

# The DAWN

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# God's Kingdom Nation

*“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”*  
—*Matthew 21:43*

**THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES**, many nations have claimed to be specially favored by God, or by some higher spiritual power. Oftentimes, this has led rulers and leaders of the world to be autocratic and oppressive, citing divine authority to govern according to dictates which, it is asserted, are approved by God and, thus, must be followed without question by the masses of people.

For many centuries, the notion of the “divine right of kings” claimed that a monarch is subject to no earthly authority, nor to the will of the people, but had the right to rule directly from God. This concept fell from its high pedestal with the events surrounding World War I. However, today, more than a century later, many nations still claim a kind of religious authority by which they govern their citizens, and by which they attempt to gain influence and power among surrounding nations and the entire world.

The belief in a higher spiritual authority as the source of influence in governing earth's affairs is not, strictly speaking, without scriptural basis. The Bible, in fact, records various times and events during the course of man's history here on earth in which God's influence and guidance over certain nations and rulers was manifest. Furthermore, the Scriptures lay out for us God's plan to develop, as our title suggests, a "kingdom nation," which will bring blessings of life, peace, and security which no previous earthly government has ever come close to achieving. It is this grand purpose of God, to be executed in perfect righteousness, which our present subject addresses.

## **ISRAEL STUMBLER**

The words of our opening text were addressed by Jesus to the religious leaders of Israel. The Master had just given the parable of the householder, who "planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country." Later, when it came time to gather fruit from the vineyard, the householder sent his servants to the husbandmen, "that they might receive the fruits of it." However, the husbandmen took the servants, "and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." Then the householder sent other servants, but they were treated the same way. Wishing to give the husbandmen whom he had appointed a further opportunity to show good faith, the householder then sent his son, saying, "They will reverence my son," but when they saw him, the husbandmen said, "This is the heir;

come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.”—Matt. 21:33-38

After relating the parable, Jesus asked his hearers what they thought the householder would do to the husbandmen who were so unfaithful to the trust he had bestowed upon them. They replied that he would “miserably destroy those wicked men,” and then would entrust his vineyard to others who would “render him the fruits in their seasons.” Jesus then asked them if they had read the scripture, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.”—vss. 40-42

Immediately following this is our opening text, beginning with the word “therefore,” by which Jesus hearkens back to the parable and gives its lesson. The nation of Israel, heeding the example of its religious rulers, was taking the same position as the unfaithful husbandmen of the parable, and was likewise rejecting the “stone” which was to become the “head,” or cornerstone, of God’s kingdom. Therefore, the opportunity to be part of that arrangement was to be taken away and “given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

The foregoing parable and Jesus’ explanation indicate that for the nation of Israel much was at stake in God’s dealings with them. Our text reveals that it was nothing less than the opportunity of participating with Jesus in the rulership of the long-promised Messianic kingdom. Many centuries earlier God had declared that if the Israelites obeyed his words and were faithful to his covenant, they would be a “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” (Exod. 19:5,6) All of God’s dealings with them were designed to help them qualify for this exalted destiny.

Israel's final test came when Jesus presented himself to the nation as their Messiah and King. In order that they might be prepared to receive him, John the Baptist was sent as a forerunner, announcing, "The royal majesty of the heavens has approached." (Matt. 3:2, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) Even with this help the nation failed in its final test, although a few individuals qualified. John explains this, saying of Jesus, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."—John 1:11,12

The majority, however, stumbled over the "stone," just as the prophet had foretold. (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14) It was this text which Jesus quoted and applied to himself, then explaining that whoever "shall fall on this stone shall be broken," adding that the stone would "grind him to powder." (Matt. 21:44) This is highly symbolic language, but it indicates that those who stumbled over Jesus, and in turn felt the weight of his rejection of them, being unworthy to be joint-heirs with him in the kingdom, would have their exalted hopes crushed. Verse 45 shows that the religious leaders knew that Jesus was speaking of them, that they were the ones who were to be replaced, the kingdom being taken from them, and given to others. Inasmuch as the people followed their leadership, the whole nation of Israel came under the decree, "Your house is left unto you desolate."—Matt. 23:38

While these historical facts concerning the nation of Israel are significant in relationship to God's plan, even more vital to us is a proper recognition of other important factors leading up to their rejection from

the chief place in the kingdom which was offered to them. Their final failure was but a continuance of those object lessons Paul had in mind, which, he says, were “written for our admonition.” —I Cor. 10:11

## **GOD’S NATION**

In our text the Greek word translated “nation” means a race, or tribe. The Jewish race comes from the family of Abraham, and in the Old Testament many other families are spoken of as nations. The Hittites, Amorites, Jebusites, and many other groups likewise had family origins. Jesus’ reference to a nation might well be narrowed in meaning to the thought of a family, specifically a family of God, or as the Apostle Paul states, a “household of faith.” —Gal. 6:10

This family is made up of the children, or sons of God. That the hope of the kingdom has been given to these is clearly shown by Paul. He wrote that God’s Holy Spirit “beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:16,17

The Apostle Peter also identifies the nation to whom the kingdom was given when taken away from those to whom it was first offered. He, in fact, quotes the same prophecy that Jesus had referred to concerning the rejected stone. Peter then adds, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous

light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God.”—I Pet. 2:7-10

The reference here is to Gentile believers—not all Gentiles, but those who accept Christ and dedicate their lives to following in his footsteps. However, the opportunity is not limited to Gentiles, for individual Israelites may also qualify. Indeed, the first thus to receive this privilege were those Jews who accepted Christ, and to whom he gave the “power to become the sons of God.”

This nation is new in the sense that it is a faith seed, or family, made up of “new creatures” in Christ Jesus. (II Cor. 5:17) It matters not what their nationality may have been. Paul stresses, “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:27-29

The natural descendants of Abraham took for granted that they were the promised seed of Abraham, solely through whom all nations would be blessed. Such would have been the case had they qualified under the terms which God laid down. However, due to their lack of faith and obedience, this great privilege was taken from them, and given to a new “family.” These are all begotten by God’s Spirit and bound together in one family by the cords of faith and love. These, irrespective of nationality, position or gender, are now the real seed of promise, the nation to whom the kingdom has been given.

## **GOD'S MERCY**

We thank the Heavenly Father for his assurance that the rejection of Israel as the heirs of the heavenly kingdom promises does not imply their loss of opportunity for salvation through Christ Jesus. Paul speaks of the future time when the “fulness of the Gentiles be come in”—that is, when the full number designed by God to be associated with Jesus as joint-heirs in his kingdom have been called and fully prepared to reign with Christ. Then, he says, “all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.” (Rom. 11:25-27) Likewise, all Gentiles will be given the opportunity for salvation, as spoken of by the Apostle James, “That the residue [remainder] of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles.”—Acts 15:17

Israel sought to be the kingdom nation, the seed of promise, hence the avenue of blessing to all the families of the earth. The promises of God justified the nation's hopes along this line. However, in addition to these promises being conditional upon faith and obedience, they contained implications with respect to God's plan of salvation which the Israelites did not perceive—namely, that the seed of promise was to be of a spiritual kind rather than earthly.

## **A “MYSTERY”**

It is this feature of God's plan that is referred to by Paul as a “mystery,” which he further describes as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) Another way of expressing this is found in the apostle's words that “through our Lord Jesus Christ” we have “access

by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1,2) The Apostle Peter words the same thought a little differently, saying that to us are given “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.” (II Pet. 1:4) These promises belong to the sons of God, the spiritual family, or nation, to which the kingdom is given.

The Apostle John also testified, saying, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (I John 3:2) This Gospel Age family of God is to be like Christ, who, when he was raised from the dead, was highly exalted above “all principality, and power,” and was made the “express image” of the Heavenly Father.—Eph. 1:20,21; Heb. 1:1-3

As God resurrected Jesus from the dead and “gave him glory,” so those to whom he gives power, or authority, to become sons of God, will likewise be exalted, if faithful unto death. Those of the Jewish nation who accepted Jesus and espoused the Messianic cause were the first to be identified with this new and “holy nation.” Throughout the entire age, the call of the Gospel has continued to go out to Jews and Gentiles alike. The invitation is to accept Christ as one’s personal Redeemer and Savior, deny self, and follow him into sacrificial death.—I Pet. 1:21; Matt. 16:24; Rom. 6:3-5; 10:9

This invitation is described by Paul as the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:14) It is a “high” calling because those who are faithful to its terms, even unto death, will receive the reward of joint-heirship with Jesus in his kingdom, to live

and reign with him a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4,6) Throughout past ages this aspect of God's plan remained a mystery, and little did the posterity of Abraham realize that Gentiles would become fellow heirs of these glorious promises. This also remained a mystery until God's due time came for revealing it.

What a privilege it is now to be "partakers of the heavenly calling." (Heb. 3:1) The conditions attached to this calling are exacting, however, and only through faithfulness even unto death may we hope to attain that for which we have been invited. Paul sounds a timely warning of this by reminding us, using metaphorical language, that since many of the natural Jewish "branches" in the olive tree of the Abrahamic promises were "broken off" because of unbelief, those Gentiles who have been "grafted in" can also be broken off, and for the same reason. He says, therefore, "Be not highminded, but fear."—Rom. 11:17-20

## **BRINGING FORTH FRUIT**

In our text Jesus said the kingdom would be given to a nation "bringing forth the fruits thereof." These are the "fruits of righteousness," which provide the outward evidences of faith in the promises of God, and of humble and loyal obedience to all the terms associated with them. As we have seen, God's new nation, or race, is made up of those who, during the Gospel Age, become his "sons," his children, and Paul emphasizes that one of the conditions of sonship is that "we suffer with him."—Rom. 8:14,16,17

Suffering with Christ implies faithfulness in representing him as his ambassadors. Simply to believe in Jesus is not enough. To rejoice in all that he means to us is not sufficient. He has commissioned

his followers to be the “light of the world.” If we let our light shine we will find, as Jesus did, that people often prefer “darkness rather than light,” and thus will oppose the Word of truth and those who proclaim it.—Matt. 5:14-16; John 3:19-21

When the Apostle John wrote, “Now are we the sons of God,” he added, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (I John 3:2,3) The purity here mentioned by John is God’s own standard of righteousness, his will for his consecrated people. It means unqualified devotion to every aspect of God’s principles of righteousness set before us in the perfect example of his dear Son.

Christ’s example is summed up in the quality of unselfish and self-sacrificing love, which he demonstrated perfectly. If we root out selfishness from our hearts, and seek to be filled and controlled by the principle of divine love, we will find ourselves in full harmony with what Jesus referred to as “these sayings of mine” contained in his sermon on the mount. (Matt. 7:24) We will love our brethren, neighbors and even enemies. We will bless those who curse us, and pray for those who persecute us. As the Heavenly Father bestows his favors upon the just and the unjust, causing the sun to shine and the rain to fall upon all alike, so we will be impartial in our treatment of all, and thus be “perfect,” or complete, just as our Father in heaven is perfect.—Matt. 5:44-48

### **“IF YE DO THESE THINGS”**

In Peter’s second epistle he again reminds us of the conditions attached to the heavenly promises of God. He says, in the third chapter, that we look for

a “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (vs. 13) Indeed, the promises of God give us authority to hope that, if faithful, we will be a part of that “new heavens,” the spiritual phase of the Messianic kingdom nation which will rule for the blessing of all mankind. In view of this exalted hope, Peter asks, “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [conduct] and godliness?”—vs. 11

The “manner of persons” we ought to be is outlined in chapter one of the same epistle. After reminding us of the precious promises of the divine nature, Peter says that we should give “all diligence,” to add to our faith: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, which is love. (vss. 5-7) These are the fruits for which the Lord is looking in the lives of all who are seeking to be part of the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Peter confirms this, saying, “If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”—vss. 8,9

Let us be sure that we are not one who “lacketh these things,” but that in humility and in full surrender to the divine will, we allow the Spirit of God to work in us to bring forth these fruits of righteousness, the fruits of the kingdom. We have been called and chosen for the high position of joint heirship with Christ. Peter speaks of it as our “calling and election.” (II Pet. 1:10) However, those who will actually be partakers of the divine nature and the glory of God, who will sit on the throne with Christ,

and who will be with him to reign a thousand years, must not only be “called, and chosen,” but they must also be “faithful.”—Rev. 17:14

This being “faithful unto death” is what Peter describes as making our “calling and election” sure and steadfast. (Rev. 2:10) He admonishes us to give diligence in order to do this. No halfhearted followers of the Master will be successful in making their calling and election sure.

Rather, we must be like Paul, and say with enthusiasm, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:13,14

Peter says that if we give all diligence in doing “these things” we “shall never fall.” What a glorious assurance! God wants us to make our calling and election sure. It is his good pleasure to promise that “an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (II Pet. 1:10,11) With this in view, our Heavenly Father will supply guidance in our struggle against the devil and his wiles, give us encouragement when we might become discouraged, grant us wisdom to know his will, and provide the needed help to do it.

Surely the prospect for those to whom the Lord has given the kingdom is a glorious one. The “holy nation” to which it is given will soon be completed. Let us be diligent to carry out the terms of our discipleship, so that we might serve in that nation as kings and priests to reign with Christ for the blessing of “all the kindreds of the earth.”—Gen. 22:18; 26:4; Acts 3:25 ■

# A More Excellent Ministry

**Key Verse:** “*Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*”  
—**Hebrews 8:6**

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Hebrews 8:1-12**

subsequently its Temple.—Exod. 28:1-3

Speaking of Christ as a greater high priest, Paul says, “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” (Heb. 8:1,2) The various religious ordinances and services performed by the Jewish priesthood were to “serve unto the example and shadow” of the higher reality to be manifested on behalf of all the families of the earth.—vs. 5

Our Key Verse affirms that now in the Gospel Age, a

**IN THIS LESSON, REITERATED** from the preceding chapter, we note that Jesus Christ after his resurrection is a high priest according to the order of Melchisedec and occupies a position of authority in heaven. Accordingly, his ministry is superior to the Levitical priesthood which existed on earth and began with Aaron, the older brother of Moses. Aaron’s descendants served as priests who ministered in Israel’s Tabernacle and sub-

change from previous conditions has occurred. As Moses was the mediator of Israel's Law Covenant, so Christ Jesus is the mediator of a New Covenant which has been legislated with promises of better things to be accomplished during God's kingdom.

As a further expansion on this subject, we are informed that the necessity for this second covenant lay in the fact that the first one did not have a perfect mediator who could compensate for the weakness and inability of the Israelites to keep it. (vss. 7,8) Moses was a faithful servant of God, but he was only able to offer imperfect sacrifices which could not take away the sins of the people.—Heb. 11:24-28,39,40

Nevertheless, after the close of the Gospel Age, a new arrangement will be instituted as a result of Christ's having laid down his life as a ransom for all. There will be an opportunity for the nation of Israel and the entire human family to receive the blessings promised by God through the promised spiritual seed of Abraham.—I Tim. 2:5,6; Gal. 3:16,22,27-29

God's requirements for his intelligent beings are very exacting. Through his use of covenants, past, present and future, the consequences for engaging in sinful behavior are dire. We are very grateful that despite human frailties, through the faithful sacrifice of Christ Jesus, a means of reconciliation has been found for all who desire to be restored to divine favor. We can be encouraged that in addition to being just, the Heavenly Father is also merciful. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."—Heb. 8:12

As we desire to share in the process of helping the human family to attain perfect life during the glorious kingdom of Christ, let us be faithful to our vows of consecration now as part of our preparation for such an exalted position. "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."—Gal. 3:9 ■

# The Son of God Dies

**Key Verse:** *“When the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the spirit, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.”*  
—Mark 15:39

**Selected Scripture:**  
Mark 15:33-39

## **THE CLOSING SCENES OF**

Christ’s earthly ministry depict his proven faithfulness under the most extreme series of tests. He traveled to Gethsemane with his disciples and admonished Peter, James and John to be watchful while he went further into the garden to enter into personal communion with the Father, but on several occasions he found them asleep during his hour of need.—Mark 14:34-41

Subsequently, Judas led a crowd, including Roman soldiers, into the garden and kissed the Lord so that he could be identified and arrested. That kiss was a sad symbol of betrayal. Jesus was then taken to Annas for questioning after which he was bound and sent to his son-in-law Caiaphas, the high priest.—John 18:12-16; 19-24

False accusations were made against Jesus, but in fulfillment of prophecy, he did not open his mouth to refute them. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” (Isa. 53:7) Under direct questioning, he affirmed he was the Christ, after which he was accused of blasphemy, condemned to death, spat upon and then struck by the temple guard. On the

morning of his crucifixion, there was a meeting of the Sanhedrin. From various accounts, it seems that Jesus appeared before Pilate, then Herod, and then Pilate a second time.—John 18:28-38; Luke 23:5-11

“Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.”—Mark 15:2-5

It was customary at this season for amnesty to be granted by the Romans to one of the Jewish prisoners. Pilate inquired whether the crowd which had assembled desired to have Jesus released, but under the persuasion of the chief priests, they asked for Barabbas, a robber, to be set free and the Lord crucified. (John 18:39,40) Pilate yielded to their expressed wishes, had Jesus beaten, mocked, attired in a purple robe and while wearing a crown of thorns he was saluted as the King of the Jews. Ultimately, he had a laborious walk to Golgotha where he was nailed to a cross and placed between two thieves who also had been condemned to death.—Mark 15:15-28

The agony of Jesus' experience on the cross for six hours was punctuated by his dying words, “It is finished.” (John 19:30) This utterance attested to the faithful completion of his mission by laying down his life to redeem the condemned race of Adam. A visible manifestation as to the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice seems to be illustrated in the veil of the Temple being rent from top to bottom at that time, as a new and living way was being opened for dying sinners to obtain life.—Mark 15:33-38

Our Key Verse affirms the centurion's words which reflect the unmistakable fact that Christ's enemies refused to acknowledge previously. Truly he was the Son of God!



# The Shedding of Blood

**Key Verse:** *“Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”*  
—*Hebrews 9:22*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Hebrews 9:11-22*

**IT IS WELL TO REMEMBER** that when the New Testament was written during the first century after the death of Christ, it was a period of transition. Jewish beliefs still were strongly influenced by the rites and ceremonies associated with the Law Covenant in which Moses served as its mediator. “For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat.”—*Heb. 9:2-5*

The sacrifices associated with the Tabernacle arrangement on the Day of Atonement were of a temporary nature and had to be repeated each year because the blood of bulls and goats could not actually remove sin. (vss. 6-14) There was a purpose for these ceremonies, however, since the old Law covenant was to prepare the Jews to accept Christ’s sacrifice for sin. (Gal. 3:23,24) This was the means whereby they could be justified and enter into a new and living way, rather than remaining

under condemnation because of their inability to keep the Law.—Rom. 8:1-4

As the Jews gained further understanding about the meaning of and necessity for the atonement sacrifices to typically cleanse them from their sins, God explained why eating blood was prohibited. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”—Lev. 17:11

As a typical illustration, the old covenant was formally instituted by sprinkling with blood the book of the Law, as well as all the people, following their departure from Egyptian bondage. In antitype, the blood of sprinkling represents the merit of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice that has been imputed on behalf of the church, thereby providing each consecrated believer justification by faith in Christ and the cleansing power of his blood.—Heb. 9:18-21; Rom. 3:24-26

Our Key Verse emphasizes that redemption from the curse of sin and death can only be obtained through an equivalent sacrifice. In this instance, Adam’s forfeited perfect life was atoned for by Christ’s meritorious death as a ransom, or corresponding price.—Rom. 5:18,19; I Tim. 2:5,6

Under Moses’ leadership, the general population of Jews received their deliverance after crossing the Red Sea. Similarly, the human family at large will be given an opportunity for deliverance from sin and death under the reign of Christ and his church during the kingdom of righteousness when Satan is bound.—Rev. 20:1-4,6

What a magnificent privilege has been provided for the church, the antitypical firstborn, to assist our Head, Jesus Christ in blessing all the families of the earth and to end this present night of sin and death. Truly, we can “sing unto the LORD,” as we anticipate the joy which will come in the morning of the kingdom!—Heb. 12:22-24; Gen. 22:18; Ps. 30:4,5

# Rooted in Christ

**Key Verses:** *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”*  
—Colossians 2:6,7

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Colossians 2:1-15*  
in Christ.”—vss. 4,5

Our Key Verses emphasize that Christian character will flourish through obedience to the Word of God, assimilating his precious promises and being more and more filled with the Holy Spirit. By carefully scrutinizing the teachings set forth by human instrumentalities, followers of Christ would avoid the corrupting influence of the false doctrines and human philosophies which were being promulgated at the time.

Throughout his ministry Paul reminded the brethren that consecrated believers whose faith was in the efficacy of our Lord’s ransom sacrifice had no need of anything

**ALTHOUGH IT IS UNLIKELY** that Paul ever visited the church at Colossae, which was probably established by Epaphras, he desired the brethren to have their hearts united in love and to appreciate that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge stem from God and Christ alone. (Col. 1:4,7; 2:1-3) “And this I say,” Paul continues, “lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith

additional to have a standing as children of God. For example, circumcision of the heart was effected by baptism into Christ's death. (vss. 10-14) Many of the Colossian believers were Gentiles who had not been physically circumcised, nor were they required to do so. Under the influence of certain Judaizers there was an attempt to enforce the rite of circumcision upon Gentile converts to Christianity. This was one of the matters previously discussed at the Jerusalem conference.—Acts 15:1-6

“When there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”—vss. 7-10

Under divine guidance, the matter was resolved. A message of encouragement was sent to believers who had never been under the bondage of the Mosaic Law with a recommendation to maintain the spirit of unity in the bonds of peace.—vss. 23-32

During these last days in which perilous times have come, we should use the Scriptures to “prove all things,” and “hold fast that which is good.” (I Thess. 5:21) The infallible Word of God should be our guide as opposed to human speculations. Our Lord's words are equally applicable now as they were during his earthly ministry. “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is empty, because they teach human rules as doctrines.” (Matt.15:8,9, *International Standard Version*) Heeding this counsel will help to guard us from error and keep us rooted in Christ Jesus. ■

# Right Attitudes

**Key Verse:** *“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.”*  
—*Matthew 5:12*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Matthew 5:1-12*

saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. 5:1-3

It is clear from the foregoing verses that Jesus was not addressing the public at large. Instead, he was speaking to his followers in order to set forth those attributes of character that needed to be manifested by those who would be acceptable to God as participants with Christ in his kingdom. Poverty of spirit relates to humility. This quality was exhibited by the Master in that he willingly submitted to the doing of his Father’s will in every particular. As his followers we must exhibit this same characteristic.

“They that mourn” must have compassion towards others who are experiencing grief. There are many opportunities to enter into the sorrows of our brethren as well as mankind and to offer comfort.—vs. 4

Meekness is to be gentle or approachable. (vs. 5) This trait also implies a willingness to suffer for righteousness rather than to exhibit a retaliatory spirit. “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto

**THE BEATITUDES OR** blessings constitute the initial portion of what is commonly known as Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. “Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them,

all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”  
—II Tim. 2:24,25

We must have a sincere “hunger and thirst” for righteousness. (Matt. 5:6) As fallen individuals we are unable to perform perfectly in the flesh. However, we are to strive against our inherited weaknesses and fill our minds with thoughts that are sublime. (Phil. 4:8) As followers of Christ, his righteousness is imputed to us to make up for our many deficiencies. We are clothed with the “garments of salvation,” and are covered with the “robe of righteousness.”—Isa. 61:10

As part of our character transformation, believers are expected to develop a merciful attitude. We are deeply grateful that the Heavenly Father forgives our trespasses based upon a sincere repentance for misdeeds, and we must do likewise towards others who trespass against us. If we internalize this principle, it will help prepare us to become a part of that sympathetic high priest class in dealing with mankind during God’s kingdom. Heart purity also is needed by us and requires a vigorous warfare now against our unintentional weaknesses and blemishes.—Matt. 5:7,8

We have God’s blessing by learning to promote peace through our actions, and by words aptly spoken in season. (vs. 9) Appreciating the privilege of joyfully enduring persecution falsely is also evidence of our loyalty to godly principles and merits divine approval.—Matt. 5:9-11; I Pet. 4:14-16

Our Key Verse again reminds us of our great reward for faithfulness—“the kingdom of heaven.” Surely, it behooves us daily to serve the Father with every fiber of our being in all particulars. What joy there will be in both heaven and earth when all will realize what a marvelous plan of salvation our God has authored for all of his intelligent creatures. ■

# The One True and Living God

**“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.”**  
—*Deuteronomy 6:4*

**NEARLY TWENTY CENTU-**ries ago the Apostle Paul wrote, “There is no God but One. For even if there are so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as there are, indeed, a vast number of gods and lords—yet for us there is but one God, the Father, who is the source of all things and the goal of our living, and but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom everything was made and through whom we live.” (I Cor. 8:4-6, *Williams New Testament*) The situation today is still the same. Among the world’s religions, there are many gods and lords worshipped by the people, and most professed Christians worship three gods, while claiming that the three are somehow one.

It is clear from the Old Testament that the ancient servants of God, beginning with Abel, believed that there was but one true and living God—the Creator of the universe, and the sustainer of all life. The Creator informed Moses and the ancient Israelites that his name was “Jehovah,” meaning the self-existing, or eternal one. (Exod. 6:3) Moses testified

that the almighty Heavenly Father is “the eternal God.”—Deut. 33:27

In Isaiah 42:8, God declares, “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” In the *King James Version* of the Old Testament, there are many places where the name “Jehovah” appears in the Hebrew manuscripts but is not so rendered in the English text. Rather, the name “LORD,” in capital letters, is the translated name. This is the case in the verse just quoted. To know this is a valuable help to all careful students of the Bible, for thus we know that the English word LORD is translated from the word Jehovah in the Hebrew, and, therefore, both refer to the same being—the one true God.

In the foregoing text, God explains that he will not give his glory to another. This is verified throughout the Scriptures. For example, at the time of his resurrection Jesus was exalted to a very high position of honor and glory, to the “right hand of the throne of God.” However, Paul explains, this was “to the glory of God the Father.” (Heb. 12:2; Phil. 2:9-11) Explaining further, Paul wrote, “The scripture says, God put all things under his feet. It is clear, of course, that the words ‘all things’ do not include God himself, who puts all things under Christ.”—I Cor. 15:27, *Good News Bible*

God, the Creator, does not hesitate to bestow glory and honor upon those who prove worthy of it. Indeed, Adam was crowned with earthly glory and honor when created, but then failed to prove worthy of maintaining this high position of favor in the Heavenly Father’s family of those created in his

image. God has similarly bestowed honor upon his holy angels, and has anointed his beloved Son Jesus “with the oil of gladness” above his “fellows.”—Ps. 8:5; Heb. 1:9

Our Heavenly Father has additionally promised to exalt the faithful footstep followers of Jesus to a high position of honor and glory in the Messianic kingdom. Jesus confirmed this in a promise to these in which he said, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”—Rev. 3:21

While the Creator is unselfish in bestowing honor and glory upon his people, he does not share his own glory with anyone, not even with the highly exalted and glorified Jesus. In the text quoted earlier, God declares, “My glory will I not give to another.” Our finite minds, however, can grasp only in a very limited manner all that is implied by his expression, “My glory.” Indeed, we cannot understand it at all with regard to his appearance and nature, for “no man hath seen God at any time.”—I John 4:12

The Bible speaks of the “eyes of the LORD,” and tells us that “his ears are open” to our cry. (Ps. 34:15) It speaks of his face, arms, hands and feet. However, the use of these expressions in association with God must be understood as symbolic, not literal. They do not imply that the great Creator of the universe is similar in bodily form and appearance to his human creatures. They signify, rather, that, as our maker, he knows everything about us, and can relate to every feature of the human body, mind, and character through his infinite power and wisdom.

We are not to suppose that God's knowledge and ability are limited to matters concerning his own servants on earth. He knows what is happening throughout the whole world and is able to overrule the course of events according to his will and purpose. Because this is true, we may be assured that the evil in the world is not by his planning and instigation. Rather, he has permitted it, because his wisdom knows that it will result in rich blessings to all those who ultimately will be properly educated by it.

### **GOD'S GLORIOUS CHARACTER**

Though we are not enlightened as to God's bodily form we can know about the glory of his character. This is revealed to us through his Word and the plan of salvation contained in its pages. The central attributes of the Creator's character which combine and harmonize in all his eternal purposes and plans, and which form his glory, are his wisdom, justice, love and power.

The Prophet Isaiah inquired, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" (Isa. 40:13,14) The obvious answer to these questions is that no one has taught God, the great Creator of the universe, for he is the fountain and source of all knowledge.

The wisdom of God is displayed in all his creative works. The psalmist wrote, "How clearly the sky reveals God's glory! How plainly it shows what he has done! Each day announces it to the following

day; each night repeats it to the next. No speech or words are used, no sound is heard.”—Ps. 19:1-3, *GNB*

Not only in the heavens do we see the wisdom of the Creator displayed. Closer to us, and on every side, we see manifestations of his infinite wisdom. We see it in every flower, in every blade of grass, and in the innumerable other works of nature with which we are surrounded. How irrational it is to ascribe all the marvelous works of creation to mere chance. Truly, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”—Ps. 14:1

It is in the plan of God for the redemption and recovery of the human race from sin and death that we find the greatest display of his wisdom. This plan is based on the fact that one man, Adam, was made the responsible head of the human race. Upon his creation by God, Adam was placed on probation and given an opportunity to prove his worthiness to enjoy the blessings of everlasting life and dominion over the earth, which were given to him by his Creator.

Lacking that wisdom which can be acquired by God’s creatures only by experience, Adam failed the test, but God had already planned his redemption through another man—“the man Christ Jesus.” (I Tim. 2:5,6) Adam partook of the literal fruit of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Gen. 2:8,9,16,17; 3:17-19) From that moment onward, he and all his progeny have been gaining a knowledge of evil in all its terrible forms. This has been permitted by divine wisdom for mankind’s ultimate profit.

Adam’s lesson and experience with sin and evil will be of benefit to him when awakened from the sleep of death amidst the righteous conditions of

Christ's kingdom which will soon come on earth. It will be then that the wisdom which is displayed in the divine permission of evil will be seen, appreciated, and be of inestimable value to Adam. Indeed, the entire human race, which came from his loins, will likewise profit from their experience with evil.—Rom. 5:12,18,19; 11:32,33; I Cor. 15:21,22

## **GOD'S JUSTICE**

“Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne,” we read in Psalm 89:14. The throne is a symbol of God's rulership and control over the affairs of his vast universe. His rulership is based upon justice. It is never unjust. However, the justice of the Creator can be understood and appreciated only in the light of the wisdom displayed in his great plan of salvation for the human race.

To see an innocent child suffer and die through no wrongdoing of his own, when we know that God could prevent it, does not in itself seem just. However, when we know that the child, and all seemingly innocent victims of evil, are to be awakened from the sleep of death and receive compensating blessings; and that through the endless ages of eternity, all who have suffered because of the reign of sin and death will thereby have their joys increased, then we can understand.—Isa. 35:10; Hos. 13:14; Rev. 21:3-5

Justice is equity, and we see the justice of God displayed in the redemption that is provided through Christ Jesus. He was “made flesh” for the “suffering of death, ... that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (John 1:14; Heb. 2:9) The Greek word used by the Apostle Paul to describe

the operation of God's justice in connection with the redemption of Adam and his race from death is one which means "a price to correspond," and is translated "ransom." Thus the apostle wrote, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all."—I Tim. 2:5,6

## **THE LOVE OF GOD**

The justice of God can be seen in its true light only when viewed in conjunction with his love. In I John 4:16, we read that "God is love." The greatest display of this love is recorded in John 3:16, where we read, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here the teachings of the Bible break with human tradition, which considers God to be harsh, unyielding in his justice, and without mercy. The belief is that Jesus, being kind and loving, stepped in and appeased the wrath of God so that man might have life. This is quite out of harmony with the Scriptures which, as in the text just quoted, reveal that it was God himself who, in keeping with his love, sent his Son to be the Redeemer and Savior of mankind.

In the text cited earlier which states that "justice and judgment" are the habitation of God's throne, we also read that "mercy and truth" shall go "before his face." In the plan of God for human salvation and redemption through Christ we see a marvelous blending of the two principles, justice and love. While justice demanded the payment of a price for human sin, love provided that payment, so that

God could be both “just, and the justifier” of all who come to him through Christ.—Rom. 3:26

## **DIVINE POWER**

The one true and living God is omnipotent in his power. Because of this, the Scriptures refer to him as being the Almighty. In an assurance of divine care for the people of God we read concerning him, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” (Ps. 91:1) Paul had confidence in this promise, and wrote, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”—Rom. 8:31

The power of God always operates in harmony with his wisdom, justice and love. If God were powerless, the plans devised by his wisdom would be of no value, and the blessings provided by his justice and love would go undistributed. It is the power of God which implements the various aspects of his plan of salvation and carries them through to completion.

God’s plan of salvation calls for an awakening of those who sleep in death, and only divine power is able to restore the dead to life. We have an outstanding demonstration of this in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Tradition would have us believe that Jesus himself broke the bands of death which held him in the tomb, but the Bible does not agree with this. Concerning Jesus’ resurrection, Peter said, “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”—Acts 2:24

The Apostle Paul wrote concerning the “exceeding greatness” of God’s power “which he wrought

in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 1:19,20) In the outworking of the divine plan the “exceeding greatness” of God’s power continues to operate. In order for his plan to reach completion, there must be the resurrection of the footstep followers of Jesus to live and reign with him in his kingdom, and then the resurrection of all mankind from the sleep of death.—Rev. 20:4,6; Acts 24:15

### **GOD’S PROTECTION AND CARE**

The power of God has been exercised on behalf of his people in all ages. There were the many miracles in connection with the deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in the land of Egypt. There was the deliverance of the three Hebrew captives in Babylon from the fiery furnace, as well as the deliverance of Daniel from the mouths of the lions.—Exod. 15:1-6; Dan. 3:27-29; 6:25-27

In Jesus’ day the power of God was employed by him for healing the sick and raising the dead. In a less spectacular way, but of great importance, God’s power sustained Jesus, giving him strength to endure the hardships inflicted upon him by his enemies. In every time of need the power of God’s Holy Spirit filled the mind and heart of the Master, and by it he was comforted and made strong.—Matt. 3:16,17; Luke 4:14,15; John 3:34,35

The Holy Spirit, or invisible power of God, came upon the waiting church at Pentecost. Suddenly the apostles were able to speak in languages formerly unknown to them. This enabled them to accomplish the divine purpose of witnessing the Gospel to the visiting Jews in Jerusalem who had gone there from

many parts of the then known world to commemorate one of the yearly feasts of Israel.—Acts 2:1-11

Throughout the entire age since then, the power of God's Holy Spirit has continued to operate in the lives of his people, those who have dedicated themselves to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. As with Jesus, it has sustained them in their trials, and enabled them to be overcomers in this world of selfishness and sin. While the worldly-minded have not understood, every faithful follower of the Master has been a miracle of grace, one that has been wrought by the indwelling of God's power through his Spirit.—Rom. 15:13; Eph. 1:13,14

## **GOD'S GLORY**

God's power is always utilized at the direction of divine wisdom which, in turn, plans all things in keeping with God's justice and love. It is the perfect and harmonious blending of these four attributes of the divine character that constitutes the glory of God which will soon fill the earth. "The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."—Isa. 40:5

The traditional concept of the glory of God is quite different from that presented to us in the Scriptures. Millions hold to the tradition that God's glory is revealed by the idea that those who die in unbelief are eternally consigned to torment in a fiery hell. What a distortion this is of the truths as presented to us in the Bible.

In the first place, it is contrary to the principle of justice, a divine law of equity which is expressed in the Bible by the expression, "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

(Exod. 21:23,24; Deut. 19:21) How far removed from this simple formula is the teaching that divine justice is satisfied only when a person suffers excruciating pain in the torments of hell for all eternity, as punishment for a few years of unbelief and wrongdoing during the present short span of life.

This tradition is also contrary to the principles of divine love and mercy. The Bible informs us that man was created in the image of God. This of necessity must mean that the qualities of mercy and love so often displayed by the average human being must be a reflection of the divine image which has come to them from their first parents, Adam and Eve. Because of these qualities, humans will not, normally, inflict torture even upon one of the lower animals, much less upon their fellowman. Yet tradition says that God, who is the very embodiment of mercy and love, will torture unbelievers eternally.

Human traditions also do violence to the infinite wisdom of God. One example is in connection with the teachings of the Bible with respect to the world's future day of judgment. Tradition teaches that the eternal destiny of every individual is fixed at death. However, realizing that the Bible teaches that there will be a future day of judgment, a further theory was developed that saints will be returned from heaven and sinners from torment. All will be caused to pass before the judgment seat of God to have their good and evil deeds rehearsed before them, only to be re-sentenced to either eternal bliss or torment. No useful purpose will have been served, since all will be returned to the places assigned to them when they died. All of this, according to tradition, is to be accomplished in a literal twenty-four hour day.

The almighty power of God has also been defamed by the traditions of men. Many claim that God wanted his people to convert the world to Christ, beginning at Pentecost, and, by doing so, usher in an era of universal and lasting peace and happiness. Although a noble purpose, the fact is that the world has not been converted, and peace has not been established. This means, if tradition is true, that God lacks the power to accomplish his purposes, a supposition which is unthinkable in the light of the testimony furnished in the Word of God.

Only as we accept the teachings of the Bible alone and ignore all human tradition with respect to the divine purpose for human redemption and salvation, do we find exemplified the truth of God's character and plan. The Scriptures plainly tell us that God is infinitely wise and just, also that he is merciful, loving and powerful, and fully capable of carrying out his wise, just and loving plans for the salvation and eternal happiness of his human creatures.

This divine plan of salvation is carried out through God's beloved Son, who, because of his work of sacrifice on behalf of mankind, is called the "Lamb of God." (John 1:29) When the salvation of mankind through the Lamb is fully accomplished, and the knowledge of the glory of God fills the earth, then will be fulfilled the prophetic words of John the Revelator. "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, ... and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."—Rev. 5:13

Let us, then, look forward to the time when all mankind will join together in harmonious voice to

sing the song, “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear [reverence] thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”—Rev. 15:3,4 ■

*“He telleth the number of the stars;  
he calleth them all by their names.  
Great is our Lord, and of great power:  
his understanding is infinite.  
The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him,  
in those that hope in his mercy.  
Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem;  
praise thy God, O Zion.  
Psalm 147:4,5,11,12*

## WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

**JUNE 6**—“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.”—Luke 21:34 (Z. ’95-201 Hymn 192)

**JUNE 13**—“I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”—Psalm 17:15 (Z. ’95-251 Hymn 105)

**JUNE 20**—“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”—I John 2:15 (Z. ’96-67 Hymn 312)

**JUNE 27**—“Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us.”—II Corinthians 1:21,22 (Z. ’96-212 Hymn 109)

# Pentecost

*“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”*  
—Acts 2:1,4

**PENTECOST HAS BEEN** observed as a religious holy day by Christians for centuries. It is held in remembrance of the begetting of the Holy Spirit which came upon Jesus’ disciples as recorded in our opening text. The word Pen-

tecost is derived from a Greek word meaning “the fiftieth day” and has as its origin Israel’s Feast of Harvest. This year the Jewish feast, and the Day of Pentecost which it prefigured, will be commemorated on the tenth day of June.

The principal feature of the Feast of Harvest was the waving of two bread loaves before the Lord. These loaves were made from the early fruitage of the grain harvest. Fifty days earlier, on the 16th day of the month Nisan, a “sheaf,” or handful, of ripe grain was waved before the Lord. It was unbaked, and consisted of the very first pure, uncontaminated kernels of grain which had been harvested.

The instructions regarding the waving of the sheaf and the Feast of Harvest are recorded in Leviticus 23:10,11,15-17: “Speak unto the children of Israel,

and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat [grain] offering unto the LORD. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD.”

The marvelous fulfillment of this picture centers in Jesus. As the antitypical slain Passover Lamb, he died on the cross on the 14th of Nisan. (Isa. 53:6,7; John 1:29; I Cor. 5:7) He was placed in the tomb before sundown the same day, and lay there all the next day, which was the Sabbath. In the early morning of the 16th of Nisan, the third day, Jesus was resurrected. (Matt. 28:1-6; Luke 24:1-7) Thus, the same day that Israel's priest was waving the sheaf of grain in the Temple, the fulfillment of that picture had taken place—the resurrection of Jesus. He was, as Paul later states, the “firstfruits” of those who “slept” in death.—I Cor. 15:20

Since the Jewish Feast of Harvest was a celebration of the firstfruits of their grain harvest, the “sheaf of the firstfruits” was considered a part of the harvest. This is shown to be true, because the date of the feast was reckoned by counting fifty days

from the day the sheaf was waved before the priest. Likewise, in its greater fulfilment, the fifty days until Pentecost was measured from the resurrection of Jesus.

Beginning at Pentecost, and throughout the present Gospel Age, the Heavenly Father has been seeking those from every nation, kindred, and tongue who will faithfully walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and thereby be counted as part of the firstfruits unto God. The “two wave loaves” of the Jewish feast, which were prepared from flour made from the grain of the new crop, picture this “firstfruits” class. Thus, spirit-begotten followers of Jesus since Pentecost are the first to benefit from his death and resurrection. They have, as Paul says, “the firstfruits of the Spirit.”—Rom. 8:23

The instruction given to Israel was that the two loaves were to be baked with leaven. Leaven is used in the Bible to represent sin. (Luke 12:1; I Cor. 5:6-8) Taking these two things into account, we see that the prospective members of the spiritual firstfruits are selected from the world while still under the effects of sin. However, they become acceptable as an offering to the Lord because the sheaf of grain, Christ Jesus, was offered first, covering their sinful Adamic nature.

## **THE DAY OF PENTECOST**

In Acts 1:1-3, we read that Jesus had been seen by the apostles on various occasions for a period of forty days following his resurrection. Now he was assembled together with them one final time. He instructed them not to depart from Jerusalem, but “wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith

he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.” (vss. 4,5; Mark 1:6-8) Jesus then ascended to heaven, and the eleven, following his instructions, waited together in Jerusalem. Ten days later, on Israel’s feast day—the day of Pentecost—we have recorded the words of our opening text. The record says that upon receiving the Holy Spirit, the apostles “began to speak with other tongues,” or languages. This was evidence that the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, had indeed been fulfilled.

Since this was one of Israel’s feast days, there was a multitude of people gathered from many regions, who spoke various languages. When they realized that the apostles were addressing them so that each understood in his own language, they were amazed. (Acts 2:5-12) Some, realizing that the apostles were not learned men but fishermen and the like, accused them of being drunk with wine. Peter stood up, however, saying that none of them were drunken, but rather the words of the Prophet Joel were being fulfilled. Quoting from prophecy, Peter said, “It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.”—vss. 13-18

This fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy related to the development of the firstfruits class during the Gospel Age. As of yet, Peter’s hearers knew nothing about the operation of the Holy Spirit as it was to

affect the lives of the footstep followers of Jesus. The only experience that they could relate to was with the prophets of Israel. God had dealt with them, in conveying his message and instructions, by visions and dreams. Therefore, that is how the Lord instructed Joel to describe his dealings with the spirit-begotten during the Gospel Age. Peter's words signified just the beginning of the fulfillment of this wonderful prophecy. Its full accomplishment will be in Christ's kingdom, when God's spirit will be poured out upon the remainder of mankind—"all flesh."

The enlightening effect of the Holy Spirit upon the mind was immediately evident in the Apostle Peter. He was one of those who just ten days before had indicated by the question to Jesus concerning the establishment of the kingdom that he believed it should start at that time. (Acts 1:6) The Holy Spirit had now enabled him to understand that there was a great work to be done before the Messianic kingdom would begin. This new insight was revealed in his interpretation of the prophecy by Joel and by the balance of his wonderful sermons recorded in the second and third chapters of the Book of Acts.

### **TEACHER, COMFORTER AND HELPER**

The night before he died, Jesus promised the apostles: "The Holy Spirit whom the Father will send at my request, will teach you everything, and will bring to your memories all that I have said to you." (John 14:26, *Weymouth New Testament*) An apostle had to be one who had been with the Lord, hearing his words and observing his every action. It was

because of the fulfilment of this promise concerning the Holy Spirit and its enlightening influence, starting at Pentecost, that the New Testament record of the apostles and other writers could be provided in an accurate and harmonious form. Otherwise much would have been lost.

In the last hours of his life Jesus desired to comfort his followers before his departure, and so in a very general way he told them something of the Holy Spirit. He said that after he went away he would ask the Father to send them a “Comforter,” the “Spirit of truth.” It would be a power that would not be discernible by the world, but they would know that they had it because its influence would be upon them and dwell in them. The Spirit of truth, Jesus also said, would guide them “into all truth.” (John 14:16,17; 16:13) The thought was that after the Holy Spirit came upon them, they would be able to receive a complete knowledge and understanding of God’s plans and purposes.

In John 15:15, Jesus explained that because of the enlightenment to come by means of the Holy Spirit, he could make known to them everything he had heard from the Father. This would mean a change had taken place in their status. They would no longer be considered servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. Rather, they would be friends, or associates, and as Paul later says, sons of God. “For, as many as by God’s Spirit are being led, the same, are God’s sons,—For ye have not received a spirit of servitude, leading back into fear, but ye have received a spirit of sonship, whereby we are exclaiming—Abba! Oh Father!”—Rom. 8:14,15, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*

Paul continues, saying that these “sons” are prospective “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,” if they suffer with him. (vs. 17) Jesus had indicated this to the apostles prior to his death, saying that because of this close relationship to him and the Father, they would suffer persecution, just as he had suffered.—John 16:1-3

## **BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

John the Baptist, in identifying Jesus, stated, “He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit.” (John 1:33) Jesus was the first to receive this baptism of the Holy Spirit, and being found faithful, he became the instrument by whom it would then come to his footstep followers. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter thus testified: “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”—Acts 2:32,33

We are aware of the change that came upon Jesus after he was baptized with the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 3:16, we read: “Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.” The thought seems to be that then all the hidden things of God’s Word began to be revealed to him. Assuredly, Jesus, with his perfect mind, knew the Scriptures. However, there were many hidden things in the prophecies and

shadows of the Old Testament that were not to be revealed until the proper time.

The 40th Psalm is a prophecy about Jesus at this time in his life. Verse 6 reads as follows: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering has thou not required." The key thought in this verse is that Jesus' ears were opened. In other words, he was able to both hear and understand things that were not known by him before. This information included all the details of God's plan for the redemption and reconciliation of the world of mankind and his part in it. We also believe that Jesus then understood that there would be associates with him who would share in his sufferings and his glory. The first of these were his chosen apostles, to whom he promised to send the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has had an enlightening effect upon the church throughout the Gospel Age. The Apostle Paul describes it as the "earnest," or pledge, of our inheritance. (Eph. 1:14) The Holy Spirit enables us to know and appreciate our relationship to the Heavenly Father. It also makes possible our knowledge of the privilege and responsibilities of sonship. The Apostle Paul stated, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (I Cor. 2:12) It is a knowledge of these things that enables us to walk more fully in the footsteps of Jesus.

## **A NEW AGE BEGUN**

From the standpoint of the day of Pentecost being a day to be remembered, the following points should

be considered. The work that was started that day marked the beginning of a new age. From this point the Holy Spirit was to be engaged in a work that had never been done before—the development of a New Creation that would have the potential of being like God himself. The apostle wrote: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” —II Cor. 5:17

We recognize, from the standpoint of God’s covenants, that the Abrahamic Covenant and its promises had lain dormant for many centuries. During this time the Law Covenant was added, “till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” (Gal. 3:19) In verse 16 of this same passage we read: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” The death and resurrection of Christ, the promised seed, activated the Abrahamic Covenant and brought to an end the Law Covenant, which had served as a “schoolmaster” to lead God’s chosen people, Israel, to Christ. (vss. 24,25) Finally, in verses 26 and 27, we learn that Christ is to be composed of many members, and that all the true footstep followers of Jesus are “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Pentecost marked the beginning of the development of the heavenly phase of the kingdom. The Holy Spirit cannot be poured out on the rest of mankind until the work of completing the church is ended. Then will come that glorious time when the kingdom will be established, and God’s laws will be obeyed “in earth” as they are “in heaven.”—Matt. 6:10 ■

# Devoted to Good Works

*“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”*  
—Titus 2:13,14

**THE APOSTLE PAUL'S** words to Titus speak of God's plan during this Gospel Age to develop a faithful people who are zealous and devoted to “good works.” Such works are those which have been authorized by God through his Word, and thus blessed by him. The Lord's people of the present age have responded to the heavenly call, and have given their hearts to God in consecra-

tion. (Ps. 34:18; Prov. 23:26) Willing to daily lay down their lives in his service, they have zeal and enthusiasm in pursuit of the divine cause, saying with Paul, “For to me to live is Christ.”—Phil. 1:21

This singular attitude and mindset is expressed elsewhere by Paul with these words: “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” “This one thing I do.”

(I Cor. 2:2; Phil. 3:13) To be fully devoted to divine service requires, first of all, careful and continual study of God's plan. Second, it includes the imbibing of God's spirit in our hearts. Third, these must then result in enthusiastic zeal for the accomplishment of the Heavenly Father's purposes, especially as they relate to our walk.

## **OLD TESTAMENT WORKS**

In the Old Testament we find many notable examples of zeal in the work of the Lord. One of these is the occasion when, directed by God, Moses called upon the people of Israel to volunteer their services and donate materials to be used in the building and furnishing of the Tabernacle. The people were profoundly stirred by the spirit of God. The response to this call was so great that Moses found it necessary to urge the people to cease bringing their offerings, because more than what was necessary had been furnished.—Exod. 36:1-7

Another example of zeal for God and for his work is the account of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem after the Israelites had returned from their captivity in Babylon, recorded in the book of Nehemiah, chapters 1-6. Two verses which beautifully summarize this work read as follows: "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work." "So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days." —Neh. 4:6; 6:15

There had been much delay in getting this work completed. The enemies of the Jews had threatened to attack, and continually assailed them with words

of ridicule in an attempt to discourage them. In addition, materials were not plentiful. The supply of stones was limited to what they could find amongst the rubble from the destruction of the former walls decades earlier. Despite numerous setbacks and delays, the people caught the zealous spirit of Nehemiah, risking their own lives to join in the work. Encouraged by Nehemiah and having confidence in his ability to supervise the work properly, they labored on until the wall was finished. Summing up their renewed zeal, the account states that “the people had a mind to work.”—Neh. 4:6

Nehemiah reveals one of the primary reasons for their success, saying, “We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them [their enemies] day and night.” (vs. 9) The fact that the Israelites prayed indicates that the basis of their confidence, and the inspiration of their zeal, was the Lord. Indeed, this is the secret of success in every work authorized by God and zealously undertaken by his people, and the assurance of victory in every battle for truth and righteousness. Nehemiah and his co-workers had watched, and prayed, and worked, providing a formula that would assure success to those engaged in work for God in every age, regardless of the obstacles which might lay in front of them.

## **GOSPEL AGE WORKS**

The work of God during the present age has not been the constructing of literal city walls. Rather, it has been the building up of his people in their “most holy faith.” (Jude 1:20) Paul identifies this individual work as that of being developed as a “new creature.” The foundation upon which each

one engages in this building work, the apostle explains, is Christ, and the proper materials to be used are symbolically spoken of as “gold, silver, precious stones.”—II Cor. 5:17; I Cor. 3:11-13

Another illustration given in the Scriptures of the divinely commissioned work we are to presently be engaged in is that of a bride making herself ready for marriage. The church, as an espoused bride, is preparing herself to be united with the “Lamb,” which is Christ. (II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7,8) Each individual member of the prospective bride has a work to do, but it is the collective, and cooperative, work of the entire bride class to become prepared for the marriage—she makes “herself ready.” We can scarcely think of a prospective bride preparing for her wedding who does not have a “mind to work.”

The Apostle John wrote that those who are begotten of God overcome the world, “and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” (I John 5:4) Faith in our Heavenly Father and in his Son, our Lord Jesus, is of vital importance. Paul said that without faith, it is impossible for us to please God, “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb. 11:6) The phrase “them that diligently seek” in the original Greek text means to “search out, investigate.” This implies effort and work on our part as we develop our structure of faith.

## **JESUS’ MESSAGE AND TEACHINGS**

In concluding his sermon on the mount, Jesus said, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a

wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matt. 7:24, *New American Standard Bible*) Here the Master compares zealous obedience to his teachings to the work of building solidly upon a rock. To understand and act upon “these words of Mine” we first look back to the beginning of Jesus’ sermon, and the giving of the Beatitudes. These emphasize the need for humility, sympathy for the groaning creation, a meek and teachable spirit, a desire for righteousness, as well as exercising mercy, striving for purity of heart, and being peacemakers. Having these, Jesus adds, will result in our being reviled and persecuted by the world, but in this event, his exhortation is, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.”—Matt. 5:3-12

“Ye are the salt of the earth,” Jesus continues, warning us against losing our “savour,” or taste. (vs. 13) We have nothing of ourselves that qualifies as a pleasant “savour.” It is thus evident that this reference is to something which the Lord has given us—namely, his truth and the spirit of the truth, which we are to reflect in our words and actions toward others. In this regard, Jesus stated, “Ye are the light of the world,” and to thus let our light “shine before men,” that they might see our “good works,” and glorify, either now or in the next age, the Heavenly Father. (vss. 14-16) While Jesus refers to the light as though it is ours, in reality it is the light of divine truth which the Lord has caused to shine in our hearts, and which he here bids us to make known to others.—II Cor. 4:6; I Pet. 2:9

The light which we reflect is the truth of God’s plan. In it is revealed his character attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power, which harmoniously

work together to reveal his glory. “Holding forth the word of life” is then one of the great privileges given us, in which we will “rejoice in the day of Christ,” having not “run in vain, neither labored in vain.” (Phil. 2:16) Every true disciple of the Master is hopeful of reigning with him in his kingdom, but Jesus said that we would “in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven” unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. (Matt. 5:20) The righteousness which exceeds this is based on heart purity and a zeal for God and for his work which does not look for the praise and honor of men.

### **MAGNIFYING THE LAW**

Jesus explained that he did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. (Matt. 5:17) He also magnified the law by expanding upon its principles, and by showing that obedience to it went beyond the mere letter. It encompassed the spirit of the law. For example, Jesus said that hatred of one’s brother constitutes murder just as much as literally taking a person’s life, and that going voluntarily to those whom we have wronged with a sincere desire to make amends is a much greater sign of true repentance than bringing an offering to the altar.—vss. 21-26

“These words” of the Master also include his admonition to sacrifice every precious thing, according to the flesh, in the interests of righteousness. Those things represented to us by our right eye, right hand, or right foot must be carefully guarded. These represent our view of the world around us, the work of our hands, and our daily walk of life. Fleshly inclinations along these lines should be “cut off” and cast aside. (Matt. 5:29,30; 18:8,9) Only those

who truly “have a mind to work” at character building can obey injunctions of this kind. The flesh urges moderation and compromise rather than sacrifice. Such reasoning “exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,” and must be rejected.—II Cor. 10:5

In Matthew 5:31-48, Jesus continues his sermon with more teachings which were magnifications of God’s law, bringing them to a climax by stating that we should love even our enemies. To this he adds that if we display that comprehensive love which reaches out to bless all mankind we will be “children” of our Heavenly Father, and be “perfect,” or made complete in character, even as our “Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

### **IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER**

Also included in the teachings of the Master is the importance of prayer. If we “have a mind to work” in accordance with the doing of God’s will, we will be faithful in watching and praying, and will be guided by the outline given to us by Jesus in his model prayer. (Matt. 6:9-13) We will delight to pray “Our Father,” recognizing the holiness of his name, and our relationship to him as his children. Prominent in our prayers will also be the desire to see the world blessed by the setting up of the kingdom “in earth, as it is in heaven.” We will not make elaborate requests for ourselves, but ask only for needful things, both temporal and spiritual. “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Realizing how far short we come of the glory of God, and our great need for divine forgiveness, we will ask God for his mercy. We know, however, that

we cannot expect his forgiveness unless we forgive those who trespass against us. Because we have the assurance that God does not tempt his people with evil, we will also claim this promise, and ask the Heavenly Father to “deliver us” from the evil with which our great Adversary desires to ensnare us.—James 1:13

We must never underestimate the importance of having an active prayer life. We are assured that nothing is too great or too small to take to God in prayer. The Scriptures abound with such admonitions. “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” “Give thanks always for all things unto God.” “Pray without ceasing.” “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”—Luke 18:1; Eph. 5:20; I Thess. 5:17; I Pet. 5:7

## **LAYING UP TREASURES**

Part of our zeal for good works is shown by laying up “treasures in heaven,” and not “upon earth,” for where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also. (Matt. 6:19-21) This teaching of the Master is one of the most exacting. Earthly treasures are often the source of man’s security, and it requires great faith to realize that our real safety and refuge is to be found in the promises of God. Other scriptures indicate, without doubt, that reasonable provision is to be made for our temporal needs and for those dependent upon us. However, our interpretation of what is reasonable might well make the difference between faithfulness and unfaithfulness in the laying up of our “treasures.”

The “light of the body,” Jesus explained, “is the eye,” symbolic of our focus and direction in life. He

then says, "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." (Matt. 6:22,23) The "single" eye might well represent a wholehearted and single-minded focus on heavenly things. By contrast, an eye that is "evil," is one that is "full of labors, annoyances, hardships." (*Thayer's Greek Definitions*) In other words, it is multi-focused, and will surely lead us in the direction of darkness. Having a single eye can be best described by Jesus' admonition, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," with the assurance that all our legitimate material needs will be furnished.—vs. 33

### **MORE WORDS OF THE MASTER**

"Judge not, that ye be not judged." We are not qualified to sit in judgment of others. In his teaching along this line, Jesus indicates that the tendency to judge others might well represent a hypocritical attitude on our part—that there is more wrong with ourselves than with those we attempt to judge. We are to "have a mind to work," not by pulling out the "mote," or speck, in our brother's eye, but by casting the much larger "beam" out of our own eye.—Matt. 7:1-5

The Master's words encourage us to go to the Heavenly Father for his guidance in all things, and to not hold back in so doing. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He assures us that "every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Matt. 7:7,8) God is also pleased to "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."—Luke 11:13

Those who are devoted to good works will not seek merely the easiest way to serve the Lord. They have entered into this relationship knowing, “How narrow is the gate of life! How difficult that way leading thither! And how few are they who find it.” (Matt. 7:14, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) To fulfill the work entrusted to us is not an easy task, but requires much diligence and effort. “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”—Luke 12:48, *NASB*

It is because of this that not many walk in the narrow way of sacrifice and suffering. Yet, it is the only way which, by “patient continuance in well doing,” will lead to “glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) It is found only by those who “have a mind to work” at the cost of weariness, sacrifice, and finally of life itself.

In the last of “these words,” Jesus warns, “Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” This is a heart-searching statement for each of us. Only “he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven,” Jesus continues, will realize this promised hope. (Matt. 7:21) Throughout his sermon on the mount, Jesus outlines one detail after another of the divine will for his footstep followers. He concludes by saying that those who enter the heavenly kingdom keep his words by doing the will of God. Their work, zealously performed, will stand because they have built upon a solid rock, not upon shifting sands.—vss. 24-27

After Pentecost, the apostles filled in many more details of the divine will, but in “these words” of

Jesus, all the fundamental principles of Christian living are found. It is the blueprint by which we are to build the superstructure of our Christian character, and blessed are we if we implicitly follow the Master's instructions. His words and example are also a guide from which we learn the importance of being zealously devoted to good works.

## **OUR SALVATION**

Regardless of all other labors for the Lord in which we might engage, the most critical aspect of our devotion to good works is that which relates to the full accomplishment of our salvation. Paul instructs us: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." In exhorting us along this line, the apostle assures us that God is also working in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:12,13) The task is too great for us to accomplish alone, so we rejoice in the assurance that God is working in us, and, in fact, is supervising this very work. He is directing it, and by the indwelling of his Spirit, gives us needed guidance and direction so that we may do our part successfully. If we have "a mind to work," we will not quench God's Spirit but be filled with its holy influence to keep us zealous in the great task at hand.—I Thess. 5:19; Eph. 5:18

The Apostle Peter instructs us: "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end." (I Pet. 1:13) This suggests a long and laborious undertaking. When Nehemiah and his co-laborers were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, they did not even remove their clothes at night. They had to be continually ready to meet the enemy, and at the

same time carry on the work with as little interruption as possible. Such is our position today. The Adversary is seeking to devour us. We must resist him by being “stedfast in the faith” and by constantly wearing the “whole armour of God,” while at the same time continuing to work out our salvation.—I Pet. 5:8,9; Eph. 6:10-18

## **THE GREAT OBJECTIVE**

The work of God in this age is in preparation for that which he has promised to do in the next age. That will be the blessing of all the families of the earth, and it is this grand future work for which we are being trained. Through the application of the divine principles of righteousness in our lives now, we are being prepared to administer God’s law to the poor, groaning creation during the Messianic kingdom on earth. How wonderfully divine wisdom is displayed in the arrangements he has made for our present training to be “kings and priests unto God.”—Rev. 1:6

As was the case with Nehemiah and his co-laborers, our work is not only an individual matter, but also a collective one. Together we work, within our local ecclesias, and among other organized groups of brethren. We are to be zealous and do our part in all of these cooperative efforts among the brotherhood. Admonishing the church both individually and collectively, Paul writes, “As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”—Rom. 12:4,5

Throughout the present age, every group of the Lord’s people has been a mixed one as respects

individual progress and development, and it is still so. In Paul's many letters to the ecclesias of the Early Church, his words often reflect the varying degrees of spiritual development which existed among the brethren. To the church at Rome, for example, he wrote: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."—Rom. 15:1,2

It is the experience of all the Lord's people who are faithful in trying to help others understand the Truth, that never is the message of the Gospel so precious and such a great power of regeneration in their own lives, as when they tell it to others. Likewise, never is a congregation of God's people more alive, more joyful in the Spirit, more enthusiastic for the Truth and more spiritually healthy, than when there are those new to the message of truth to nurture and to build up in our "most holy faith."—Jude 1:20

The Apostle Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome that they be "not slothful in business," but "fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." (Rom. 12:11) The "business" here referred to is unquestionably the Lord's business, his work, the various phases of which the apostle had just outlined. (vss. 6-10) We are to be fervent, or zealous, in God's business, just as Nehemiah and the Israelites had "a mind to work" on the walls of Jerusalem.

The cooperative works in the church today are essentially as they were when Paul wrote his epistles, though the methods have changed over time. Today, the use of tracts, booklets, email, the internet and other forms of electronic media, live and recorded

broadcasts, and other available avenues of service may facilitate and even expand the Lord's work. Yet, none of these deprive any of the privilege of helping. Each of us can be a messenger of God's Word and a devoted advocate of his love to all who have a hearing ear. Among the brotherhood, we can all send cards and letters of encouragement, make phone calls and personal visits to those needing encouragement, or perhaps travel to visit isolated brethren who may crave fellowship. The point is that if we have a mind to work—first in applying the principles of the Truth in our lives, and then in helping to reach out to and serve others—we will find much to do in helping to build the walls of the new spiritual Jerusalem.

When Nehemiah and his co-workers had nearly finished the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, and completion of the gates was all that remained, Israel's enemies asked that they stop and go meet with them. Nehemiah knew, however, that they only meant mischief. He sent messengers to them saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."—Neh. 6:1-3

This is an important lesson for us. While the Gospel Age work of preparing the church to live and reign with Christ a thousand years may soon be completed, we are still highly honored with the privilege of continuing to "build." More than ever before, the enemies of the Lord, the Truth, and his people, are endeavoring to attract us away from the job. All sorts of temptations to ease, thoughts that there is no more work to do, and myriads of other misleading arguments, are being presented to God's consecrated people. In response to all these,

may we always have the courage to say, "I am doing a great work," by the Lord's grace, and "I cannot come down."

We have no claim to boast of having "done many wonderful works." Rather, our works are primarily those of keeping "these words" of the Master. By keeping them, we are preparing ourselves, and, collectively one another, to be found worthy of entering the heavenly kingdom. Let us, dear brethren, each strive to be zealously devoted to good works, demonstrated daily in our lives, until the end of our earthly sojourn. ■

*A moment in the morning  
ere the cares of the day begin,  
Ere the heart's wide door is open  
for the world to enter in.  
Ah then, alone with Jesus,  
in the silence of the morn,  
In heavenly sweet communion,  
let your new day be born.  
In the quietude that blesses,  
with a prelude of repose,  
Let your soul be soothed and softened  
as the dew revives the rose.  
Take time for prayer!  
Take time to behold him!  
—Songs of the Nightingale*

## **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 John Haldenwang, Phoenix, AZ—April 12.  
Age, 75**

# ENCOURAGING LETTERS

## BIBLE TRUTHS

DawnBible: I am a Bible student and I love studying God's word.

Thank you for your wonderful and insightful publications. They are a great source of Bible truths. God bless.—Liberia

## GOSPEL LITERATURE AND LECTURES

DawnBible: I love to come here to read the Gospel literature of today and of years ago. And to listen to the wonderful recorded lectures etc. Thank you—OH

## STILL LEARNING

DawnBible: I'm enjoying Dawn Bible Students Association. I'm still learning.

I was baptized in 2015 and my heart, mind and soul totally belongs to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ forever. Thanks again.—SC

## FRANK AND ERNEST

DawnBible: I listen to *Frank and Ernest* on 1440-WJLL and love your teachings. I want to learn more!—NY

## USED BOOKSTORE

DawnBible: Bought a book today: *The Divine Plan of the Ages* at a used book store. Doing research and found your website. Blessings!—TN

## GOD'S PROMISES

DawnBible: Just found this page ... looks interesting. I was searching for does God change his mind on promises made. I know he cannot lie and his promises are yea and amen.—IL

## DELIGHTED

DawnBible: I was so delighted to find your website.

I am very interested in acquiring knowledge of the Bible student program.—TX

# 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.*

## **O. B. Elbert**

Toronto, ON June 8,9

## **S. Jeuck**

St. Louis, MO June 29,30

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

## **T. N. Alexander**

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

## **R. Goodman**

Portland, OR June 14-16

## **N. Austin**

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

## **B. Jakubowski**

Prince Albert, SK June 29-July 1

## **G. Balko**

Prince Albert, SK June 29-July 1

## **T. Krupa**

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

## **M. Balko**

Delaware Valley, PA June 2

## **B. Montague**

Delaware Valley, PA June 2

## **B. Dutka**

Prince Albert, SK June 29-July 1

## **R. Niemczyk**

Portland, OR June 14-16

## **O. B. Elbert**

Portland, OR June 14-16

## **A. Oystryk**

Prince Albert, SK June 29-July 1

## **A. Fernets**

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

## **M. Shilling**

Delaware Valley, PA June 2

## **J. Freer**

Prince Albert, SK June 29-July 1

## **B. Sweeney**

Prince Albert, SK June 29-July 1

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*“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ... If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”—I John 1:5,7*

# 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.*

**DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 2**—Falls Township Senior Center, 282 Trenton Road, Fairless Hills, PA. Contact O. Elbert. Phone: (732) 710-2423 or Email: obe3@comcast.net

**VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 8,9**—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada. Contact B. Smith. Phone: (604) 576-6070 or Email: bas@telus.net

**PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 14-16**—Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel, 8235 NE Airport Way, Portland, OR 97220. For convention accommodations, contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (503) 459-2720 or Email: janetlwojcik@gmail.com. Other information, contact M. Colletti. Phone: (503) 820-8899 or Email: colletti291@gmail.com

**PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, June 29-July 1**—Siwak Farm, RR 1, Prince Albert, SK, Canada S6V 5P8. Contact B. Siwak. Phone: (306) 960-5526 or Email: bswk77@gmail.com

**BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 20-25**—**New Location**—University of Idaho, 709 Deakin Avenue, Moscow, ID 83843. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com. For additional information, go to the General Convention website: **[BibleStudentsGeneralConv.org](http://BibleStudentsGeneralConv.org)**

**BENIN REPUBLIC CONVENTION, July 26-28**—Semekpodji Porto Novo, route pk 16klm, Benin Republic. Contact E. Okorie. Phone: + 229 65505568, + 229 97059452 or Email: bbseclesias@yahoo.com

**RED DEER CONVENTION, August 9-11**—Golden Circle Senior Centre, 4217 50 Avenue, Red Deer, AB, Canada.

Rooms available at Super 8 Hotel, 4217 50 Avenue. Phone: (403) 358-7722. Mention Alberta Bible Students when booking. Other information, contact J. Neumeier. Email: jboneumeier@live.com

**JACKSON CONVENTION, August 17,18—New Location**—Jackson College, Bert Walker Hall, 2111 Emmons Road, Jackson, MI 49201. Contact L. Davis. Phone: (517) 414-5544 or Email: lydadav@gmail.com

**NIGERIA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 23-25**—Central School Obudi Agwa Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: +2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

**NEW YORK CONVENTION, August 31-September 1**—Doubletree Hotel Mahwah, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ. For reservations, phone: (201) 529-5880. Deadline for reserving rooms at subsidized rate is August 16. Other information, contact G. Passios. Phone: (201) 939-3196 or Email: gpassios11@verizon.net

**SEATTLE CONVENTION, August 31-September 2**—Seattle Scottish Rite Center, 1207 N 152nd Street, Shoreline, WA 98133. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (206) 518-2678 or Email: laurie@flinn.us

**ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 26,27**—South Seminole Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact C. Goodman. Phone: (407) 695-6815 or Email: clmgoodman@gmail.com

**MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, November 2,3**—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Farchione. Phone: (414) 324-9667 or Email: debfarchione@aol.com

*“They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”*  
—Acts 2:42