in the first resurrection.—I Cor. 15:37

To be clothed ultimately with a heavenly body has been the hope of Christ’s footstep followers. Paul says, “He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” (II Cor. 5:5) This “earnest of

the Spirit” is God’s pledge of the joy and blessing we, if faithful, will have when, in the first resurrection, our hope is changed into reality.

In several instances, Paul uses the reality of our future reward to illustrate the blessings which in a small way we now enjoy by faith. He says, “As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4) This does not mean that our resurrection has actually taken place, but merely that we should walk as though it had—in “newness of life.” When Jesus was resurrected, all his former environment and experiences were left behind. By faith, we should endeavor to live as completely apart from the world and from all the “old things” of life as possible.—II Cor. 5:17

In Ephesians 1:3, Paul employs this same method of illustrating the new life of the Christian. Here he speaks of our being blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” These “heavenly places” indicate the high position of glory to which Jesus was exalted in his resurrection. (vs. 20) By faith, and in the spirit of our mind, we are now dwelling with him in these heavenly places.

In the context of our opening verses, Paul is employing this same method of illustrating our present heritage as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. As we have seen, he first speaks of our earthly tabernacle in which we “groan,” contrasting it with our “house which is from heaven.” (II Cor. 5:2) Thus he reminds us of the unsatisfactory conditions which we must now endure, and holds before us that great ecstasy of joy which we will experience when in the resurrection

(Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31) we receive our new heavenly bodies.

BEING “PRESENT” WITH THE LORD

The apostle explains that even now, through the “earnest of the Spirit,” we can, by faith, be in the presence of the Lord while actually dwelling in our earthly tabernacles. In verse 9, he says, “We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted.” Here, he is speaking symbolically, using our present sojourn in the flesh and also our glorious future home in heaven, to show that in either condition we can be “present with the Lord” and “absent from the body.” It is in view of both our present condition and our future hope that we thus “labour, that . . . we may be accepted.”

Just as our great future hope is to be in the actual presence of the Lord and to experience the fullness of joy which this will mean, so now, while still on this side of the veil, we find our greatest joy in being present with him in the Spirit, by faith. Through our study of his Word, meditation upon the Truth, fellowship with his people, activity in his service, and through prayer, we can even now be present with our Heavenly Father.

There is a certain amount of time, however, in the life of the follower of Christ, which must be devoted to temporal responsibilities. It is necessary to make a living, and to give a proper amount of time and consideration to those who are near and dear to us according to the flesh. The Scriptures enjoin this upon us, and we accept these privileges with thanksgiving, and endeavor to carry them out to the glory of God.

While we are engaged in these necessary earthly tasks, it is not always possible to be present with the Lord in the sense of directly meditating upon his Word, fellowshiping with his people, or working in his vineyard. However, here again, we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord. It should be our earnest desire to be pleasing to him in everything we do, whether it is carrying out temporal responsibilities, or enjoying more directly the spiritual blessings implied in the thought of being present with him.

THE JOY OF HIS PRESENCE

Great are the joys of faith which we now experience while in this symbolic manner we are “absent from the body” and “present with the Lord.” It is a true delight for the New Creature that we earnestly endeavor to manage every possible moment of the day that is not rightfully devoted to other things in order that we may have more time to spend with our Heavenly Father.

Immediately after using this meaningful illustration of our present privileges as New Creatures, Paul adds, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body.” (vs. 10) This is a reference to our present trial period while in the flesh. It is what we do, and our faithfulness, while still in the fleshly “body” that will determine our fitness for our home in heaven. This is a practical test to which the Lord is putting us. If we are genuinely longing to be actually with him in heavenly glory, where we will experience fullness of joy throughout eternity, it will be natural to seek

every possible opportunity we can to be near him now.

By using this as a guide, we can in large measure determine for ourselves how sincerely we are longing to be in the actual presence of God. If we are content now to be “at home in the body” (vs. 6), and do not experience a sense of great loss when we are not by faith “present with the Lord,” it might well indicate that we are not earnestly setting our affections on things above.

HEAVENLY PROSPECTS

If we prove faithful, and in the first resurrection are exalted to heavenly glory, it will mean being ushered into the actual presence of our Heavenly Father and his son Christ Jesus, our Head. There we will see Paul, John, Peter, James, Jude—in fact, all the apostles, face to face. We will also be united with all our faithful brethren who have lived throughout the age in a reunion indescribable by words.

There, too, we will meet the holy angels, and become acquainted with those who were our “ministering spirits” while we walked in the narrow way. (Heb. 1:14) What a joy that will be, and how wonderful it will be to learn of the many times they miraculously protected us from harm as New Creatures, keeping us from falling.

From beyond the veil we will also have contact with the Ancient Worthies, who will then be “princes in all the earth.” (Ps. 45:16) They will be human beings, while the church will be on the divine plane. Nevertheless, the faithful overcomers who make up the bride of Christ in glory will have

full knowledge of the Ancient Worthies, and will be directing their ministry.

Paul says that we will join “the general assembly and church of the firstborn.” (Heb. 12:23) Indeed, in this same context, he mentions all those with whom it will be our privilege to be associated, saying that we are “come unto” or, in a better translation, “approaching unto” them. We are approaching unto “mount Sion,” he says, “and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect [the Ancient Worthies], And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.”—Heb. 12:22-24

Let us remember the “down payment” which is ours to enjoy even now. We earnestly look forward to cooperation with Abraham, Moses, David, and with all the prophets, in the work of the kingdom. We anticipate the joy of meeting Jesus, the apostles, and other faithful ones portrayed in the New Testament. Even now we can meet them in God’s Holy Word, for it is through the Scriptures that the Spirit gives us the earnest of our future inheritance. The Bible is a place where we can gather, as it were, with not only the Lord, but his faithful servants of both the Old and New Testaments. Every hour we spend in its pages, in addition to learning the Truth, we can be enjoying the inspirational company of those faithful patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, as well as Jesus himself and our guardian angels.

We can stand beside Noah, for example, as he preached righteousness and prepared for the

coming flood. We can enter into the feelings of Abraham and be inspired by his faith. We can go with him on that three days' journey to the land of Moriah, ascend the mountain with him, and watch while he prepares an altar on which to sacrifice his beloved Isaac. We can hear the angel speaking to him not to slay Isaac. Through the Word, we can also enjoy a wonderful association with Moses—at the burning bush, before Pharaoh, leading the Israelites across the Red Sea, and receiving the Law from God. To quote Paul, "What shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets."—Heb. 11:32

In the Bible, we meet these faithful servants of God, these holy ones of old, "who through faith 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," and "turned to flight the armies of the aliens." (vss. 33,34) While through the Word we commune with various ones in this "cloud of witnesses," we can rejoice the more in the thought of their "better resurrection" and future high position in the plan of God as his earthly representatives in Christ's kingdom.—vs. 35; chap. 12:1

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the same manner, we can enjoy the fellowship of Jesus, the apostles, and all those of the Early Church whose names are mentioned in the New Testament. We can spend time with the Master, or

with any of his faithful apostles, or with all of them together. We can stand beside Jesus as he heals the sick and raises the dead. We can hear the gracious words which fell from his lips, the lips of him who spoke as never a man had spoken before, or has spoken since.

We can be with the Master as Mary anointed him with the precious ointment, and can smell the sweet odors that filled the room, betokening the outpouring of her heart devotion to him whom she loved. We can seat ourselves at the table in the “upper room” on that last night before he was crucified. (Luke 22:12) We can then hear him impart those wonderful words of life recorded in John, chapters 13 to 17. We can walk with him to Gethsemane, to the judgment hall, to Pilate, and to Golgotha. We can hear him in his dying moments summon sufficient strength to give a witness of the kingdom to the thief who was dying beside him.

We can read the opening chapters of the Book of Acts, and in our minds take our place with the disciples upon whom the power of God fell on the day of Pentecost, and in some measure experience with them the joys of a reaffirmed faith, and the certain knowledge of what the Lord now wanted them to do. Time fails to mention all the wonderful experiences of the Lord’s people which are recorded in the Book of Acts. Yet, they are all there for us to enter into, and from which to receive inspiration to continue our journey toward the heavenly Canaan. What a wonderful down payment of the future joys of fellowship with Jesus and the Early Church we can now enjoy if we will.

Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude wrote letters to churches and to individuals of their day, and some general epistles. Those letters were written to us also, and bring us much closer to the apostles who wrote them, and to our Lord, as we think of it in this personal way. The next time we feel that we would very much like to receive an encouraging letter from one of our fellow brethren in the narrow way, let us go to the epistles, and read the letters which are there recorded for our admonition and joy.

We also joyfully anticipate meeting those guardian angels who so faithfully serve us from day to day. We enjoy an earnest of this future experience because the Spirit of God has put in the Word many revealing accounts of the services of these angels. If we go with the women to the tomb of Jesus, we will there see the angel that announced to them that "he is risen."—Matt. 28:6

We recall that angels served to release the apostles from prison. We can visit those prisons, place ourselves in the position of those who were incarcerated, and get some idea of what the ministry of the angels must have meant to them. We can turn backward and forward almost anywhere in the Bible, and come in contact with angels and their faithful ministry. Indeed, in this earthly "tabernacle" we can approach unto this "innumerable company of angels."

We can even enjoy sweet fellowship with our Heavenly Father by meeting him in his Word, for we are present with him when we are present with his son Jesus, his holy angels, the apostles, and the faithful brethren of the Early Church. We should not overlook, either, the many direct and personal

messages God has constantly waiting for us in his Word. How reassuringly he talks to us when we meet him there. He tells us: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” and “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”—Heb. 13:5; Exod. 33:14

WITH THE LORD’S PEOPLE

We can also be present with the Lord while still dwelling in our earthly tabernacle through fellowship with others of like precious faith. When we go to any of the meetings, when we attend a study or a testimony meeting, it is more than gathering with our brethren in Christ. We are meeting also with the Lord. Jesus said that where even two or three were gathered in his name he would be present, and in spirit the Heavenly Father is also present.

Through weariness or other difficulties we might be tempted to give up meetings which we could attend with a little greater effort. We might feel that we can afford to miss the fellowship of the brethren, or that they do not particularly need us. However, we would likely not feel this way if we remembered that by failing to attend a meeting we lose an opportunity to be in this special way present with the Lord.

There are many of the Lord’s people who are not situated so they can enjoy the fellowship of their brethren. This may be due to isolation through distance, sickness, or other circumstances over which they have no control. Each saint of God yearns for the fellowship of his brethren, and through them with the Lord, but if circumstances are such that this is frequently or always impossible, he can still

be present with the Heavenly Father through personal communion with him, and through the study of his Word. Every isolated brother or sister in the Truth can testify how wonderfully God has made up the great loss of not being able to meet with his people, when his Word and Spirit have been sought.

THROUGH SERVICE

When we are directly active in the service of the Lord, we are also enjoying the blessedness of being present with him. This is because we are coworkers with him, partners in his glorious plan for the reconciling of the world. It is a mistake to think that we are taking time away from fellowship with the Lord when we are serving in his vineyard.

Paul wrote, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Now, he explained further, he has given this "ministry of reconciliation" to us, and thus we are made "ambassadors for Christ." (II Cor. 5:18-20) Surely Christ was very close to his Heavenly Father when Paul could say that God was "in" him. He is in us in the same manner and for the same purpose.

As co-laborers with the Lord it is essential, through his Word, to acquaint ourselves with his plans and purposes. This brings us into close contact and fellowship with the divine Architect. As we view the grandeur and harmony of his plan, our spiritual vision sees him "high and lifted up," and we rejoice in his glory as we endeavor to tell the whole world the blessed tidings of his kingdom.—Isa. 6:1

It is indeed wonderful that, in this way also, we can be present with the Lord, and have the assurance

that he is present with us. This should make every witness we give a sacred, blessed experience. It should add dignity and importance to every piece of truth literature we distribute. Let us try to realize that whatever we do in the Lord's service, or wherever he asks us to go, we are not alone, for we serve in his presence, and by his grace and strength.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Equally precious is the time we spend in the Lord's presence through meditation and prayer. We all have our regular time for prayer, such as morning and evening. In addition to these, however, it is our privilege to lift our hearts in prayer to God at any time, and under any circumstances. It may be in the factory, on the sidewalk, in the kitchen, or in the office—it matters not where—when, through meditation on God's goodness, peace and joy well up within us. Then and there we can look up to him, and say, Thank you, Lord, for taking me into your confidence and giving me a glimpse of your glory.

Problems may arise and the difficulties of the day might be bearing heavily upon us. The way ahead may not be clear, or some earthborn cloud may have momentarily hidden the Lord's face. Whatever need we may have, we can go to him for help right at the time. His ear is ever open to the cries of our hearts, and his eyes "run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."—II Chron. 16:9

During the times when it is essential to be "at home" in the body, we can, in our hearts, rejoice in the Lord. There are usually moments with all of

us, even during the rush of our everyday work, when thoughts of the Heavenly Father, his Word, his people, and his work, can be enjoyed. Perhaps in a moment of great need a thought expressed in a testimony, or a reassuring text of scripture, will come to mind to help us remember that the Lord is near, that his “angel . . . encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”—Ps. 34:7

Truly the present heritage of the saints is rich and blessed! May an ever deepening realization of our present privilege of being “present with the Lord” give us increasing strength and courage to press forward toward the “fulness of joy” unto which we are now approaching. There we will experience the joy of his actual presence—“pleasures for evermore”—as we dwell in our “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”—Ps. 16:11; II Cor. 5:1 ■

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.

Brother Jerry Andrus, Salem, OR—September 25.

Age, 85

Sister Anietie Hen Basse, Oron, Nigeria—October.

Age, 46

Brother Dan Karutsky, Sturgis, SK, Canada—October 15. Age 95

Brother Guido Apicelli, Groton, CT—October 16.

Age, 85

Brother Henry Gisbrandt, Los Angeles, CA—October 18. Age, 95

The Voice of Thanksgiving

*“I will wash mine
hands in innocency:
so will I compass
thine altar, O
LORD: That I may
publish with
the voice of
thanksgiving, and
tell of all thy
wondrous works.”
—Psalm 26:6,7*

IN THE UNITED STATES, Thursday, November, 27th will be observed as Thanksgiving Day. It is a day in which people are encouraged to remember and give thanks to God for the blessings they have enjoyed at his hands during the year past. Certainly it is appropriate that all mankind recognize God’s goodness, and endeavor in whatever way they can to show their appreciation. It is better to be thankful one day out of the year than not to be thankful at all.

As followers in the footsteps of Jesus, we should, above all others, give thanks to God. Every day with us should call for thanksgiving. We should be glad, too, to have our privilege of giving thanks brought especially to our attention by this national observance of Thanksgiving Day. Together with all the people, we appropriately should give thanks to God for the material blessings of food, raiment,

homes in which to live, and many of the other good things of life. However, if we are of those who have consecrated their lives to walk in the way of sacrifice with Jesus, there are blessings of far greater importance than those which have to do with our temporal needs.

All should be thankful for temporal blessings, for they are the necessities of daily life. How much more thankful we should be for those divine favors which are the necessities of eternal life. One of the most important of these spiritual blessings is the privilege of having a knowledge of God. "This is life eternal," Jesus said, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3) A knowledge of God is possible only by knowing his plan, or, as our opening text states, his "wondrous works," and our part in that plan. To recognize our part in the arrangements of God, and our share in his works, means having a knowledge of the manner in which he is dealing with us. It also requires an appreciation, by faith, of the Heavenly Father's providences in our lives, whether they be bitter or sweet.

KNOWLEDGE OF CREATION

To comprehend and believe what the Scriptures say concerning the creative works of God are essential to knowing him. In those creative works as outlined in Genesis, we see displayed God's mighty power, his infinite wisdom, and his boundless love. In the events which followed creation, we observe God's justice displayed. How truly thankful we should be for this understanding, and that the Lord has given us eyes to discern and hearts to believe

what his Word declares to be the truth concerning creation. How wonderful is the knowledge of a God of perfect order and planning, as compared with the unbelief of many who claim that all life came into existence on its own, and whose only “god” is mere chance.

In the creation of man and God’s provision for him, we see the purpose of the Creator concerning the human race. Man was “made . . . a little lower than the angels,” the Scriptures declare. (Ps. 8:4-8) He was not half human and half angel, nor did he evolve from animals. He was “made,” the Scriptures say very simply. Man was created to live forever in perfection, and was given dominion over the earth and all the animal kingdom. He was not created to live temporarily and to suffer and die with the possibility of enjoying a better existence in some other part of the universe. This knowledge of the truth concerning man’s creation and the divine purpose for him may seem irrelevant, but it is well to remember with thankfulness what it means to us in connection with the complete plan of God, through which his character has been revealed to us. Creation is a fundamental truth which we should ever remember with appreciation.

MAN’S FALL

Beautifully simple and understandable is the truth concerning the fall of man. Having been created perfect, and in the image of God, the Creator properly demanded absolute obedience. Man disobeyed, and the penalty of death was pronounced upon him. Here God’s justice is revealed. Everything that Adam possessed, including life itself, was his

because of God's goodness. The least he could have done was to manifest his appreciation by obeying the Creator's law. Yet, he failed to do even this, hence the withdrawal of his blessings by God was just and right. "Unto dust shalt thou return," God said. (Gen. 3:19) He did not say, "Unto eternal torture shalt thou go." Since man had been created to live, death—the cessation of life that was designed to go on forever—was God's just punishment.

It is a blessed thing to know the truth contained in the Scriptures, but when we recognize that its every detail contributes harmoniously to our acquaintance with God, then our knowledge becomes far broader and more meaningful. God's justice rightly condemned the race to death, but God's love provided a way of release from that penalty—without violating his justice. Because the Creator's love became operative, he began to make promises of future deliverance. The "seed" of the woman was to "bruise" the serpent's head. (Gen. 3:15) The "seed" of Abraham was to bless all the families of the earth. (Gen. 12:3; 28:14) A "King," a "Messiah," a "Prince of Peace," an "Everlasting Father," a "Redeemer," was to be sent. (Isa. 9:6,7; 59:20; Dan. 9:25,26; Zech. 9:9) A promise was given in the apostle's words that there were to be "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21) For all these promises, we should be exceedingly thankful.

THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

The divine provision of restitution wonderfully highlights the scriptural portrait of God. How meaningful is this knowledge in the light of God's

gift of his beloved Son in order that his plan for man's ultimate recovery might be accomplished in harmony with his will. We should be ever thankful for an understanding of the familiar text, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) One of the greatest tragedies that could befall us as followers of Christ would be to lose our appreciation of this "unspeakable gift" of God's love.—II Cor. 9:15

Because the only begotten Son of God was made flesh for the suffering of death, and because he was faithful in laying down his earthly life to redeem the sin-cursed and dying world, God's great project of restitution will indeed be accomplished. Our knowledge of the Truth should give us such a vivid picture of God's interest in the world of mankind that we can truly thrill over the prospect of restitution for the poor groaning creation. Let us not think that we have no interest in restitution. True, we are not expecting earthly restitution for ourselves, if we are striving to follow in our Master's footsteps of sacrifice. However, we are in training to be the dispensers of the blessings of restitution to the world. This is a vital part of God's plan, and nothing that he has planned should ever be considered as commonplace by his children.

THE HIGH CALLING

Jesus should mean much more to us than he does to the world in general. Indeed, he is the world's Redeemer, just as he is our Redeemer. However, he is also our Head, our Advocate, our High Priest, and

our future Bridegroom. As we think upon these blessed realities—and we will fail to be thankful if we do not think upon them—we are reminded of the glorious privilege that is ours of being workers together with God and with Christ in the outworking of the divine plan. Ours is a heavenly calling, and we have the privilege of running “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:14

As we think of the various details of God’s loving plan which make it possible for us, as members of the fallen race, to enjoy such an exalted position as partners with him and with Jesus, our thankfulness should know no bounds. Therefore, nothing should be held back in the expression of our appreciation for his loving-kindness. We should be thankful every day of the year, and everything which we have and “all that is within” us should “bless his holy name.”—Ps. 103:1

The divine grace which makes it possible for us to be counted as acceptable servants of God is great cause for thankfulness. The proper appreciative viewpoint of this is expressed by Paul when he wrote, “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”—II Cor. 5:14,15

RECKONED PERFECT

We should never forget what the merit of Christ’s sacrifice truly means with regard to our relationship with God. Because of this loving provision, God

views us as though we were perfect. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us through faith in his blood, and God accepts our best endeavors as though they were perfect. (Rom. 4:6-8) Upon the basis of this we have the additional privilege of presenting our “bodies a living sacrifice”—no longer dead in trespasses and sins—with the assurance that they are “holy” and therefore “acceptable” to God. This, the apostle explains, is our “reasonable service”—the only reasonable way we can properly express our thankfulness for God’s grace.—Rom. 12:1

Our opening text gives us a similar thought. David, who was a picture of Christ and his footstep followers, said, “I will wash mine hands in innocency.” Jesus was innocent—“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” (Heb. 7:26) The sin of the fallen race did not contaminate him, and he was not responsible for it. Through the merit of his ransom sacrifice the true Christian enjoys the same blessed position of innocency. We should remember, however, that with Jesus, as well as with us, innocency before God is maintained only through faithfulness in the doing of his will. As such, righteousness in God’s sight is never accompanied by a negative, inactive attitude. Rather, it must produce to the greatest extent possible a positive, active obedience to his will. Jesus’ attitude was, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”—Heb. 10:7

The language of our text takes our minds into the court which surrounded the typical Tabernacle, where were located both the brazen altar and the laver of water. The priests washed at the laver, which foreshadowed our “washing of water by the

word.” (Eph. 5:26) It is only as we thus wash that we have a standing of innocency before God and have the privilege of offering sacrifice. Cleansing ourselves by the “water of the word” calls not only for a study of God’s Word, but also the bringing of ourselves into harmony with its righteous requirements. Briefly, these requirements are: recognition of and repentance for sin; faith in the shed blood of the Redeemer; full consecration to do God’s will; and a daily effort to conform our every thought, word and deed to the high standards of righteousness set forth in the Bible.

There is more to the Christian life, however, than to wash our “hands in innocency.” Our text gives us the further thought, saying, “So will I compass thine altar, O LORD.” The cleansing of our lives by the blood of Christ, and our best efforts to bring ourselves into line with the righteous requirements of the Word of God, are the necessary prerequisites to sacrifice, but these are not of themselves sacrifice. Recalling again the typical Tabernacle arrangement, the cleansing was done at the laver, but the sacrifice was made upon the altar.

SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

David associates the altar—symbolic of sacrifice—with the voice of thanksgiving. This indicates that wholehearted thanksgiving calls for sacrifice. Nothing short of this should be considered an adequate response to the Lord in return for all that he has done for us. The Apostle Paul expresses this thought, saying, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” (Heb. 13:15)

Here Paul may have had in mind the statement of Hosea 14:2, where the prophet speaks of rendering to God the “calves of our lips.” In any case, the thought is that true Christian thanksgiving involves sacrifice, as foreshadowed by the typical sacrifices of the Tabernacle.

There are various ways whereby we can offer the sacrifice of praise to God. We can sing hymns of praise which, without doubt, is pleasing to him. Not much in the way of sacrifice is involved, however, in this form of praise. Nevertheless, it is a delight to raise our voices in songs of praise to the giver of every good and perfect gift. We should also express our thanks to God by means of prayer. It is a blessed privilege to pour out our hearts to him in praise and adoration, telling him how much we love and appreciate him. Such incense of praise is a sweet-smelling savor to our Heavenly Father. It is this form of praise that is pictured more particularly by the offering of incense at the golden altar in The Holy of the Tabernacle.

We should remember that the coals of fire that burned the incense at the golden altar was brought by the priest from the brazen altar out in the court. If the fires of sacrifice were not burning on this altar there could be no burning of incense at the golden altar. The one depended upon the other. Although prayers, adorations and praises might be considered the most direct offerings of incense to the Lord, he has so arranged matters that we cannot offer these sincerely and acceptably except as we have his Spirit. If we have his Spirit, at the same time that we offer incense on the golden altar, we will be offering also upon the brazen altar in the

court good works. We will be seeking, “as we have therefore opportunity,” to “do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”—Gal. 6:10

“THY WONDROUS WORKS”

In our text, David explains another important aspect of the “voice of thanksgiving,” saying that we should tell of all God’s wondrous works. To do this means to bear witness to the Truth. David does not mean that we are to tell the Lord about his own works. Sometimes, when offering prayer in meetings of the Lord’s people, we may be inclined to tell the Heavenly Father considerable about his plan, but this is not necessary. God knows all about his own works and does not need us to remind him of these things. At the same time, however, the expression in prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God for his plan and all his wondrous works would always be in order.—Ps. 89:5; 107:8; 150:2

It is to others that we tell of God’s wondrous works. It is by doing this that we “shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Pet. 2:9) It is, indeed, a wonderful privilege to tell others of God’s works. Every feature of his plan is a delight to us, and our joy in the Truth increases as we tell it to others. Even when relating it to one another it becomes more precious, more wonderfully sweet.

There is no better way—in fact there is no other way at all—to live a true life of thanksgiving and praise to God than to lay down our lives in showing forth his praises. When we consider that all we have and all we hope for are ours by God’s grace,

then we will know that our debt of gratitude calls for nothing less than the devoting of our all to him, no longer living unto ourselves, but unto him.

It is this thought that is expressed by David in these well-known words: “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the [sacrificial] death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant, . . . and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds [released me from Adamic condemnation]. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.”—Ps. 116:12-18

Again the psalmist calls upon us to remember the Lord’s goodness with thanksgiving, saying: “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.” (chap. 107:21,22) Here, as elsewhere, David clearly associates thanksgiving with declaring the works of the Lord. This is a very practical arrangement. Had we received special favors from an earthly friend and wanted to show our appreciation by letting others know of his goodness, there would be no better way to do it than to tell of his works—of what he did for us.

The Lord has wonderfully favored us, and has bestowed rich blessings upon us. Grand are the things he has promised yet to do for us—and not

for us only, but also for the whole world. To tell of all these wonderful works of God it is necessary to proclaim the truth of his plan. Thus it is that in appreciation of what God has done for us, and because his love calls forth our love in return, we must become “the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” (Matt. 5:14) Echoing the sentiments of Paul, we should say, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”—I Cor. 9:16

THANKFUL FOR TRIALS

As we count our many blessings and exercise the “voice of thanksgiving,” we should not overlook the trials which the Heavenly Father has permitted to come into our lives. If we had the choosing of our own experiences we would likely avoid the things which annoy, vex and try us. God, in his wisdom, however, sees that we need trials, and in his love permits them. If our wills are wholly resigned to him, then we will be thankful that he is providing all our needs, even trials and testings that are so necessary for the rounding out of our Christian characters.

Some of our trials may be permitted by God to test our faith and confidence in him. Others may be for the purpose of developing our patience and long-suffering. At times they may be in the nature of gentle chastening from the Lord. In any case, they are permitted by our Heavenly Father, who is too wise to err and too loving to be unkind. Even though he may permit severe experiences to come to us, it is done so in love, and our hearts should respond in grateful appreciation for this evidence that he is supplying all our needs for growth and development in Christ.

“In every thing give thanks,” the apostle exhorts. (I Thess. 5:18) None but truth-enlightened, consecrated followers of Christ can do this wholeheartedly. These understand that nothing can come into their lives except that which is for their eternal good. (Rom. 8:28) They know that they are the children of a loving Heavenly Father who is watching over their every interest. They have the assurance that even the minutest affairs of their lives, illustrated by the hairs of their head, are known by him, and directed according to his wisdom and love.—Luke 12:7

If we are truly thankful for the manner in which the Lord is directing our lives, we will not knowingly try to resist or go contrary to his will. Instead, with a prayer in our hearts and a song on our lips, we will continue to pay our vows unto him with thanksgiving, keeping our sacrifice on the altar until it is wholly consumed. “He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold,” said Job. (Job 23:10) With us, too, God allows the fires of affliction to come so that the gold of our character might be refined. How precious is the further thought that the Great Refiner tempers the heat. He will not permit us to be tested above that which we are able to bear. If he sees that the heat is becoming so intense that we are liable to be injured as New Creatures, he provides a way of escape. (I Cor. 10:13) Indeed, God knows and cares for us. (I Pet. 5:7) May this blessed truth become so thoroughly fixed in our minds and hearts that nothing will be able to disturb our inner peace and rest in him and in his promises.

We enjoy this knowledge because “God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light.” Therefore, let us “bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” (Ps. 118:27) Doing so, we will be inspired to respond “with the voice of thanksgiving,” making melody in our hearts unto the Lord. We will seek every opportunity to sound forth God’s praises throughout the land, and to “tell of all [his] wondrous works.” ■

Protect me, LORD God! I run to you for safety, and I have said, “Only you are my Lord! Every good thing I have is a gift from you.”

Your people are wonderful, and they make me happy, but worshipers of other gods will have much sorrow. . . . You, Lord, are all I want! You are my choice, and you keep me safe. You make my life pleasant, and my future is bright.

I praise you, LORD, for being my guide. Even in the darkest night, your teachings fill my mind. I will always look to you, as you stand beside me and protect me from fear. With all my heart, I will celebrate, and I can safely rest.

I am your chosen one. . . . You have shown me the path to life, and you make me glad by being near to me. Sitting at your right side, I will always be joyful.

—Psalm 16:1-11

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SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below are routed through the Pilgrim Department of The Dawn. Their visits are furnished free upon request. Write to: The Dawn Pilgrim Department, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. A visit will be arranged whenever possible.

J. Freer

Atlanta, GA November 2

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

D. Christiansen

New Haven, CT November 2

M. Davis

San Diego, CA
November 28-30

O. B. Elbert

Toronto, ON, Canada
November 16

L. Griehs

Petite Foret, France
November 1-2
Karlsruhe, Germany 9

T. Krupa

San Diego, CA
November 28-30

E. Kuenzli

Atlanta, GA November 23

H. Montague

New Haven, CT November 2

M. Nemesh

Delaware Valley, PA
November 9

T. Ruggirello

San Diego, CA
November 28-30

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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.

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 2—Westwoods Italian-American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact A. Suraci, 171 Johnson Road, Hamden, CT 06518. Phone: (203) 248-3793 or Email: annasuraci@comcast.net

PHOENIX CONVENTION, November 16—Boys and Girls Club of Scottsdale, 8250 E. Rose Lawn, Scottsdale, AZ. Contact C. Humphreys. Phone: (480) 226-9076 or Email: christystcastles@gmail.com

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 28-30—Alpine Community Center, 1830 Alpine Boulevard, Alpine, CA 91901. For accommodations information, contact D. Desmarais, 4333 Serena Avenue, Oceanside, CA 92056. Phone: (760) 945-2233 or Email: desmarais3@cox.net. Other information, contact R. Rice, 13084 Treecrest Street, Poway, CA 92064. Phone: (858) 486-0381 or Email: robinrice@sbcglobal.net

IBADAN CONVENTION, December 6—Contact C. Egbu, #24 Fayemi Street opp. Coca Cola, Mokola, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Phone: 234-803-333-9949 or 234-808-214-6621 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

CHICAGO CONVENTION, December 27,28—Prisco Community Center, 150 W. Illinois Avenue, Aurora, IL 60506. Contact A. Schneider. Phone: (847) 533-1874 or Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, January 25—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91605. Contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 438-1086 or Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 13-15—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact J. Freer, 8012 Vintage Way, Fair Oaks, CA 95628. Phone: (916) 879-4655 or Email: shootingln@aol.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 7-9—Howard Johnson Hotel, 230 West State Road 436, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714. For room reservations, contact the hotel. Phone: (407) 862-4455. Specify “Florida Bible Students” for special rates, which expire on February 25, 2015. Other information, contact J. Wesol. Phone: (407) 921-9248 or Email: JerryWesol@hotmail.com

*Oh how sweet when we mingle
with kindred spirits here,
and tell of Jesus and his love!
When by faith we can see him
and feel his presence near,
and lift our longing souls above.*

*We are pilgrims of Zion,
tho trials we must bear,
which all are blessings in disguise;
Tho the cross may be heavy,
the crown we soon shall wear
in heaven, where pleasures never die.*

*When we walk thru the valley
and shadow of the tomb,
dear Savior, thou wilt be our guide;
And thy smile like a sunbeam
will light beyond the gloom,
and keep thy people at thy side.*

—Poems of the Way