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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

God to Be Served with

One Consent 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

Remaining in the Faith 12

Faith that Sets an Example 14

Called to Be Holy 16

Partakers of the Divine Nature 18

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

The Bible Versus Tradition-Part 11

Treasures in Heaven 20

“Present with the Lord” 37

In Everything Give Thanks 50

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 36

OBITUARIES 49

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 63

God to Be Served with One Consent

*“Then will I turn
to the people a
pure language,
that they may all
call upon the name
of the LORD, to
serve him with
one consent.”*
—*Zephaniah 3:9*

WITH THE FALL OF OUR

first parents in Eden, man soon became fearful of his loving Creator. This spirit of fear, fostered by Satan, the Devil, has been fertile soil in which he has sown seeds of confusion regarding religious worship, moral as well as social stan-

dards, and ideologies among nations and governments. Through the ages these seeds have germinated and matured into myriads of false and distorted beliefs. Today, despite the enlightenment of the world along many lines, the people are more confused and divided than ever before in their concepts of religious, political and social scruples.

God is fully aware of man's past and present condition, however, and has a plan for unifying mankind's understanding of divine principles along all lines. The word translated “pure” in our opening text means, according to *Strong's* Hebrew definitions, to “clarify” or “brighten.” Indeed, it is God's plan to enlighten the entire world as to his standards of righteousness,

while at the same time doing away with the false and confusing concepts which have plagued mankind with division for thousands of years. Only such a plan can bring about the Creator's desired result of having the entire human race serve him with "one consent."

THE "TRUE LIGHT"

God's only begotten Son, Jesus, is that "true light," the "light of the world," which will eventually enlighten every individual who has lived upon the earth. (John 1:9; 8:12) During his earthly ministry, Jesus commissioned his followers also to be lights in this present world of darkness. (Matt. 5:14) The divine purpose through these light-bearers has not been to convert the whole world to Christ during the present age, but to serve as a witness, and to assist in God's current purpose of calling from the world a "people for his name."—Acts 15:14-17

As this work has progressed during the past two thousand years, Satan has continued to foster and promote false religions, theories, and practices among the people. When some of these seem outdated, he causes new versions of darkness to arise and flourish to keep pace with societal changes. As a result, many have been turned aside from God's ways, and like the Israelites of the past, they have brought into their midst various viewpoints, standards and practices that are out of harmony with righteousness. Today, people throughout the world, regardless of religious profession, are divided into many groups, and there is no "consent" as to what is right or wrong, moral or immoral, truth or lies.

Toward the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus raised the question of whether or not he would "find faith

on the earth” when he returned. (Luke 18:8) We note that he did not question whether there would be religious fervor, or the spirit of religious devotion. The “faith” to which he referred was the faith pertaining to the true Gospel, which was “preached before ... unto Abraham.” It was the glad tidings that God, in his own due time and way, through the promised seed of Abraham, would bless “all the kindreds of the earth.”—Gal. 3:8; Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25

THE “UNKNOWN GOD”

A general review of religious, political as well as social convictions and practices through the ages, together with conditions as we see them in the world today, helps one to understand Paul’s feelings when he stood on Mars Hill and talked with the Athenian philosophers. He said, “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.”—Acts 17:22,23

We might suppose to commend the Athenians for the open manner in which they confessed their belief in a god whom they did not know. It is interesting, too, that they gave thought to higher powers which, in accordance with their worship of many gods, were ostensibly there to guide them in all matters of life. Yet, they did not serve a single deity with “one consent.” Such a God was, indeed, “unknown” to them.

Among the wooden, stone, and metal idols throughout the world today, there may be none ascribed to the “unknown god” as was the case in ancient Athens. However, we can be safe in saying that in the hearts

of millions there is an image of a god whom the people would like to believe exists who is loving and kind. Such a vision is of a supreme being able and willing to take hold of this present confused world and bring order out of chaos, peace out of turmoil and war, understanding and cooperation out of the bitter strife of words and conflict of ideologies.

It is this unknown god which the people are thinking about when they raise the oft repeated question, “Where is God in the troubled world of today?” Very few offer any explanation, and those who do often give most shallow words, such as, “God is punishing the world,” or “This is what mankind deserves.” However, there is that God who, throughout the ages, has been unknown to the people, and who has promised, as recorded in our text, that the time is coming when he will turn to the people “a pure language,” which will enable them all to serve him with “one consent.”

The time identification contained in this wonderful promise is immediately after the symbolic “earth” has been “devoured with the fire” of God’s jealousy, as prophesied in the preceding verse. It reads, “Wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.”—Zeph. 3:8

THE VISION

God-reverencing people throughout the ages have been encouraged to wait on the Lord. Likewise, in every generation there have been those who wondered why God continued to permit evil. To Habakkuk the

Lord said, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Hab. 2:3) Paul quotes from this prophecy and applies it to the Second Advent of Christ.— Heb. 10:37

There is, therefore, no mistaking the time of the application of God's words to Habakkuk. It is at the time subsequent to Jesus' return, during his invisible presence in the outworking of earth's affairs. The fulfilment of many prophetic signs indicates that we are currently living in that period. The vision now "speaks," giving sincere students of the Bible an understanding of the times in which they are living. Among other things, the meaning of the great "time of trouble" now upon the world is the assurance that the waiting time is about over. (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21) The time is near at hand when the Lord will put down iniquity and exalt righteousness in the earth.

The vision has spoken also in that we now see that the nations are being gathered, that the symbolic fire of God's jealousy is upon them, and that when this aspect of divine intervention shall have accomplished its purpose, the pure language will be turned to the people. Then the previously "unknown" God will be revealed to them, and with hearts rejoicing they will unitedly serve him with one consent, their songs of praise filling the earth with his glory.

Paul explained to the Athenians some of the characteristics of the unknown God, who "made the world and all things therein." He dwells "not in temples made with hands," Paul said. It was a polite way of telling the Athenians that the unknown God did not need such temples as they had in Athens for many

of their other gods. (Acts 17:24) Today we might add that God also does not dwell in royal palaces, halls of presidents and premiers, or mansions of dictators and fanatical rulers.

The unknown God, Paul went on to explain, “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being.” (vss. 26-28) The apostle further expounds that since we are children of God, his creation, “We should not think that the divine being is like gold, silver, or stone, or is an image carved by humans using their own imagination and skill.” (vs. 29, *International Standard Version*) How wonderfully Paul thus contrasts the one true God with all other gods.

THE JUDGMENT DAY

Paul says concerning mankind’s general lack of knowledge of the “unknown God,” that the “times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent, Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30,31) The command to repentance has gone out through the Gospel message, and while it has been proclaimed throughout all the earth, the number thus far who have heard the message in an understandable manner has been very small. Thus, as for the majority of mankind, God is still “winking”

at, or overlooking, their ignorance as he continues to prepare for their future blessing.

That blessing will be brought to them through enlightenment. Notice how Paul contrasts the “times of this ignorance” with the fact that God has appointed a future “day” of judgment. The Apostle Peter clarifies that this judgment day will not be twenty-four hours in length, but rather a period of one thousand years. (II Pet. 3:7,8) The apostles knew this to be in harmony with God’s plan, for the Prophet Isaiah had written, “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Isa. 26:9) Likewise, the psalmist wrote, “He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.” (Ps. 96:13) In the judgment day scene pictured for us in Revelation the “books” are “opened,” a symbol of revealed knowledge and understanding.—Rev. 20:12

The foregoing statement of Isaiah that the people will learn righteousness when God’s “judgments are in the earth,” is followed by the prophet’s reference to other “lords beside thee,” which he says have had “dominion over us.” These, Isaiah asserts, will all be “dead” then, “they shall not live,” and even the memory of these former gods will “perish.” (Isa. 26:13,14) This will be made possible through the enlightenment of the judgment day, as well as by the fact that Satan will be unable to deceive mankind any longer, for he will be bound. (Rev. 20:2) By these means, all people will thus be enabled to learn of, worship and serve the only “living and true God” with one consent.—I Thess. 1:9

Paul explains that this future work of enlightenment and judgment will be in the hands of Jesus,

and that God has given assurance of this to all men in that he has raised him from the dead. An outline of the qualifications of this future judge of mankind is presented to us by the Prophet Isaiah. Jesus is identified prophetically as “a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch” which was to grow out of his “roots.”—Isa. 11:1

Concerning this Branch, Isaiah further writes: “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear [*Strong’s*: “reverence”] of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the [reverence] of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked”—those who willfully oppose earth’s new king and judge. “Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.”—vss. 2-5

The result of this righteous rulership and judgment of Christ is then symbolically described by Isaiah: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of

the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:6-9

A PURE LANGUAGE

The earth will then be filled with the “knowledge of the Lord” because he will have provided the people with a “pure language,” or message, which will “sweep away the refuge of lies,” misrepresentations, and distortions which have confused the minds of the fallen and dying race. (Isa. 28:17) Then they will be enlightened concerning the one true God, and learn to serve him with “one consent,” that is, all in a unified way. They will not be forced to do so, but they will have learned to love their Creator, because they will have been taught concerning his character attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power. They will learn how his love was manifested and his justice satisfied through his beloved Son who “gave himself a ransom for all.” (I Tim. 2:6) They will see his power manifested in the resurrection. Finally, they will come to understand his wisdom in the permission of evil, and in his loving plan for the recovery of the fallen race.

In his words to Timothy, Paul explains that it is the desire of God that all shall be saved, and “come unto the knowledge of the truth.” This knowledge, centered in the “ransom for all,” will be “testified in due time” to all people. (vss. 4,6) The “due time” is the appointed time during which the world is to be judged by the righteous judge, Christ Jesus. Concerning that day, the Prophet Micah wrote, “The law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” (Mic. 4:2) “Zion” is here used as a symbol of the heavenly phase of Christ’s kingdom. With Christ on mount Zion will be the

“little flock” who have followed him faithfully, even unto death.—Luke 12:32; Rev. 14:1,4; 2:10

Jerusalem, as used in Micah’s prophecy, symbolizes the earthly phase of the kingdom. “Princes in all the earth” will be appointed by God as earthly representatives to carry out Christ’s instructions. (Ps. 45:16) From these will go forth the “word of the LORD”—the words of instruction, the “pure language,” which will enlighten all mankind and thus provide a full opportunity for everyone to turn to the Heavenly Father.

Of this time we are assured, “There shall be no more death.” (Rev. 21:4) The people, raised from the dead, will learn the fundamental truth which Paul stated so long ago: “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23) Mankind will rejoice to learn that by accepting the provision of life made for them through the redemptive work of Christ, and by obeying the laws of his kingdom, they may live forever. They will attain to life everlasting once they have taken full advantage of the opportunity to partake of the symbolic “tree of life,” and “water of life” which, in Christ’s kingdom, will flow from the “throne of God and of the Lamb.”—Rev. 22:1-3,14,17

There will indeed be one worldwide government, based on the righteous laws and loving attributes of the one true God. The laws of God will not only be learned, but written in the hearts of the people, the Bible assures us. No one will then need to say to his neighbor, “Know the Lord,” for all shall know him, from the least to the greatest. (Jer. 31:33,34) Thus will come about the joyous fulfilment of our opening text, that all will “call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.” ■

Remaining in the Faith

Key Verse: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”
—II Corinthians 13:5

Selected Scripture:
II Corinthians 13:1-11

excluded from fellowship until personal acknowledgment of this sinful conduct was made and repentance occurred.—I Cor. 5:1-11

Paul also found it necessary to affirm his apostleship as well as warn the brethren against the beguilement of false teachers. (II Cor. 11:2-15) Since the Corinthian brethren had not properly addressed all the problems they faced, Paul forewarned them in this epistle that in his next visit, he would deal with such transgressions in a forceful manner.

He writes: “This is the third time I am coming to you.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.”—II Cor. 13:1-4

Our Key Verse underscores the necessity for introspection to ensure that we are manifesting the spirit of Christ in thought, word and deed. If we discover that we have been deficient in any of these areas, we should promptly repent, and with renewed diligence pursue the principles of righteousness with every fiber of our being. “Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.”—vss. 7,8, *New International Version*

Paul’s letters were addressed to specific congregations or individuals as exhortations to be internalized for developing and maintaining a character that would be pleasing to the Heavenly Father and ultimately a position in the glorified body of Christ. Accordingly, since he was an inspired servant of God, as consecrated believers we are admonished to heed the instructions contained in his epistles.

The word “finally” in verse 11 implies an advanced stage of Christian development to which we must progress. We should attain unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and humility, and should be striving to exhibit these at all times in our walk. It is important also that we evaluate our motives in life, because, although we are unable to perform perfectly, the Lord judges us largely by our heart’s intent. How thankful we should be to have such a merciful Heavenly Father. ■

Faith that Sets an Example

Key Verses: “*Ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.*”

—*I Thessalonians*
1:7,8

Selected Scripture:
I Thessalonians
1:2-10

chosen by God.

The powerful Gospel message delivered through the preaching of Paul, Silas and Timothy, as they traveled from place to place, was substantiated by its sound doctrinal principles. (Rom. 1:16; Tit. 1:9) Moreover, their approval by God was shown by various miraculous

AS LABORERS TOGETHER, it is understandable that Paul, Silas and Timothy would send greetings to the church at Thessalonica, expressing gratitude to God for their devotion to Christ as well as remembering them in prayer.—Acts 17:1-9; I Thess. 1:1,2

This epistle would certainly prove to be a source of encouragement to the brethren as their faith, love and hope were manifest, despite their being relatively new in terms of the length of their Christian sojourn. They gave evidence of their rapid growth as a result of the persecutions they experienced. Furthermore, the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives was a witness that they were loved and

manifestations, such as their escape from jail following an earthquake. (Acts 16:25-35) This experience at Philippi was most dramatic, and news of this occurrence may have been widely circulated, thus attesting to strength of the one true God they served.—I Thess. 1:3-5

Even though the believers in Thessalonica received severe persecutions at the hands of those who opposed them, they welcomed hearing the Gospel message with great joy, convinced that their actions were pleasing to the Heavenly Father. This Paul confirms: “Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.”—vs. 6

Our Key Verses attest the overall faithfulness of the brethren in receiving and proclaiming God’s Word, though it brought much opposition and great suffering. Their example had a profound effect upon others to whom they witnessed, and who subsequently became followers of Christ.

Although our lesson deals with the experiences of the Early Church, the concept of suffering for righteousness is something that any of the Lord’s elect may encounter. Such may be the experience of those who faithfully proclaim the scriptural message. Consecrated Christians have pledged to follow the Master’s pattern, despite opposition from others who may reject this message. Thus, any trials that we presently endure are but light afflictions as contrasted with the glory which will be ours as part of the bride of Christ, if we are faithfully carrying out this privilege.—II Cor. 4:17

May the following words strengthen our resolve to share the Gospel message: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”—Matt. 5:10-12 ■

Called to Be Holy

Key Verses: *“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”*
—I Peter 1:14,15

Selected Scripture:
I Peter 1:13-25

ness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

Although the Old Testament writers, under divine inspiration, prophesied about the salvation that was to come as a result of the sufferings of Christ, they did not understand how and when this would occur. Since Peter’s

IN THIS GENERAL EPISTLE from Peter, he encourages consecrated believers in distant locations to continue their faithful efforts in serving God and Christ Jesus in view of the great hope of attaining a spiritual inheritance at the end of their earthly sojourn.—I Pet. 1:1-5

In verses 6-9 of our lesson, Peter makes note of the fact that our faith is to be tested by means of various difficult experiences. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

epistle was written to strengthen the Gospel Age church, we are exhorted to conduct ourselves in a sober manner. This is reflected by walking in “newness of life,” made possible because we have received God’s Holy Spirit.—Rom. 6:4; 7:6

Our Key Verses emphasize the high standard of holiness required of all believers who will become part of the body of Christ. Although because of human weaknesses we cannot be perfect in all that we say and do, nevertheless our heart intentions must be pure. Whenever we speak or act amiss, we should repent and seek forgiveness from God in order to be restored to his favor.

“Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” (vss. 18-22) Here Peter reminds us that we have turned from sin unto “obeying the truth,” by virtue of accepting the merit of Christ’s ransom sacrifice at Calvary. This transformation process will also be reflected, the apostle states, in the demonstration of pure love for our brethren.

Accordingly, we will then be fulfilling the spirit of Christ’s final admonitions to the church. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”—John 13:34,35 ■

Partakers of the Divine Nature

Key Verse:
*“Whereby are given
unto us exceeding
great and precious
promises: that by
these ye might be
partakers of the
divine nature,
having escaped the
corruption that is
in the world
through lust.”*
—II Peter 1:4

Selected Scripture:
II Peter 1:1-15

PRIOR TO RECEIVING THE

Holy Spirit, as an especially beloved disciple of Christ, Peter had many unique experiences that enabled him to become a leading figure in the Early Church. On one occasion, along with James and John, he was taken into a high mountain and, in a vision, he witnessed the glorified Christ along with Moses and Elijah. This was an illustration as to how God’s kingdom will bless the human family in the future.—Matt. 17:1-9

In today’s encouraging lesson, Peter indicates that believers will receive increasing manifestations of God’s peace and favor based upon our faith in the redemptive merit of Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary. Additionally, by virtue of our accompanying knowledge of the Heavenly Father through study, prayer, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit, we have been called to moral excellence and a glorious hope.—II Pet. 1:1-3

Our Key Verse indicates that we have been given a series of “exceeding great and precious promises” to impel us towards our attainment of the divine nature. To reach

that goal, however, Peter tells us of certain qualities which we must develop. “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [love].”—vss. 5-7

The apostle’s exhortation continues by reminding us to be earnest in our efforts to develop the needed graces of the Holy Spirit. To be of God’s elect we must possess and maintain these character attributes until the end of our consecrated walk. All who are faithful in this regard will be rewarded with glory, honor and immortality.—vss. 10,11; Rom. 2:7

Such a prospect is almost unfathomable to the human mind, but if we are obedient to the divine instructions contained in God’s Word, the promise given by our risen, glorified Lord will surely be our portion—“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) Fully devoted followers of the Master have been invited to the wedding of Christ and his church—his bride—not merely as spectators, but as participants. (Rev. 19:7,8; 21:2,9) The Heavenly Father and his Son, Christ Jesus, desire that we become a part of the divine family.

Perilous conditions in the earth imply that the kingdom for which faithful Christians have long prayed is imminent. May the urgency of the moment bring renewed vigor to apply in our lives those principles that will enable us to live the words of Paul, who expressed the following conviction near the end of his Christian walk. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”—II Tim 4:7,8

Treasures in Heaven

“Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.”
—*Matthew 19:21*

MANY OF THE MAN-MADE traditions that have to do with religious doctrine had their beginnings centuries ago. However, one tradition which is rather new, comparatively speaking, is the set of beliefs promoted by some branches of Christianity which has been termed “prosperity theology.” It is also sometimes referred to as the “prosperity gospel,” the “health and wealth gospel,” and the “gospel of success.”

Prosperity theology holds that financial blessing and physical well-being are the will of God for Christians, and that these can be attained through increased faith, positive behavior, and financial support for those who teach this viewpoint. It is supposed that the more these are put into practice, the more God will deliver health, security and earthly prosperity.

Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, the television became an integral part of nearly every home in

the western world, and particularly in the United States. With that came the ability to communicate to the general population by means of many different types of broadcasting, such as news, documentaries, movies, comedy and drama series, sports, and various other informational programming. Religion grew to be one of these popular options, especially as church leaders realized the potential for much larger audiences than would ever be possible in a church building.

In the 1980s, cable television became available to the general public. One of the results of this was that many channels, some local and others national, were established which were devoted strictly to religious programming. With this, “televangelism” grew significantly in popularity and began to figure prominently in organized Christian religion. The ability to reach the masses right in their own homes at any hour of the day, seven days a week, seems to have been one of the catalysts for the increase in number of those teaching the prosperity gospel.

Prosperity theology can perhaps also be traced to the general increase in affluence of western society during the last 50-75 years. With that affluence has naturally come the desire among many for even greater earthly prosperity and wealth. If, indeed, this is God’s will for the believing Christian, many have been persuaded to think that they should give heed to the prominent leaders and charismatic orators who promote this teaching.

There are those, however, who have criticized prosperity theology, saying it promotes greed, pride, irresponsibility and idolatry. Others have suggested that, in particular, it exploits the poor. In addition,

some of the well-known preachers of the gospel of prosperity have been involved in scandal, and in a few cases they have been charged with financial fraud.

While these are reasons enough to avoid the relatively new man-made tradition of prosperity theology, our final authority on the subject should be the Scriptures themselves. What is promised in the Bible to the Christian believer in the way of earthly wealth, health and prosperity? What kind of “treasures” are the followers of Jesus to lay up for themselves, and for what eternal purpose should they be sought?

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

The words of our opening text were addressed to a young man who approached Jesus and said to him, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16) In Luke 18:18 this young man is referred to as a “certain ruler.” The record in both Matthew and Luke clearly indicates that he was rich, hence he is often referred to as “the rich young ruler.” However, while he was rich in the wealth of this world, and evidently exercised some degree of authority among men, he realized full well that these advantages would be only temporary, and thus vain, unless he could continue to live. He correctly understood that the rich cannot take their earthly wealth with them when they die.

With this realization weighing heavily upon him, the young man went to Jesus and asked him the question noted above. There is no indication here that this rich young ruler was asking about a future life. This is indicated by Jesus’ reply in which he

referred the young man to the commandments which were given to Israel at the hand of Moses. The Mosaic Law did not promise eternal life beyond the grave, but it did promise that anyone who could keep its requirements would, as Jesus stated, “enter into life.”—Matt. 19:17-19

To the young man’s thinking, Jesus’ statement evidently meant that he would not grow feeble and ultimately die. Being a Jew, and knowing the commandments, he promptly replied to Jesus, “All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” (vs. 20) Let us conclude that this man had been sincere in his efforts to keep the commandments but realized that he was not gaining the reward which obedience to them offered. While he is referred to as a young man, he was evidently not so young that he did not already sense that he was perhaps slowly losing his youth. Possibly he was not so strong and vibrant of health as he formerly had been, so his plea to Jesus was, “What lack I yet?”

A COMPLETE GIVING UP

Jesus replied to this young man with the words found in our opening text, and the Mark account adds this important statement by the Master: “Take up the cross.” (Mark 10:21) Jesus’ expression in Matthew 19:21, “If thou wilt be perfect,” does not imply physical perfection, but mental and moral completeness and maturity, resulting from a full dedication to the doing of God’s will. Only those who are fully devoted to God and to the doing of his will are pleasing to him and are assured to receive whatever blessings he may wish to bestow.

The record states that when the young man heard Jesus' instructions to sell what he had and give to the poor, "he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." (vs. 22) In other words, this young ruler, although noble so far as human standards are concerned, was not willing to pay the price of being one of the Master's followers. In addition, Jesus' instruction to "take up the cross," recorded by Mark, may have further steered the young man toward his negative decision. In Jesus' day, under Roman law it was customary for a criminal condemned to death by crucifixion to carry his cross from the judgment hall to the place of crucifixion. Thus, for one to carry a cross would indicate that he was on the way to death. This rich young ruler had asked Jesus what he could do to have eternal life, but Jesus simply invited him to give up his riches and follow him into death. It is perhaps no wonder that the young man "went away sorrowful."

A HEAVENLY HOPE

Had the young man been able to grasp it, in reality Jesus offered him a far more compensating portion than merely to remain alive as a human, and to continue enjoying his riches. He said to him that if he would sacrifice everything, even life itself, he would have "treasure in heaven." The Old Testament commandments did not promise a heavenly reward, hence the idea of heavenly treasure would be quite new to the rich young ruler. Evidently such a prospect had no appeal for him.

Jesus' disciples were listening to this dialog between the Master and the young man, and there were elements in it which they also did not at the

time understand. Jesus explained further to them: “A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven,” and also, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” The record continues, “When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?”—Matt. 19:23-25

Jesus could have explained to his disciples that rich individuals can enter into the rulership phase of the kingdom of God if they are willing to devote all that they have, and themselves, to the service of the Lord. He partially explained this thought by his illustration of a camel going through the “eye of a needle.” This was apparently a reference to a small gate within the larger entrance leading into the city of Jerusalem, called the needle’s eye gate. Camels could go through this gate, but only on their knees, and after first having their pack removed.

Though Jesus used this illustration, it seemingly was lost on the disciples, and they still inquired, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus did not give a direct reply to this question. He simply said, “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” Peter knew that this was not a full answer to his question, so he inquired very directly, “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?”—vss. 26,27

It is apparent why Peter asked this question. He had heard Jesus invite the rich young ruler to give up his all and follow him, with the promise that if he did this, he would have treasure in heaven. This was a new thought to the disciples. They had given up everything, and they supposed that they were

to be associated with Jesus in an earthly kingdom arrangement. It seemed worthwhile to give up all in order to obtain a high position of honor like this among men. Now, however, Jesus was talking about treasure in heaven. What could he mean, and how did they, the disciples, fit into such an arrangement? Thus, Peter asked plainly, “What shall we have therefore?”

THRONES AND JUDGMENT

Replying to this question, Jesus said, “Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Matt. 19:28) This was not the full answer as to what would constitute the promised “treasure in heaven,” but it did give some important information. It revealed that the promised treasure in heaven involved “glory” and “thrones,” and the exercise of authority with respect to judgment.

These treasures, however, were not to be obtained until after our Lord’s return at his Second Advent—not until “the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory.” Jesus mentioned this point again in his parable of the sheep and the goats, given just three days before his death on the cross. He said, “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”—Matt. 25:31,32

The “holy angels” who are shown in this parable as being with the Son of man when he sits upon the

throne of his glory are the faithful followers of the Master during the present age—those who have “forsaken all” and followed him. (Rev. 3:21) The word “angel” in the New Testament is a translation of a Greek word which simply means “messenger.” A messenger may be heavenly or earthly. In this case the reference is to those among mankind who faithfully follow Jesus and are exalted to heavenly glory to live and reign with Christ.—Rev. 14:1,4; 20:4

The Apostle Paul refers to these “messengers,” these faithful ones, saying, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Col. 3:4) Such a prospect is a bright one indeed. It is a prospect of glory and, as Paul adds, also of honor and immortality. (Rom. 2:7) The hope of such heavenly treasure is not a selfish one. As Jesus explained, and as the Scriptures elsewhere clearly teach, the purpose of sitting with Jesus in glory is to participate in the great future work of judging the whole world of mankind. The Bible further teaches that this judgment period will be one of rich blessing for all who then, when given a favorable opportunity, obey the laws of righteousness which will be in force. The world will be judged “in righteousness” by the glorified Christ, not by the unrighteous reasoning of fallen human thinking.—Acts 17:31

The psalmist wrote, “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.”

(Ps. 96:11-13) What a blessed prospect it is to realize that if we are faithful in giving up all that we have, and following Jesus into death, we will have this precious treasure and joy of associating with Christ to bring blessings to all the families of the earth.—Acts 3:25

JEWES AND GENTILES

In Jesus' explanation to his disciples concerning "treasure in heaven," he said that they would sit on "twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In his parable of the sheep and the goats he indicates that all nations, which would include Jews and Gentiles alike, will then be on trial, passing through their judgment day period. This larger picture is quite in harmony with God's original promise to Abraham assuring him that through his seed all families of the earth would be blessed.—Gen. 12:3; 22:18

Jesus explains further concerning the position of both Jews and Gentiles, as recorded in Matthew 10:15. Here Jesus compares the position in the judgment day of Jews who rejected him and his disciples with certain Gentiles. He states, "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city." Whether it will be less tolerable or more tolerable for individuals in the day of judgment will depend upon the amount of knowledge they previously had concerning God and his laws of righteousness, and the extent to which they endeavored to live up to the light they possessed.

For us it is a blessed source of encouragement to know that if we are faithful, even unto death, we

will have the joy of dispensing the blessings of the judgment day and of the kingdom to the sin-sick and dying world of mankind. This was one of the joys set before Jesus which enabled him to endure the cross and to despise the shame which was heaped upon him because of his faithfulness to his Heavenly Father. It is likewise one of the joys which is set before us. To the extent that our faith can lay hold upon the many promises of God which assure us of this high position of honor and rulership in the kingdom, we too will thereby receive strength and courage to continue in the narrow way of sacrifice, laying aside all encumbrances, and running with patient endurance the “race that is set before us.”—Heb. 12:1,2

OTHER TREASURES

It is impossible for our finite minds to grasp clearly just what the glories of the kingdom will be like, but of a certainty they will be far beyond any temporary glory or satisfaction that could possibly come to us from earthly riches or treasure in the few short years of this present life. The Apostle John wrote: “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 3:1-3) As John declares, we have no earthly frame of reference to help us conceive of what our heavenly condition will be, but we do know that we will be “like him,” and we shall see him in all his divine glory. What an eternal treasure this will be!

We have rejoiced in our relationship with Jesus, calling upon him as our Advocate, Elder Brother, High Priest, Good Shepherd, and Friend. (I John 2:1;

Heb. 2:11; 4:15; John 10:11; 15:14) This association with him has been upon the basis of faith, for we have never seen him, yet our faith in the promises of the Scriptures has brought him very close to us. However, if we are faithful unto death, we shall see him face to face, and behold his glory. We will behold the glory also of the Heavenly Father. Indeed, we will share in these glories, and participate in that joyous work of dispensing blessings of health and life to all mankind. What a treasure!

The psalmist spoke prophetically of Jesus' express desire to be in the presence of his Father: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. 16:11) Paul informs us that Jesus is now "set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:2) At that position on God's "right hand" Jesus stated in his vision given to John that the overcomers of the present age will be granted the privilege of sitting with him in his throne, even as he was with the Heavenly Father in his throne.—Rev. 3:21

The thought of meeting and being with the great Creator of the universe, the one who is from everlasting to everlasting, is far beyond our capacity to grasp with any degree of reality. Thinking of this as being one of the heavenly treasures, it is so great that we can comprehend its implications to but a small extent. Though we can understand it only in part, we know that this is part of the spiritual riches promised to the faithful. Paul wrote, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also 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 BRIDE

In Revelation 19:7, Jesus is referred to as the Lamb, and in this text, we are told of the time when “the marriage of the Lamb” comes, and when his “wife hath made herself ready.” The wife, or bride of the Lamb, will be his glorified church, and is depicted in Revelation 21:2 as a “holy city” which comes down from God out of heaven “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” The foundations of this symbolic city are “garnished with all manner of precious stones.”—vs. 19

We may not understand all that is depicted by these precious stones, but they do represent riches of heavenly glory, and obviously a part of the “treasure in heaven,” which will become ours upon the basis of our giving up earthly riches in demonstration of our zeal for the Lord and for his cause.

NO PROFIT WITHOUT LOVE

While it is true that the way into the treasures of heavenly glory is the “narrow” way of sacrifice even unto death, this sacrifice must be motivated by love or else it will not be acceptable to the Lord. It will be remembered that Jesus called upon the rich young ruler to bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and take up his cross, that he might gain “treasure in heaven.” The Apostle Paul was evidently acquainted with this expression of the terms of the narrow way, and wrote, “If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.”—I Cor. 13:3, *Revised Version*

Here Paul built upon Jesus’ instructions to the rich young man by explaining (Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31) that in order to obtain this “profit” of heavenly treasure, love must be the motive which causes us to sacrifice, to suffer, and to die. Thus, gaining heavenly treasure is not merely a matter of sacrifice, but sacrifice inspired by the inward force of love. If we are filled with the love of God, the love that prompted the Creator to give his Son to be man’s Redeemer, and the love which prompted Jesus to suffer and die that we might live, then we too will gladly follow in his footsteps of sacrifice faithfully unto death. May this indeed be our response to the Master’s invitation to follow him, and may the glories of the kingdom, and the future privilege of blessing others, continue to be the great treasure before us, encouraging and strengthening our faith in every time of need. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

NOVEMBER 7—“I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God.”—Revelation 20:4 (Z. ’00-285 Hymn 134)

NOVEMBER 14—“Take heed unto yourselves, ... for grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”—Acts 20:28-30 (Z. ’04-74 Hymn 293)

NOVEMBER 21—“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”—James 1:2 (Z. ’02-133 Hymn 275A)

NOVEMBER 28—“When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?”—Job 34:29 (Z. ’96-259 Hymn 106)

“Present with the Lord”

*“We are confident,
I say, and willing
rather to be absent
from the body, and
to be present
with the Lord.
Wherefore we
labour, that,
whether present or
absent, we may be
accepted of him.”*
—II Corinthians
5:8,9

IN VERSES ONE TO FOUR

of the fifth chapter of II Corinthians, Paul contrasts the Christian’s body of flesh with the future heavenly body received in the resurrection. He speaks of the fleshly body as a “tabernacle,” or temporary dwelling, in which a Christian lives. In this tabernacle, he says, “we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” “Not for that we would be unclothed,” he adds, “but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

Paul knew that in his day, and throughout the ensuing centuries, for a Christian’s earthly tabernacle to be “dissolved,” as stated in verse one of our lesson, meant being “unclothed” in the sleep of death until the resurrection. He would be, to use the apostle’s language in another place, a “bare grain”

sown in death, there to remain until given his new spiritual body in the resurrection.—I Cor. 15:37

To be clothed ultimately with a heavenly body has been the Christian's hope of future life. Paul says, "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." (II Cor. 5:5) This "earnest," or pledge of the Spirit, is a token of the joy and blessing faithful followers of the Master will have when, in the resurrection, their hope is made a reality.

In several instances, Paul uses the promised future reward for such faithful Christians to illustrate the blessings which, in a small way, we enjoy even now by faith. He says that "as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4) This does not mean that our resurrection has actually taken place, but merely that we should "walk" as though it had—in "newness of life." By faith, we should endeavor to live as fully as possible apart from the world and from all the "old things" of fleshly life.—II Cor. 5:16,17

In Ephesians 1:3, Paul employs this same method of illustrating the new life of footstep followers of Jesus. Here he speaks of our being blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." These "heavenly places" will ultimately be the high position of glory which, if faithful, we will share with Jesus in the resurrection. However, Paul indicates that by faith we are even now dwelling in these heavenly places as the result of our relationship with Christ.

Similarly, in the language of our opening verses, Paul is employing the same method of illustrating

our present standing with God through Christ Jesus. As we have seen, he first speaks of our earthly tabernacle in which we “groan,” contrasting it with our “house which is from heaven.” Thus, the apostle reminds us of the unsatisfactory conditions which we must now endure and holds before us that great prospect of joy which we will experience when, in the resurrection, we receive our new heavenly bodies.

Then, in the words of our theme text, the Apostle Paul explains that we now have a down payment, as it were, on this future reward. By faith we can be “present with the Lord” while actually dwelling in our earthly tabernacles. He continues, saying, “We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted” of the Lord. (II Cor. 5:9) Here he is speaking symbolically, using our present sojourn in the flesh as well as our glorious future home in heaven as illustrations of that which we experience as followers of Christ while still in this fleshly tabernacle.

How apt this illustration is! Indeed, the one great hope of every faithful Christian is to be in the actual presence of the Lord and to experience the fullness of joy which this will mean. Now, too, while still in the flesh, we find our greatest joy in being “present” with the Lord. We experience this by faith. Through our study of God’s Word, meditation upon the truths contained therein, fellowship with his people, activity in his service, and prayer, we can even now be present with the Lord.

On the other hand, there is a certain amount of time in the life of every follower of Jesus which must be devoted to material things. It is necessary to earn a living, and to give a proper amount of time and

consideration to those who are near and dear to us according to the flesh. The Scriptures enjoin this upon us, and we accept these privileges with thanksgiving, and endeavor to use them to the glory of God.—Rom. 12:17; I Tim. 5:8

While we are engaged in these needful earthly responsibilities, it is not always possible to be present with the Lord in the sense of meditating upon his Word, fellowshiping with his people, or working directly in his service. However, as Paul says, we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord. It should be the earnest desire of every Christian to be pleasing to the Lord in everything he does, whether it is working at a job, giving time to his family, or enjoying more directly the spiritual blessings implied in the thought of being present with him.

THE JOY OF HIS PRESENCE

Great are the joys of faith which we now experience while in this symbolic manner we are “absent” from the body and “present” with the Lord. This should be such a true delight that we will earnestly endeavor to manage every hour of the day that is not rightfully devoted to other things in order that we may have more time to spend with our loving Heavenly Father.

Immediately after using this meaningful illustration of our present privileges, Paul adds, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body.” (II Cor. 5:10) This is a reference to our present trial period while in the flesh. It is what we do while still in this body of flesh, together with our heart’s

intentions regarding the same, that will determine our fitness for our home in heaven.

It is a most reasonable test to which the Lord is putting us. If we are genuinely longing to be with him in heavenly glory, where we will experience fullness of joy throughout eternity, it will be natural to seek every possible opportunity we can to be near him now. By using this as a guide we can in large measure determine how genuinely we are longing to be in the actual presence of the Lord. If we are content now to be “at home” in the body, and do not experience a sense of great loss when we are not by faith present with the Lord, it might well indicate that we are not earnestly setting our affections on things above.—vs. 6; Col. 3:1,2

HEAVENLY PROSPECTS

If we prove faithful and are exalted to heavenly glory, it will mean not only being ushered into the actual presence of our Heavenly Father, but meeting also, face to face, all the faithful saints of the entire age since Pentecost. There we will see Paul, John, Peter, James and all the other apostles. We will also meet those other faithful brethren mentioned in the Bible in connection with the experiences of the Early Church.

There, too, we will meet the holy angels, and become acquainted with those who were our “ministering spirits” while we walked during our earthly sojourn. (Heb. 1:14) What a joy that will be, and how wonderful it will be to learn of the many times they providentially overruled and protected us, keeping us from falling.

From our heavenly home we will also have contact with the "Ancient Worthies." They will be the earthly representatives of God's coming kingdom, which will bring blessings of health, peace and life to all the willing and obedient of the remainder of mankind. The faithful overcomers who make up the church in glory will have full knowledge of the Ancient Worthies and will be directing their ministry.

Speaking of this coming kingdom arrangement, God's prophets state, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:3; Mic. 4:2) "Zion" is a reference to the heavenly phase of that kingdom, under Christ and his church, who will give forth God's righteous laws at that time. "Jerusalem" refers to the earthly part of the kingdom, under the supervision of the Ancient Worthies, who will disseminate the "word of the LORD" to the people.

In harmony with the foregoing statements, Paul says that we are approaching Mount Zion, "The city of the living God, ... and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." (Heb. 12:22-24) These "just men made perfect" are the Ancient Worthies, those faithful servants of God who lived and died prior to Jesus' offering himself as a ransom sacrifice.—Heb. 11:39,40

Let us remember the down payment which is ours to enjoy even now. Do we earnestly look forward to cooperation with Abraham, Moses, David, and with all the prophets, in the work of the kingdom? Do

we anticipate the joy of meeting Jesus, the apostles, and other faithful ones portrayed in the New Testament? Surely we do! Even now we can meet them in the Bible, for it is through the Scriptures that God's Holy Spirit provides us the pledge of our future inheritance.

The Word of God is a place where we can meet and come to know, not only our Heavenly Father, but his faithful servants of both the Old and New Testaments. Every hour we spend in its pages, in addition to learning of God's glorious plan, we can enjoy the inspirational company of those faithful patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, as well as Jesus himself and our guardian angels.

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

In the Bible, we meet these faithful servants of God, worthy ones of old, who "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched

the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in faith,” and “turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” (Heb. 11:33,34) We can rejoice, too, in their future position in the plan of God as “princes in all the earth.”—Ps. 45:16

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the same manner we can enjoy the fellowship of Jesus, the apostles, and all of the Early Church whose names are mentioned in the New Testament. We can spend moments with the Master, or with any of his faithful apostles, in their many experiences. We can stand beside Jesus as he heals the sick and raises the dead. We can hear the gracious words which fell from his lips, who spoke as never a man had spoken before. (Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:22; John 7:46) We can be with Mary as she anointed the Master with the precious ointment, demonstrating the outpouring of her heart devotion upon him whom she loved. (John 12:3) We can seat ourselves with Jesus and his disciples at the table in the “upper room” on that last night before he was crucified. (Luke 22:12) We can hear him impart those wonderful words of life recorded in John, chapters 13 to 17. Then we can go with him to Gethsemane, to the judgment hall, to Pilate, and then to Golgotha. We can hear our precious Lord in his dying moments summon sufficient strength to say, “It is finished,” and pray to his Father, “Into thy hands I commend my spirit.”—John 19:30; Luke 23:46

We can read the opening chapters of the book of Acts, and in our minds take our place with the disciples upon whom the power of God fell on the

Day of Pentecost, and in some measure experience with them the joys of a reaffirmed faith, and a knowledge of what the Lord now wanted them to do. Throughout the pages of the Book of Acts, we have recorded many of the wonderful and noteworthy experiences of the Lord's people during the period of the Early Church. These are all there for us to enter into, and from which to receive inspiration to continue our journey toward the heavenly Canaan. What a wonderful foregleam of the future joys of fellowship with Jesus and the Early Church we can now enjoy if we will.

Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude wrote letters to churches and to individuals of their day, and some general epistles. They wrote those letters to us also. How much closer it brings us to them, and to our Lord, to think of it in this personal way. The next time we feel that we would very much like to receive an encouraging letter from a fellow Christian in the narrow way, let us go to the Scriptures and read the letters which are there recorded for our admonition, joy and encouragement.

Do we joyfully anticipate meeting those angels who have so faithfully served us from day to day? We can also enjoy a glimpse of this future experience by looking into the many revealing accounts of the services of these heavenly messengers recorded in the Word of God. If we go with the women to the tomb of Jesus, we will there see the angel that announced to them, "He is risen." (Matt. 28:6) Angels also served to release Apostle Peter from prison and save Paul from drowning. (Acts 12:6-11; 27:23,24) Through the lens of the Bible, we can gaze into the tomb, visit that prison, place ourselves in

the position of those who were endangered, and get some idea of what the ministry of the angels must have meant to them. We can turn almost anywhere in the Scriptures and come in contact with angels and their faithful ministry. While in this tabernacle we are approaching unto this “innumerable company of angels.”

Above all, we can enjoy sweet fellowship with our Heavenly Father by meeting him in his Word, for we are present with him when we are with his people of the past and present, and with his holy angels. We should not overlook, either, the many direct and personal messages God has provided for us in his Word. How reassuringly he talks to us when we meet him there: “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”—Exod. 33:14; Heb. 13:5

WITH THE LORD'S PEOPLE

We can also be present with the Lord while still dwelling in our earthly tabernacle through fellowship with others of like precious faith. When we meet together, it is more than gathering with our brethren, for we are meeting also with Jesus. He said that where even “two or three” are gathered in his name he would be present. In spirit, the Heavenly Father is also present in our fellowship.—Matt. 18:20; I John 1:3

Through weariness or other difficulties, we might be tempted to give up meeting with our brethren. We might feel that we can afford to miss their fellowship, or that they do not particularly need us. However, would we feel this way if we remembered that by “forsaking the assembling of ourselves

together,” we lose an opportunity to be present with the Lord? (Heb. 10:25) There are many of the Lord’s people who are not situated so they can enjoy the fellowship of their brethren. This may be due to isolation through distance or other circumstances over which they have no control. Each child of God yearns for the fellowship of his brethren, and through them with the Lord, but if circumstances are such that this is frequently or always impossible, he can still be present with the Heavenly Father through personal communion with him, and through the study of his Word. Those in such circumstances can testify how wonderfully the Lord has made up the great loss of not being able to meet with his people, when his Word and Spirit have been sought.

THROUGH SERVICE

When we are active in the service of the Lord, we are also enjoying the blessedness of being present with him. This is because we are coworkers with him, partners in his glorious plan for the reconciling of the world. Paul wrote that God, through Christ, is “reconciling the world unto himself.” Now, he explained further, he has given this “ministry of reconciliation” to us, and thus we are made “ambassadors for Christ.” (II Cor. 5:18-20) Surely, as God used Christ to bring about the promised reconciliation of the world through his ransom sacrifice, we too have the privilege of engaging in that “ministry” by giving words of hope and comfort to the present groaning creation.

As co-laborers with God, it is essential, through his Word, to acquaint ourselves with his plans and purposes. As we view the grandeur and harmony of

his arrangements, our enthralled vision sees him “high and lifted up,” and we rejoice in his glory as we endeavor to tell others the blessed tidings of his kingdom. (Isa. 6:1) How wonderful it is that in this way also we can be present with the Lord and have the assurance that he is present with us. This should make every word of comfort we give a sacred, blessed experience. It should add dignity and importance to every booklet and tract we distribute. Let us realize that whatever we do in the Lord’s service, or wherever he asks us to go, we are not alone, for we serve in his presence, and by his grace.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Equally precious is the time we spend in God’s presence through meditation and prayer. In addition to our regular times for prayer, such as morning and evening, it is our privilege to lift our hearts in prayer to God no matter the time, place or circumstance. Through meditation on the Lord’s goodness, peace and joy well up within us. We can look up to him and thank him for taking us under his wing and giving us a glimpse of his glory.—Ps. 91:1-4; Exod. 33:18-22

Problems may arise and the difficulties of the day might often bear heavily upon us. The way ahead may not be clear, or some earthborn cloud may have hidden the Lord’s face. Whatever need we may have, we can go to him immediately for help. His ear is always open to the cries of our hearts. “The eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.”—II Chron. 16:9, *New American Standard Bible*

For all of us, there are times when it is necessary to be “at home in the body.” (II Cor. 5:6) However, in this, too, we can rejoice in the Lord. Even during the rush of everyday work, there are moments when thoughts of the Lord, his Word of truth, his people and his work can be enjoyed. Perhaps in such moments, a thought from one of our brethren, or a reassuring text of Scripture, will come to mind to help us remember that the Lord is near, and his presence continues with us.

Truly, the present heritage of the saints is rich and blessed! Let us have an ever-deepening realization of our privilege of being “present” with the Lord. By so doing, we will be given increased strength and courage to press forward toward the “fulness of joy” unto which we are now approaching. Such will be the joy of being in God’s actual presence, for at his “right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”
—Ps. 16:11 ■

*“Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
Praise the LORD with the harp;
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.
Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully, and shout for joy.”
—Psalm 33:1-3, New International Version*

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Bernice Blencowe, Vernon, BC, Canada—September 21. Age, 86

In Everything Give Thanks

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”
—*I Thessalonians 5:18*

THANKSGIVING DAY IS celebrated each year in the United States on the fourth Thursday in November, while in Canada it is celebrated on the second Monday in October. Regardless of the day it is observed, we rejoice that

many still pause to give thanks to God for the bountiful blessings which he has given. As the psalmist wrote, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.”—Ps. 92:1, *Revised Version*

Jesus “gave thanks” in prayer throughout his earthly ministry. Before food or drink was served, Jesus prayed to the Heavenly Father, giving thanks for these provisions. When performing miracles, such as feeding the multitudes or raising the dead, Jesus offered thanksgiving to God for guiding him in the exercise of divine power. In the upper room, when Jesus instituted the Memorial Supper, he gave thanks for the symbolic “bread” and “cup.”—John 6:11; 11:41; Luke 22:19; Matt. 26:27

The New Testament teaches us that we must develop a deeper attitude of thanksgiving than what might seem sufficient to human thinking. In our opening text the Apostle Paul emphasizes that we should be thankful “in everything,” or as the *Weymouth New Testament* reads: “In every circumstance of life be thankful.” Paul expressed a similar thought to the Ephesian brethren, writing, “Giving thanks always for all things unto God.”—Eph. 5:20

Implied in this higher level of thanksgiving is that we are to be thankful not only for the good and pleasant experiences which come to us by God’s providences, but also for the trials and difficult experiences which he permits in our life. Giving thanks for these is not easy to do, especially at first. However, if we develop a faith based upon God’s promises, we will be able to realize more and more that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28) These “all things” include difficulties, persecutions, financial troubles, health problems, or the death of a loved one. They may also include being slandered, evil-spoken of, or personally misrepresented by others.

The Apostle Peter spoke about this, saying, “Though for the passing moment you may need to suffer various trials; that is only to prove your faith is sterling (far more precious than gold which is perishable and yet is tested by fire), and it redounds to your praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”—I Pet. 1:6,7, *James Moffatt Translation*

UNTHANKFULNESS IS UNHOLINESS

In society today people are often taught, either directly or indirectly, “believe in yourself” or “promote yourself.” If someone does something good to you, “you deserved it” or “earned it.” Because of such an attitude, thankfulness is lost sight of in many instances. However, this is the spirit of the world which the Apostle Paul warns about, saying, “In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, ... unthankful, unholy.” (II Tim. 3:1,2) We note the implication shown in the final words of this text—that unthankfulness is closely associated with unholiness.

Being unthankful can easily lead to discontent, complaining, and ultimately disobedience to God. Soon after the nation of Israel’s exodus from Egypt, most began to complain, becoming discontent and unthankful to God. The psalmist records, “Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.” “They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel.” “They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD.” “They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt.” “They believed not his word: But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.”—Ps. 106:7,13,16,21,24,25

WHY THANKFULNESS IS IMPORTANT

True thankfulness removes discontent and complaining. Thus, it is impossible to complain and be thankful at the same time. Thankfulness allows us

to recognize and appreciate what God has done, not only for us individually, but also what he has done, and will do, for all mankind. Our attitude should be: “The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”—Ps. 126:3

In every unexpected trial or emergency in life, let us remember that God has prepared that “cup” of experience for us. As we drink this cup, and as we pass through each experience he permits for our eternal benefit, his promise is, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (John 18:11; Mark 10:38,39; Heb. 13:5,6) Sometimes God may permit our experience to be prepared by blinded servants of the Adversary. This awareness should help us to take joyfully the “spoiling of our goods,” which may include anything we might have deemed precious, including our influence or good name. (Heb. 10:34) We are to learn to treat with kindness and gentleness those whom God may permit to prepare and administer to us the cup of our sufferings.

At the present time, very few have the type of faith necessary to develop and maintain such an attitude of heart. Only a “little flock” have not only believed in the precious blood of Jesus unto justification, but have also made a full, unreserved consecration to the Heavenly Father. These have vowed to walk in Jesus’ footsteps, to “suffer with him,” that they “may be also glorified together” with him.—Luke 12:32; Rom. 8:17; Col. 2:6; I John 2:6

Thankfulness makes trials and sacrifices seem small, and all of God’s promises grand and motivating. As we read, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ... for the things which

are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (II Cor. 4:17,18) Thanksgiving leads to obedience to God’s principles and to willing self-sacrifice in his service. Let us consider a few examples of this attitude of thankfulness to God recorded in the Scriptures.

DAVID’S THANKFULNESS TO GOD

Israel’s king David wrote a psalm of thanksgiving. Many years prior to this, the Israelites had gone out to fight against the Philistines, which resulted in 4,000 Israelites being slain. (I Sam. 4:1,2) Returning to the camp after such a horrible defeat, the elders of Israel said to the people, “Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.”—vs. 3

The Israelites knew how precious the ark of God was. It was upon the ark, between the two cherubim, where God met and spoke to Israel. (Exod. 25:22; Num. 7:89) However, Israel’s elders incorrectly reasoned that if they took the ark with them into a second battle against the Philistines, they would be victorious. They thought that surely God would not allow the ark to be captured by Israel’s enemies. Perhaps the elders were thinking back to the time when the ark was used to lead the people of Israel during the crossing of the Jordan River and also, during the fall of Jericho. (Josh. 4:1-18; 6:1-20) However, on both of those occasions it was God who had given the instructions to Israel concerning how the ark was to be used. Never in their history, though, had God instructed the Israelites

to take the ark with them into battle with carnal weapons.

Regarding the instructions God had given as to the proper use of the ark, we note that even the high priest of Israel was not permitted to come before the ark of the covenant at any time of his own choosing, because he would die. (Lev 16:2) One lesson for us is how careful we should be in closely following God's instructions given to us in the Scriptures. We must not deceive ourselves into thinking that we can deviate from them by either trying to improve upon or by omitting them. Let us not mistakenly conclude that "times are different today," or that our particular situation or circumstance should allow us to alter God's Word.

The Israelites heeded the words of the elders of Israel and "sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims." With no instruction or authorization from God, however, they illicitly sent the ark into the battle against the Philistines. The result was disastrous. 30,000 Israelites were slain, and the ark of God was captured by the Philistines.—I Sam. 4:4-11

More than twenty years later, King David was able to bring the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem. (I Sam. 7:1,2; I Chron. 15:1-29; 16:1,2) On this occasion he wrote a "psalm to thank the LORD." We quote, in part, David's words: "Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually. Remember his marvellous works

that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth. ... Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised. ... Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name. ... Give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.”—I Chron. 16:7-34

DANIEL’S EXAMPLE

The Prophet Daniel thanked God on many occasions throughout his life, especially when receiving help from the Heavenly Father. One notable example of this occurred during the second year of King Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. The king had a dream which greatly troubled him. He called his closest wise men to come before him and demanded that they not only give its interpretation, but also tell the dream itself. The king reasoned that if his wise men could miraculously tell him his dream, which they had never heard, then surely their interpretation of what the dream meant could be relied upon. However, none of the wise men could recount the dream. This angered King Nebuchadnezzar so much that he made a decree that all the wise men in his kingdom be killed. This would include Daniel and his three Hebrew companions—Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.—Dan. 2:1-13

When Daniel learned about the king’s decree, he asked the king’s captain why such a pronouncement had been made. After hearing the reason, Daniel asked for an appointment with the king and promised to describe the dream and give its interpretation. After making this appointment, Daniel returned home and asked his three companions to pray to the God

of heaven concerning the king's dream and its interpretation.—vss. 14-18

God revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel in a night vision along with its interpretation. (vs. 19) Daniel then thanked and praised God, saying: "I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter." (vs. 23) The humble heart of Daniel enabled him to recognize and praise the help which God had provided.

THANKFULNESS OF JESUS

Jesus is the best example of having true faith and continual confidence in God. He went frequently to God in prayer and to his Word for guidance. Jesus realized that his every experience was under God's supervision. One example of this is when Jesus was before Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate said to Jesus, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." (John 19:10,11) Clearly, Jesus knew that the Heavenly Father's providential care was supervising all the affairs of his life. The same is true for us. Trials or difficulties which God permits to come upon us should be considered as mercies and blessings, because he overrules each experience we have in order to help us develop and crystalize our Christian character. Let us remind ourselves that we have consecrated our all to the Lord. Thus, by faith, we are able to realize God's providence in all our experiences and render thanks unto him.

When Jesus performed miracles and gave lessons, he acknowledged the Heavenly Father as the source of his power and wisdom. (Luke 10:21,22; John 5:17-43) For example, before performing the miracle of feeding the 5,000, “Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down.” (John 6:1-14) Before Jesus raised Lazarus from death, he thanked God, saying, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.”—John 11:41,42

APOSTLE PAUL’S THANKFUL ATTITUDE

In nearly all of his epistles Paul wrote about thanksgiving. In his letter to the brethren at Rome, he said, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” (Rom. 1:7,8) In his two letters to the brethren at Corinth, the apostle expressed his thanksgiving to God, writing, “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.” “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”—I Cor. 1:4; 15:57; II Cor. 9:15

To the brethren at Ephesus, Paul wrote, “Giving thanks always for all things unto God.” (Eph. 5:20) How true it is that for us every day should be one of thanksgiving. We are to give thanks for “all things”—blessings as well as trials, knowing that all things are working for our eternal good by God’s direction. To his beloved fellow Christians at Philippi, Paul

said, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” —Phil. 1:3-6

In his letter to the brethren at Colosse, Paul wrote, “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.” He admonished them to be “abounding therein with thanksgiving,” and that “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God.” (Col. 1:3; 2:7; 3:17) Similarly, to the brethren at Thessalonica the apostle said, “We give thanks to God always for you all.” “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God, ... ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” —I Thess. 1:2; 2:13

When the Apostle Paul wrote to various individuals, he emphasized the thanksgiving which he had toward God. To Timothy he wrote, “I thank God, ... that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; ... When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee.” (II Tim. 1:3,5) To Philemon, he said, “I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints.” —Philem. 1:4,5

THANKSGIVING EVERY DAY

As we look back through the past year and recall life’s storms as well as its sunshine, its sorrows as

well as its joys, its tears as well as its smiles, we have the assurance of God's Word that the trials, difficulties, and adversities of life are blessings in disguise. If rightly accepted as lessons, they will work out for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" in the life to come.—II Cor. 4:16,17

Being thus exercised, we will be able to rejoice in tribulation, not because we love suffering, but because it helps us in developing our Christian character. (James 1:2-4; Rom. 5:3-5) "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Heb. 12:11, *New International Version*) Thankfulness will allow us to focus on the lessons we can learn from each experience we have, rather than become disappointed, discouraged or bitter.

Let us be thankful to God every day, regardless of our present situation. In this way, we can have a celebration of Thanksgiving continually. Surely it will not always be easy to do this. However, someone once expressed it in this way: "Gratitude is an attitude, that comes from the habit of giving thanks." May the attitude of thankfulness fill our hearts and minds more and more until the end of our earthly walk.

IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS

*We thank thee, Lord, for raiment,
and we thank thee for our food,
We thank thee for our shelter, O, thou Giver of all good;
We thank thee for the day
on which our eyes first saw the light,
We give thee thanks for every sense,
for hearing and for sight.*

*We thank thee for the sunshine,
and we thank thee for the rain,
We thank thee for the pleasure
and we thank thee for the pain.
We thank thee for the friends we've won,
and for the friends we've lost,
We thank thee for the heartaches
which these separations cost.*

*We thank thee for the tender love
which makes us clearly see
That every severed heart-string hath
but drawn us nearer thee.*

*We thank thee for forgiveness
when we fail in word or deed,
We praise thee for sufficient grace in every time of need.*

*We thank thee, blessed Father, for the gift of thy dear Son,
We thank thee and we praise thee for the victory he won.*

*We thank thee for his righteousness,
his robe so pure and white,
We praise thee that, when clothed in it,
we're blameless in thy sight.*

*We thank thee, oh, we praise thee
for thy good and precious word,
We bless thee for the wondrous faith
its promises have stirred.*

*We thank thee for the glorious hope of immortality,
Our hearts are longing, Lord, with thee
to dwell eternally!*

*We thank thee for our brethren,
for the love of each dear saint,
We bless thee for their fellowship
when heart and strength grow faint.
And thus we give thee thanks, dear Lord,
for each and every thing,
And pray that thou wilt keep us safe
beneath thy sheltering wing!*

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M. Colletti

Ontario, CA November 29,30

M. Davis

Ontario, CA November 29,30

W. Dutka

India:

Bangalore November 15-17

Mangalore 18

Mumbai 19

Chandigahr, Jalandhar 20,21

Ooty, Nilgiri Hills 22-24

Kochi 25,26

Tuticon, Nagercoil, Tirunelveli

27,28

Coimbatore 29,30

O. B. Elbert

Colombia:

Cali November 16,17

J. Freer

Ontario, CA November 29,30

L. Griehs

New Haven, CT November 3

Ontario, CA 29,30

S. Jeuck

New Haven, CT November 3

E. Kuenzli

India:

Bangalore November 15-17

Mangalore 18

Mumbai 19

Chandigahr, Jalandhar 20,21

Ooty, Nilgiri Hills 22-24

Kochi 25,26

Tuticon, Nagercoil, Tirunelveli

27,28

Coimbatore 29,30

A. Loutsky

Colombia:

Cali November 16,17

J. Parkinson

Milwaukee, WI November 2,3

Ontario, CA 29,30

D. Rawson

Ontario, CA November 29,30

D. Rice

Ontario, CA November 29,30

T. Ruggirello

Milwaukee, WI November 2,3

M. Shilling

Colombia:

Cali November 16,17

If any one preaches, let it be as uttering God's truth; if any one renders a service to others, let it be in the strength which God supplies; so that in everything glory may be given to God in the name of Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the might to the Ages of the Ages. Amen.

—I Peter 4:11, Weymouth New Testament

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.

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

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 3—Italian-American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact A. Suraci. Phone: (203) 248-3793/(203) 430-5770 or Email: annasuraci@comcast.net

CALI, COLOMBIA CONVENTION, November 16,17—Hotel Las Americas, Calle 21 Norte #3N-34. Cali, Colombia. The room rate is \$40.00 per night. The deadline for this rate is October 15. Contact C. Anania. Phone: (973) 262-0467 or Email: njbiblestudents@gmail.com

SOUTHWEST CONVENTION, November 29-December 2—Ontario Gateway Hotel, Ontario, CA. Hotel reservations, phone: (909) 975-5000. Mention Bible Students Convention for special rate available until November 3. Other information, contact D. Rawson. Phone: (408) 644-7668 or Email: rawsondr@yahoo.com

IDABAN THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, December 7—Ibadan Ecclesia place of fellowship, #24 Bola Fayemi Street, Coca Cola Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: +234803339949

CHICAGO CONVENTION, December 28,29—Addison Park District, 120 E. Oak Street, Addison, IL. Contact D. Whittaker. Phone: (630) 293-4810 or Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 18,19—Drury Inn, Happy Valley, 2335 W. Pinnacle Peak Road, Phoenix,

AZ 85027. Hotel reservations, phone: (800) 325-0720. Confirmation #2369019. Reservation deadline, December 16. Other information, contact A. Mengos. Phone: (480) 390-3767 or Email: samengos@yahoo.com

AUSTRALIAN CONVENTION, January 24-27—Camp Wilkin, Anglesea, Victoria, Australia. Contact R. Charlton. Email:australianbiblestudents@gmail.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 7-9—Holiday Inn Orlando International, 5750 T. G. Lee Blvd., Orlando, FL 32822. Phone: (407) 851-6400. Specify “Orlando Bible Students” for special rate by February 22. Online booking code: SBO. Other information, contact S. Jeuck. Phone: (407) 247-4641 or Email: sjeuck@aol.com

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, March 28—DoubleTree by Hilton, 789 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06854. Phone: (203) 853-3477. Other information, contact S. Koterba. Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 10-12—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Send reservations and meal counts to S. Thomassen by April 1. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

Christian Fellowship

Blest be the tie that binds

Our hearts in Christian love;

The fellowship of kindred minds

Is like to that above.

Our glorious hope revives

Our courage every day,

While each in expectation strives

To run the heavenly way.

—*Hymns of Dawn*