

The DAWN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

God's Ultimate Design for Humanity 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

Obedience in Temptation 16

Proper Almsgiving and Prayer 18

A Model for Prayer 20

Ask, Seek and Knock 22

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

The Depths of Belief and Faith 24

Obedient to the Vision of Truth 37

A Peculiar People 51

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 14

OBITUARIES 15

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 63

God's Ultimate Design for Humanity

*“Thy kingdom
come. Thy will be
done in earth, as it
is in heaven.”*

—*Matthew 6:10*

THE HEAVENLY FATHER

has justice as the foundation of his throne. Thus, the rule of law will always be applied by him with absolute fairness.

Equally true, however, is that he is a God of mercy. This is reassuring because without God's mercy, any deviation by his intelligent creatures against his laws would result in dire consequences for themselves.—Exod. 34:6,7; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 89:14

The father of the human family, Adam, was created perfect: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” (Gen. 1:27) While God placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden where they could be sustained in perfection forever, the Heavenly Father also prepared a test of Adam's obedience by directing him not to eat the fruit from one of the many trees that grew in this paradise. Had the first pair remained

faithful and obedient to God's instructions, the intimation is that there would have been no death in the human family, but instead a perfect race of mankind would have developed and maintained the image and likeness of the all-glorious Heavenly Father. Additionally, the conditions which existed when man was created would have continued, and joy, peace, love and happiness would have been experienced by the entire human family in accordance with the Creator's original design.—vss. 28-31

THE PENALTY INSTITUTED

Before the creation of mankind, there were angelic hosts in existence who rejoiced to observe the unfolding of God's plan to have intelligent human beings inhabiting the earth—"When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job 38:7) This passage of Scripture is generally understood to mean that heavenly beings joined in praise of the glorious creative works of God which would so honor him. It was a new manifestation of the Almighty Creator's goodness and power that thus enlarged his domain, and such benevolence claimed their gratitude.

One of these angelic "morning stars" which at that time sang such glorious praise to God was the angel Lucifer. He is described in the following manner: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! ... For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." (Isa. 14:12-14) Now, in his fallen

condition, he is called Satan, the arch-enemy of God and all his righteous purposes.—Luke 10:18

God had informed Adam what the penalty for disobedience would be, but Satan, speaking through the serpent, told mother Eve that death would not result from disobeying God's command. Deceived by the devil's lie, Eve partook of the forbidden fruit and offered it to Adam, who ate of it as well. (Gen. 3:1-6) The result of Adam's disobedience was death and, indeed, this penalty has continued upon his offspring for more than six thousand years. Globally, countless billions have suffered and died as a result of this original sin.—Rom. 5:12

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

About two thousand years after man's fall into sin and death, God made a promise to Abram, who was later called Abraham: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:1-3) We note, however, that God's promise was not fulfilled in Abraham's lifetime, but it was reaffirmed to Isaac his son and then to Isaac's son Jacob in turn. At his death, Jacob's descendants were denoted the "twelve tribes of Israel."—Gen. 49:28-33

Before Jacob's death, through a unique set of circumstances, all the Israelites dwelt in the land of Egypt. In time, they came under bondage to Pharaoh, the Egyptian ruler, who afflicted them severely.

Subsequently, God delivered them from their oppressors by raising up Moses, who became their leader. (See Exodus chapters 1-14) Through the Heavenly Father's provisions, various laws and ordinances were given to Israel for their guidance and protection as his chosen people. We also recall their wilderness experience, where they wandered for some forty years, with still no apparent evidence of the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. At last, the Israelites did finally enter into Canaan, after which many judges were raised up by God to instruct the people, and to assist in delivering the nation from their oppressors.

Ultimately, Israel rose to national prominence in the days of their kings, especially under David and Solomon. At Solomon's death, however, there was a division of the kingdom into ten northern tribes known as Israel and the remaining two which were called Judah. The ten northern tribes were led into idolatry by wicked kings and, ultimately, they were conquered by the Assyrians. Sometime later, the two-tribe kingdom of Judah also fell. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered their nation and ended their reigning line of kings—the last one being Zedekiah. We are told that this kingly arrangement would exist no more until “he come whose right it is.”—Ezek. 21:25-27

ADDITIONAL RESULTS OF MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE

The foregoing brief account of Israel's experiences is in many ways illustrative of all mankind's struggle with the results of Adamic sin, and its penalty, death. Comparatively few humans throughout the ages have lived privileged lives. As a result of sin, oft-times manifested in the form of pride and greed, the overwhelming majority of the world's populace has been subservient

to the wealthy and powerful. In our present day, with the increase of knowledge and the resulting explosion of communication and information, more and more individuals who have previously been exploited have become aware of the existing inequities in terms of wealth and living standards and are increasingly demanding their rights, whether real or only imagined.

Furthermore, in various polls that have been taken, there are many pressing issues which are shaking today's social, religious, political and economic foundations to the core. A sampling of these include: governmental corruption, moral bankruptcy, global economic turmoil, terrorist activity, invasion of privacy through technology, availability of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, violence, murder, suicide, religious and racial hatred, cyber-bullying, homelessness, a general lack of civility and respect, border and immigration issues, child abuse and trafficking, a decline in formal religious worship, pollution of the environment, and starvation. In addition, there continues to be general instability in many parts of the world, including the nations comprising the Middle East, as well as various other hot-spots in Asia, Africa, and South America.

Indeed, were it not for the Heavenly Father's merciful plans and purposes, there would be no hope for any of these problems to be eradicated. They would continue to plague mankind, and death, man's greatest enemy, would rule over the people unabated. In due course, however, God sent his son to earth for the purpose of becoming the redeemer for humanity and for the eventual removal of all the troubles which have beset the world as a result of sin. "We see Jesus,"

the apostle says, “who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”—Heb. 2:9

SCRIPTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHRIST’S SACRIFICE

The implications of Christ’s sacrifice can be summarized in the four statements and accompanying Scriptures below:

1. None of humanity could have attained eternal life before Jesus died. However, God’s purpose and grace, Paul says, “is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”—II Tim. 1:9,10

2. Salvation cannot be obtained except through Christ. “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. ... Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”—Acts 4:10,12

3. It is God’s will that each individual be given an opportunity to benefit from the death of Jesus. “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”—I Tim. 2:3-6

4. Those who have gone into the grave will be awakened at some future time from the sleep of death.

“Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgment.”—John 5:28,29, *Revised Version*

The rendering of John 5:29 in the *King James Version* speaks of the “resurrection of damnation.” However, the Greek word *krisis* properly denotes “judgment” which follows a trial. If the purpose for awakening sinners from the grave was simply to condemn them again, they would have no opportunity to benefit from the death of Christ. How hollow would be the meaning of the text, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16

Two thousand years ago a heavenly message was given which still awaits fulfillment: “There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”—Luke 2:8-11

These good tidings were for all people of past, present and future generations. Not fully grasping the import of what the Bible teaches, some Christians believe one must obtain salvation before death or forever be lost as part of the wicked. However, the Scriptures indicate that Jesus not only died as a

satisfaction for the sins of those who already have accepted him as their Savior, but also for those who have not. The Apostle John states that “Jesus Christ the righteous ... is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”—I John 2:1,2

HEAVENLY SALVATION

The Bible teaches a heavenly reward is offered to faithful Christians during this age. Human perfection is set forth for the rest of mankind who will lead righteous lives in God’s kingdom here on earth. Let us examine these two aspects of salvation. The following Scriptures make reference to the faithful followers of Christ who are promised a heavenly reward.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” “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.”—Matt. 6:19,20; Heb. 3:1; Rev. 3:21

During his earthly ministry, our Lord Jesus, in obedience to his Heavenly Father’s will, humbled himself to the death of the cross. As a result of his death and his subsequent resurrection by the power of God, Jesus provided an opportunity for all mankind to be raised from the death condition which has befallen all humanity because of Adam’s original sin. (Phil. 2:8,9; I Cor. 15:21,22) Furthermore, it was God’s

desire that there be a class of individuals redeemed from among mankind to comprise the church, or bride of Christ, who would be associated with Jesus in blessing all the families of the earth.—Heb. 12:22,23; Rev. 21:2,9; Gal. 3:16,28,29

Those who would be disciples of Christ have been invited to follow a course of righteous living and self-sacrifice. In extending this invitation, we read, “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”—Matt. 16:24,25

The rigorous process of devoting one’s life to such a sacrificial course helps to explain why few are chosen from among the many who are called. (Matt. 22:14) There are comparatively so few that they are styled a “little flock.” (Luke 12:32) These saints will be associated with our Lord, the Lamb of God, in vanquishing all unrighteousness and establishing God’s kingdom. They are the “called, and chosen, and faithful” believers.—Rev. 17:14

As the “captain” of all true believers, Jesus led the way to this heavenly salvation for his church by setting an example of self-denial and enduring trials even unto death. (Heb. 2:9,10) The path of discipleship is a difficult one at this time because it requires following in the Master’s footsteps and involves suffering and, at times, persecution. (Matt. 7:14; I Pet. 2:21; John 15:20) A high reward is promised to all who persevere faithfully in doing God’s will despite any opposition received. We read, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified

together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”—Rom. 8:17,18

GOD’S MERCIFUL PROVISION

God’s mercy is manifested in providing for the church’s redemption. As members of the fallen human race, we were born “in sin” and “shapen in iniquity.” (Ps. 51:5) The Heavenly Father was under no obligation to do anything for mankind, but through his merciful love the demands of divine justice have been satisfied by the sacrificial death of Jesus: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” —I John 4:10

The application of this mercy began to be evidenced by the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the imparting of miraculous gifts to the apostles. On that eventful day, Peter spoke to the multitude: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” (Acts 2:38,39) This benevolent provision continues to this day for all those who have been invited to become a part of the body of Christ and to participate in the blessing of the human family during God’s kingdom.

As a confirmation of this new relationship with Christ, Paul wrote: “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”

(Eph. 1:13) Consecrated believers now receive the benefits of this promise by having the influence and power of God's Holy Spirit working in their hearts and minds to replace the works of the flesh with the fruits of the spirit. As each believer daily strives to develop a more Christlike character, he becomes transformed and, if faithful, will inherit the innumerable promises of God reserved for the saints.—Rom. 12:1,2; Gal. 5:22,23; I Pet. 1:3,4; II Pet. 1:2-8

In another reference to God's mercy in providing redemption for the church, Paul wrote: "Ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body." (I Cor. 6:20) Thus, the apostle reminds us that while Christ laid down his life as the purchase price to recover the entire human family from sin and death, thus far that price has only been applied to the church.

EARTHLY SALVATION

Most of the promises relating to humanity's future involve an earthly salvation. Mankind was made to live on the earth, as we read: "Thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else." "The earth hath he given to the children of men."—Isa. 45:18; Ps. 115:16

All that has been lost because of sin is to be restored, and there will be an opportunity provided to all mankind for salvation here on the earth, allowing the righteous to live and the wicked to be destroyed as a result of the work of God's righteous kingdom. The Bible asserts this is a prime objective of Christ's return and second presence. Peter spoke of the time

when God would again send Jesus Christ, “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”
—Acts 3:20-23

It will be during the thousand-year reign of Christ and his church that the foretold day, or period, of judgment will be in operation. (Isa. 26:9; Acts 17:31) During this time Satan will be bound, “that he should deceive the nations no more.” (Rev. 20:1-3) It will be a favorable time for mankind as the promised “new covenant” will be in effect, and everyone will come to know God and his righteous laws. (Jer. 31:31-34) The condemnation which fell upon Adam originally and passed to all his posterity will be lifted because of Christ’s sacrifice. Only those who, after receiving complete knowledge of God’s laws willfully choose to disobey him, will be destroyed.—Jer. 31:29,30; Acts 3:22,23

Presently, there are many evils that afflict humanity which God has promised to eradicate. This will be followed by the turning of mankind to the Lord for blessings. (Zeph. 3:8,9; Hab. 2:14) Isaiah 35 speaks of how every imaginable illness, woe and condition of despair will be removed and replaced by rejoicing in the kingdom. God’s ultimate purpose for humanity is to have them worship him in spirit and in truth.

How wonderful it will be when the New Jerusalem—the church in its heavenly glory under Christ’s headship—blesses the human family as God’s instrumentality for eradicating all sorrow, evil and death. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Rev. 21:1-4) This glorious fulfillment will testify to the majestic grandeur of the Heavenly Father’s ultimate design for humanity. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

FEBRUARY 6—“Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.”—Psalm 75:6,7 (Z. ’95-11 Hymn 331)

FEBRUARY 13—“Love thinketh no evil.”—I Corinthians 13:5 (Z. ’98-84 Hymn 143A)

FEBRUARY 20—“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, . . . this man’s religion is vain.”—James 1:26 (Z. ’99-215 Hymn 267)

FEBRUARY 27—“Let your moderation be known unto all men.”—Philippians 4:5 (Z. ’03-7 Hymn 95)

2020 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Tuesday, April 7, 2020.

A complete Memorial Service is available for any who wish to have it. CD or DVD versions can be purchased for \$6.00. Please send your request to:

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199 Railroad Avenue
East Rutherford, NJ 07073

Please place your order by March 23, if possible.

Memorial Services in MP3 format are also available for download at dawnbible.com/memorial

OBITUARIES

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

Brother Timothy Allen, Boaz, AL—December 25.

Age, 52

Sister Ruth Szczesny, West Suburban, IL—January

9. Age, 88

Brother Donald Holliday, West Wickham, England—

January 12. Age, 92

Brother Robert Wilson, Portland, OR—January 16.

Age, 93

“These are the words of the Lord of armies: See, the man whose name is the Branch, under whom there will be fertile growth. And he will be the builder of the Temple of the Lord; and the glory will be his, and he will take his place as ruler on the seat of power; and Joshua will be a priest at his right hand, and between them there will be a design of peace.

—Zechariah 6:12,13, Bible in Basic English

Obedience in Temptation

Key Verse: “*Jesus said to him, Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.*”
—**Matthew 4:10**,
New International Version

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 4:1-11

AFTER HIS BAPTISM AT thirty years of age, Jesus was led by God’s Holy Spirit into the desert where he fasted and reviewed the Old Testament scriptures and prophecies to determine the Father’s will for himself. He soon realized that he was the greater Passover Lamb for the world of mankind, and his life on earth would include mistreatment, suffering, and ultimately lead to his death.
—John 1:29; Heb. 2:9

Jesus “was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan.” (Mark 1:12,13, *NIV*) In this we have another proof that God and Jesus are separate beings, since the Bible clearly states that God cannot be tempted. (James 1:13,14) The temptations Satan was permitted to present before Jesus were from different standpoints. However, they all had the same objective, which was to cause Jesus to do his Father’s work in ways which were contrary to his Father’s will. The same test comes to all the Lord’s followers.

The first temptation was, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones be become bread.” (Matt. 4:3, *NIV*) The enticement was that Jesus, being hungry, should use the power of the Holy Spirit to provide himself with food.

This, however, would have been a misuse of the power which God had given to him. As the Lord's followers, we may, at times, have similar temptations such as asking God to intervene in our life for our own fleshly convenience or advantage, or to avoid pain and suffering.

Jesus answered, "It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (vs. 4 *NIV*) Our life is not wholly dependent upon what we eat, but rather obedience to the word of God. "In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."—Rom. 8:28, *NIV*

Satan's second temptation was to mentally take Jesus to the top of the Temple, saying, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down." Satan then misapplied a Scripture, stating, "It is written: He will command his angels concerning you." Jesus replied, "It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test." (Matt. 4:5-7, *NIV*) How important it is, when seeking the correct meaning of a Scripture, to examine other related verses in the Bible and ensure the proposed interpretation is in full harmony with the rest of God's Word, his character and principles. We may, at times, have similar temptations to show or prove that we are children of God by performing some noteworthy works to be seen of others. However, the work God has given to us is to be "transformed by the renewing" of our mind.—Rom. 12:1,2

Satan's third temptation was to show Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world," saying, "All this I will give you ... if you will bow down and worship me." (Matt. 4:8,9, *NIV*) Jesus realized earth's dominion could be properly attained only by following God's will. Our Key Verse gives his immediate and explicit reply. The Lord's followers may also experience this temptation, to look for an easier way, without sacrifice or self-denial. However, God's way, the narrow way, is the only path which leads to glory.—Luke 9:23; Rom. 2:7; II Tim 2:11,12 ■

Proper Almsgiving and Prayer

Key Verse: “*Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.*”

—**Matthew 6:1,**
New International Version

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 6:1-8

honoured by men.” (vs. 2) “Acts of righteousness” may include the giving of our time, talent, or financial means for various reasons. Such resources of ours might be given to those in need, to the brethren in general, or to the work of spreading forth the Gospel message.

The word “hypocrites” in the original Greek language referred to theater actors who wore a mask. Such actors were simply playing a “role,” and not showing their true inward self. On this occasion, Jesus warns against pretending to be holy by performing charitable acts to be

A PORTION OF JESUS’ SERMON on the mount contains lessons on proper giving and prayer. The Master emphasized the importance of having the proper motive, which is to seek to please God and not seek to be well thought of by others.

In our Key Verse, Jesus admonished his disciples not to do “acts of righteousness”—alms in the *King James Version*—in order to be purposely seen and admired by others. “Do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be

seen by others and thereby gain their approval. God is able to read the heart and will not bless almsgiving or other good deeds unless they are motivated by sincerity and devotion to him. (Jer. 17:10; Eph. 6:6-8) Our Heavenly Father appreciates our giving, not according to the amount given, but rather according to the spirit which prompts the giving.—Luke 21:1-4

Hypocrites noisily attract attention to themselves when giving time, talent, or money, and usually include how much they give of these things. Jesus denounced such conduct, stating, “They have their reward,” implying that whatever earthly reputation they obtain in the form of human praise, it will not benefit them eternally from God’s standpoint. If our giving is done in secret, avoiding gaining attention from it, then our motivation will remain pure. Paul urged, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”—Col. 3:23, *NIV*

Then Jesus emphasized the importance of sincerity when praying, saying, “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen of men.” “When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.” (Matt. 6:5,6, *NIV*) Jesus’ personal prayers to his Heavenly Father were not given in public, but most often in seclusion. (Matt. 14:23; 26:36-44; Luke 6:12) Likewise, our personal prayers to God should not purposely be done in public to impress others of our devotion to God. Instead, such prayers should be done in private communication with the Father.

Jesus added, “When you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.” (Matt. 6:7, *NIV*) Our prayers should proceed from our heart and with active thought, not a mechanical reciting of the same phrases. By thus following the Master’s example and teachings, we will be enabled to give to others and to pray properly. ■

A Model for Prayer

Key Verse: *“After this manner therefore pray ye.”*
—*Matthew 6:9*

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 6:9-15

ANOTHER IMPORTANT LESSON given by the Master in his sermon on the mount was a model prayer. The expression in our Key Verse, “after this manner,” in the original Greek means “in this way,” and elsewhere in the New Testament has been translated “likewise.” (Luke 14:33; 15:7,10) Thus, Jesus was not stating the exact words which we must recite each time we pray, rather he gave an example of how to arrange our prayers. One cannot help but notice its brevity, simplicity, directness, and orderliness. Jesus’ example prayer shows that the chief aim of our prayers should be to glorify God and to express our desire for the fulfillment of his plan and purposes.

Jesus’ example prayer begins, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” Prior to this time no Israelite ever prayed using the expression “Our Father.” Instead they used the words “LORD” or “LORD God of Israel,” because they had been a house of servants. The example prayer Jesus gave assured his disciples that although they were Jews, God would recognize those fully consecrated to him during the Gospel Age as sons, not as servants. (Gal. 4:1-7; Heb. 3:5,6; I John 3:1,2) The words “Our Father” imply a recognition that there are other sons who also have been adopted into God’s family. (Rom. 8:14-17) “Hallowed be thy name” expresses reverence, adoration, and appreciation of God’s goodness and greatness, which should be part of our prayers.

Next Jesus states, “Thy kingdom come.” (Matt. 6:10) Accordingly, our prayers should express our earnest expectation and desire for God’s kingdom to soon be established on the earth, fulfilling all the promises God has given for the blessing and restoration of mankind.—Isa. 35:1-10; Jer. 31:34; Hab. 2:14

The following words, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,” indicate our prayers should express a continuing desire to know and follow God’s will in our daily life. “In earth” and “in heaven” emphasize our longing for God’s will to be done, or accomplished, with regard to both the heavenly and earthly phases of God’s kingdom.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matt. 6:11) “Daily bread” reminds us of God’s provision of food for the nation of Israel—“bread from heaven”—which sustained them in the wilderness for forty years. (Exod. 16:4-35) This expression in Jesus’ model prayer shows the need to recognize our continual dependence upon God each day, especially for spiritual food. This is the “true bread from heaven”—Christ Jesus and the lessons which he proclaimed.—John 6:32-58

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Matt. 6:12) In prayer we should acknowledge our sins and shortcomings, seeking forgiveness through the merit of our Savior. By so doing, it will assist us to be merciful, compassionate, and forgiving toward others.—Eph. 4:32

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matt. 6:13) The word “temptation” means “a putting to the proof.” Paul states that the Lord’s followers would have temptations and testings to prove our faith. These, the apostle says, are “such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (I Cor. 10:13; II Pet. 2:9) As we approach God in our prayers, let us continually realize his loving care in all matters of our life. ■

Ask, Seek and Knock

Key Verse: *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*
—*Luke 11:9*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 11:5-13

IN THE GOSPEL ACCOUNT written by Luke, following Jesus’ instructions on how to pray, an additional lesson regarding prayer is recorded. Jesus gave an illustration of a certain man who, at first, refused to grant a request by a friend. However, due to his friend’s persistence in petitioning, the man finally granted his friend’s request.—*Luke 11:5-8*

Within this context is recorded the words of our Key Verse. Jesus then continued, saying most positively, “Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” (vs. 10) An important lesson is that our Heavenly Father is pleased with genuine and persistent prayers.

“Ask, and it shall be given you.” To ask means to desire or crave. If we ask or desire something of God, “according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” (I John 5:14,15) However, we must also “ask in faith, nothing wavering.” (James 1:5,6) By asking accordingly, we will always receive an answer corresponding to God’s will. His answer to our prayers may be yes, no, or it may be his will that we wait upon him in order to learn an important spiritual lesson.

Next Jesus stated, “Seek, and ye shall find.” As New

Creatures in Christ, we are to “seek those things which are above.” (Col. 3:1-3) On other occasions, Jesus said, “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father,” and “I seek not mine own glory.” (John 5:30; 8:50) If we are obedient followers of the Master, we will do likewise. In the Prophet Jeremiah’s letter sent to the Israelites who had been carried away captive to Babylon, he recorded the words which God directed him to write, regarding how to seek the Lord: “Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” (Jer. 29:13) One of the chief ways to “seek” and “find” the Lord is through prayer. However, acceptable prayer to our Heavenly Father necessitates having a proper heart attitude, and requires giving all our heart to him.

Jesus then stated that in prayer we are to “knock,” or inquire persistently, and “it shall be opened unto you.” A similar lesson regarding persistency is found in quite a literal sense from the events which occurred after Peter’s miraculous release from prison. (Acts 12:6-17) Peter went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, and “knocked at the door of the gate.” A servant named Rhoda heard his voice and ran back to tell the others in the house that it was Peter, but at first, they did not believe her. However, because “Peter continued knocking,” they opened the door and saw him. Similarly, if we are persistent in prayer, it is promised that the Heavenly Father will open “the windows of heaven” and pour out to us many spiritual blessings.—Mal. 3:10

Jesus concluded this lesson concerning prayer by making a comparison to imperfect earthly parents and their desire to give good things to their children. He stated, “How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:11-13) Here Jesus indicates that God is glad to give his Holy Spirit to us if we persistently seek it with our whole heart in prayer, and make earnest efforts to study and apply God’s Word in our daily lives. ■

The Depths of Belief and Faith

“Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

—*Hebrews 11:6*

PAUL EXPLAINS THAT FAITH is the “substance,” or foundation, of things hoped for, and the “evidence” of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1) If we possessed the things hoped for, and could see the things unseen, we would not need faith. We are surrounded by circumstances and conditions

which greatly limit our ability to “see” by means of human eyesight and understanding. Therefore, we need faith, working through the power of God’s Holy Spirit, to view the glorious things that have been promised.

To please God, according to our opening text, encompasses not only believing on him, but also having full faith and trust in his promises. Such faith allows us to appreciate him more and more as our loving Heavenly Father. When we express in prayer our sincere desires to God, and ask for his will to be done in all our experiences, the following promise

can be claimed: “All things whatever you pray for, and desire, believe that you will receive, and you shall have them.” (Mark 11:24, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) Those things promised in the Scriptures God is pleased to grant us if we strive daily to obey, serve and diligently seek him.

Our Heavenly Father provides us with everything that we need to grow to spiritual maturity. We recall the Scriptures which speak, in symbolic language, of the “water” of God’s Word which cleanses us, and the “meat in due season” and “finest of the wheat” which feed us. (Eph. 5:26; Matt. 24:45; Ps. 147:14) Indeed, God gives us many things, but there is responsibility on our part. Jesus said, “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” (Luke 12:48) Each day we are to engage in applying the things that have been taught to us in God’s Holy Word, that we may “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (II Pet. 3:18) This will not be an easy task, as we are told: “Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”—Matt. 7:14

APPLYING OUR FAITH

Though we have entered upon a “narrow” way which “few” have found, it is the means by which we can enter, through Jesus our Redeemer, into the presence of God for assistance in applying our faith. How blessed are these words: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in

full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).”—Heb. 10:19-23

Through the sacrifice of Jesus, God has made provision whereby we may be reckoned as righteous, just and pure in his sight, and thus able to apply our faith properly, and do works acceptable to him. When speaking to Jewish converts, Paul said that it was by Jesus “all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”—Acts 13:39

Being justified through the blood of Jesus and thus entering into the narrow way which he opened up for us requires that, as his disciples, we begin following the Master’s example in the application of faith. An important aspect of this relates to the daily trials and testings which are permitted of God both to prove us, as well as to develop us as part of the “merciful and faithful” priesthood which will bless the world of mankind in God’s coming kingdom. (Heb. 2:17,18; Rev. 20:6) Concerning these experiences, Paul says, “No trial has assailed you except what belongs to man; and God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tried beyond your ability; but with the trial, will also direct the issue, that you may be able to bear it.”—I Cor. 10:13, *Diaglott*

In addition to the various trials and testings which come to us, the application of our faith involves many other things. Daily we must examine our heart and observe God’s ways; we must “walk circumspectly” and use our time wisely; we must be “doers” of God’s Word, and not merely hearers. (Prov. 4:23; 23:26;

Eph. 5:15,16; James 1:22) In his epistle to the brethren at Philippi, the Apostle Paul identifies several ways in which we can be further assisted in applying our faith—having singleness of purpose; avoiding self-satisfaction; forgetting the desires of the past; pressing forward toward our spiritual goal with energetic zeal; and guarding carefully our thoughts.—Phil. 1:27; 3:3,13,14; 4:8

The Apostle Peter also presents a revealing outline of how we may apply our faith by both claiming God's promises, as well as by adding to our faith certain qualities of character. "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. And beside this, 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]. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Pet. 1:4-8) If we find that we are making progress along the foregoing lines, it is evidence that the Holy Spirit of God has not only entered our hearts, but is molding our lives in such a way as to assist us in carrying out, day by day, the important work of applying our faith.

PRECIOUS PROMISES

How good it is to know and contemplate the all-encompassing promises of God contained in the Scriptures. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the

most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Ps. 91:1; Heb. 13:5) Indeed, God has pledged his special watch care over all those who love him and seek to do his will. Yet, his promises go beyond this, reaching to the very purpose of his plan for man’s recovery from sin and death. We note these words from Paul: “The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” (Gal. 3:22) This “promise by faith” is not only for those who believe now, but will be extended to all mankind in the coming Messianic kingdom.

There are many assurances of the coming kingdom arrangement here upon the earth to be found in the Bible. The Prophet Isaiah foretold of this time: “Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. ... A highway will be there, a roadway, And it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, But it will be for him who walks that way, And fools will not wander on it. No lion will be there, Nor will any vicious beast go up on it; These will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there, And the ransomed of the LORD will return And come with joyful shouting to Zion, With everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.”—Isa. 35:5-10, *New American Standard Bible*

Furthermore, the Scriptures promise that there will be a resurrection of the dead, when all who are in the graves shall come forth; that the time is

coming when there will be no more death; and that the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth. (I Cor. 15:22; John 5:28,29; Rev. 21:4; Isa. 11:9) Truly, we can say with the psalmist: “Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count.”—Ps. 40:5, *NASB*

The promises of God are very potent factors in the lives of those at the present time who are striving to follow in the footsteps of Christ. As already noted, by claiming the many blessings and helps which are implied in the “great and precious promises” of God, and by yielding ourselves to his work within our characters, we will be victorious and become “partakers of the divine nature.”

In Hebrews 4:1 the Apostle Paul urges us to be on the alert so that we do not “come short” of the promises which the Lord has made for our benefit and encouragement. Thus, we understand that God’s promises have conditions attached to them, and failure to comply with these to the best of our ability may result in our coming short of the goal set before us. Rather, it is our faithful compliance with the conditions attached to the promises which qualifies us to be partakers of the divine nature and to have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.—II Pet. 1:11

Our opening text states that one critical aspect of our faith is that of believing that God rewards those who diligently seek him. This is another way of saying that, in order for the promises of God to be truly meaningful, we must have complete faith and trust in them—never doubting. Only then can

they be of eternal value to us. God is pleased when his people truly believe what he has promised. Of Abraham we read that he “staggered not at the promise of God.” Instead, he was “strong in faith.” Fully believing that God was able to perform that which he had promised, Abraham’s faith was “imputed to him for righteousness.”—Rom. 4:20-22

By nature, we are sinners, and have “come short of the glory of God.” Every day we see the results of our imperfect state. (Rom. 3:23) Our great adversary, the devil, also sees our weaknesses and attempts to use them to discourage us, hoping that we will give up running toward the mark for the prize of the High Calling. If our confidence in the promises remains firm, however, we will not fear, for our God has said, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.”—Isa. 54:17

What a blessed assurance is found in the words, “their righteousness is of me!” If we can grasp the full meaning of this promise, we will realize that despite our imperfections we stand justified before God, and there is no condemnation from him. Truly, a proper recognition of this fact should keep us humble, ever remembering that our own righteousness is as “filthy rags,” and that the pure, white “robe of righteousness” which God sees as we stand before him is not our own, but Christ’s—the robe of his righteousness. (Isa. 64:6; 61:10) This is confirmed by Paul in his letter to Titus, where he writes: “Not by works of righteousness which we

have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”—Tit. 3:5,6

Most assuredly, it is by the many promises of God that we are made partakers of the divine nature—by their encouragement, by their authority, by our own faithfulness to all the conditions attached to them, and by their inspirational power in our lives. As we continue on in the narrow way of sacrifice and service, we continually need the strength of which these promises assure us. There is no possible circumstance in our Christian experience in which God has not promised to be with us, and to supply our need. As Paul states: “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 4:19

If by virtue of the promises of God, we are to attain the divine nature, it will be necessary to give “all diligence.” (II Pet. 1:5) It will not do to make a halfhearted effort to attain the prize. We will not be able to divide our interests between the things of God and the things of the world; nor between the interests of the New Creature and the interests of the flesh. “This one thing I do,” Paul said. (Phil. 3:13) This is the only approach to the Christian life which will result in victory, and it is the only attitude of heart that we should have if the Lord is to fulfill his promises made to us. We cannot afford to be unduly concerned or anxious about even our temporal needs. The Lord knows about these and has promised: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Matt. 6:33

LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES

In II Corinthians 7:1 Paul admonishes us that if we have “these promises” we should “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,” and to then perfect “holiness in the fear of God.” This is a similar thought to that expressed by the Apostle John when he wrote that those who have “this hope”—the hope based upon the promises of God—purify themselves. (I John 3:3) We might reverse this thought and say that our purification of character will be the evidence of the possession of the promises, and of having truly inherited them. Indeed, the conditions and character qualities associated with the promises guarantee that this will be the case.—II Pet. 1:3-8

Paul speaks of those who “through faith and patient endurance are inheriting the promises.” (Heb. 6:12, *Diaglott*) In order to claim the promises for our very own we must demonstrate an active faith in them and patiently endure whatever trials the Lord may see we need in order that our worthiness of the promises might be manifested. The fulfillment of many of God’s promises belongs in the present life, while others apply to our future inheritance, if faithful unto death. Thus, when the apostle speaks of “inheriting the promises,” he refers to both our present and our future inheritance.

Have the “precious promises” really become ours? Do we believe them, or do we just read them in an impersonal manner as though they do not actually apply to us? This is important, because it is not until we are able to see in the promises of God a personal assurance of his blessing, that they become truly effective in transforming us into his character

likeness, and thus prepare us to become partakers of the divine nature.

What a blessed prospect is assured to us by God's wonderful promises. Truly he has given us "good doctrine." (Prov. 4:2) Let us yield ourselves to its transforming influence and be made ready for that glorious entrance into the kingdom, where we shall be "like him," and "see him as he is." (I John 3:2) At the present time, "we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."—I Cor. 13:12

GOD'S ARMOR AND FORTRESS

The basis of our belief, our faith, and the promises of God attached thereto, is Christ Jesus. Even though our feet are firmly established upon the Rock of Christ Jesus, we are surrounded by enemies. Satan as a roaring lion is seeking to destroy us. We must contend also against the opposition of the world and against the foes within—our own fallen flesh. However, we should not fear. The "power of God" has provided us with "the word of truth," and the "armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."—II Cor. 6:7

Paul tells us that we will need to put on this armor in order to stand in the "evil day." (Eph. 6:13-17) It is the armor of truth, and it affords complete protection if put on and properly used. We will certainly need such a defense as we go on with our daily experiences of life. There is the "helmet of salvation," the "breastplate of righteousness," the "shield of faith," the girdle, or belt, "of truth," the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," and for our feet there is the "preparation of the Gospel of peace." We could never ask for an armor more complete than this.

With it we are equipped to “fight the good fight of faith” and “lay hold on eternal life.”—I Tim. 6:12

God has also provided a “fortress.” David wrote, “I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.” (Ps. 91:2) Surely, we can put our trust in the most High, who has not only given us his many promises, but also protects all of our spiritual interests as a refuge and fortress. Our loving Heavenly Father has made every provision whereby we might be victorious, and “war a good warfare” as soldiers of Jesus Christ.—I Tim. 1:18; II Tim. 2:3

GIVING AN ANSWER OF OUR HOPE

In I Peter 3:13-15 we read, “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”—that is, reverence. Part of this giving “an answer” concerning our hope is to be demonstrated by our words. Paul testified to the brethren at Ephesus, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”—Acts 20:27

It is also by our conduct, and by the way in which we go about our daily lives, that we provide an answer as to our hope. The apostle said: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20) This hope which we have of being made perfect in Christ, of being made partakers of the divine nature, brings

about a lifelong work in us. “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (I John 3:3) The “hope of glory” will only be attained if the character of Christ is found in us.—Col. 1:27

Giving an answer of our hope by word, action, conduct, and by the inward development of the fruits and graces of Christian character is the ultimate indicator as to the depth of our faith and belief in God and in the promises of his Word. Indeed, as Peter stated, “If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Therefore, the apostle continues, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”—II Pet. 1:8,10

FULLY PREPARED FOR OUR FUTURE WORK

Being coworkers with the Lord now is a great honor, and those who are faithful experience a peace and joy of mind and heart which the world can neither give nor take away. However, there is a still greater field awaiting those who continue faithful in the present service—faithful even unto death. That future work will also be in association with Christ, reigning with him as kings and priests to bless all the families of the earth.—Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:16,29; Rev. 20:6

If now we are among the those who, by faith, have heard the call of God to follow in the Master’s footsteps, and have received the assurance that if we present our bodies a living sacrifice the Lord will accept us and give us grace sufficient for our every time of need, then he is also saying to us: “In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee

for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. ... And their pastures shall be in the high places.”—Isa. 49:8,9

When we are told, “I will preserve thee,” we should never have any doubts about the keeping power of God. He has promised that he will complete his good work in us. (Phil. 1:6) His love abides with us continually, just as it did with his beloved Son. Jesus reminds us of this when he says, “The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.” (John 16:27) One of the reasons the Father loves us is that he purposes to use us together with Jesus in his kingdom. God is preserving us for this glorious future time—preserving us, that is, if we continue faithful to him. It is both to Jesus and his church that the promise was made by God: “Therefore will I divide him [Jesus] a portion with the great [Jehovah], and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.”—Isa. 53:12

The “strong” is prophetic of the faithful church—those who are “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10) It is in keeping with this that Jesus promised: “He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations,” and “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. 2:26; 3:21

May we be among those who are “thoroughly furnished unto all good works,” and who by “patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality.”—II Tim. 3:17; Rom. 2:7 ■

Obedient to the Vision of Truth

*“Whereupon,
O king Agrippa,
I was not
disobedient unto
the heavenly
vision.”*

—Acts 26:19

THESE WORDS OF THE

Apostle Paul, addressed to King Herod Agrippa, constitute, in brief, the explanation of why he was before the king, answering to charges that had been made against him by the

Jews. God had given Paul a vision of understanding, the significance of which to the apostle was that the remaining days of his life were to be spent in the service of Christ whom, previously, he had persecuted and whose followers he had put to death.

Before being favored with this understanding from God, Paul had been a student of the Old Testament Scriptures. He had been zealous of the faith of his fathers. He would have had clearly in mind the many incidents of the past in which God favored his ancient prophets with special visions which were calculated to change the entire course of their lives. Being thus acquainted with the manner in which God selects and authorizes his special servants to lay down their lives for him, Paul knew instantly when he was struck down on the Damascus road that God

was calling him to a great service. It was in response to this that he lifted up his heart and voice to the Lord, saying, “What wilt thou have me to do?”—Acts 9:6

A short time later, Paul understood from the words he received from Ananias that the Lord intended this vision to have more than a passing effect in his life. He knew its meaning went beyond merely refraining from further persecutions of those who followed Jesus of Nazareth. It revealed that not only was he wrong in persecuting these disciples of the Master, but also that he was being called to be a “chosen vessel,” to bear God’s “name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”—Acts 9:6-17

WHOM SHALL I SEND?

Paul was most likely well acquainted with Isaiah’s account of the vision with which God had favored him. This account is recorded in the sixth chapter of Isaiah’s prophecy. Isaiah tells us that, as this vision unfolded to him, he heard the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Isaiah understood this to be a personal question addressed to him, and he responded in the affirmative, saying, “Here am I; send me.” (vs. 8) Paul recognized that the vision the Lord had given him on the Damascus road contained an implication of the same question, and, in a similar spirit of devotion to God as that manifested by Isaiah, he responded, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Although there is a prophetic application to the vision given to Isaiah, as indicated by John 12:41 and its surrounding context, our consideration of it here will be from Isaiah’s perspective at the time the vision was given. To Isaiah, the substance of the vision was that it presented to him a mental picture

of God's glory, in which, as the prophet says, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." (Isa. 6:1) We are not to suppose from this that Isaiah saw God literally, because the Scriptures explain that no man can see God and live. It was, as the prophet indicates, a vision descriptive of certain characteristics possessed by God. By various means God has similarly revealed himself to all those whom he has invited into his service. These revelations have not always come while the individual was in a trance, or in some other miraculous way. Nevertheless, by some method God has always made known his will and plan when calling those whom he desires to take into his confidence and use in his service.

In his vision, Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, "high and lifted up." Those to whom God has truly revealed himself have always "seen" him in this manner. If any have special visions purported to be of God, if they do not reveal him as "high and lifted up," they are not truly from him. There is no Scripture in which God has revealed himself as a torment deity, nor has he ever shown himself as degraded or in retreat before the forces of evil. God's position has always been upon the throne, just as Isaiah observed, and those who have a correct understanding of him have been made to realize that he is a God whom they delight to worship and in whose service they are glad to spend their life.

"HIS TRAIN FILLED THE TEMPLE"

Not only did Isaiah see, in vision, the Lord high and lifted up, but he saw also that "his train filled the temple." The word "train" signifies clothing, or

robe, and seems to place particular emphasis on the glorious and holy character of God. Thus, the prophet saw that the Lord's holy presence and influence, and his honor and great glory, permeated and hallowed everything within the Temple. This, in turn, would impress upon Isaiah's mind the fact that if he were to become fully associated with this most glorious being, it could mean nothing else than that God and his divine will was to influence and dominate, from henceforth, his every thought and word and deed. There was to be no place for anything else in the prophet's life but God. If we are to be temples of the living God, the same must be true of us.—I Cor. 3:16,17

If there could be still any doubt in Isaiah's mind as to the position of God and his holiness as the Creator of heaven and earth, the proclamation of the seraphim would reassure him, and, at the same time, lay more heavily upon him the implications of what he was seeing and hearing. These seraphim proclaimed, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isa. 6:2,3) Although we cannot say with certainty what the seraphim were, their words, "Holy, holy, holy," indicate that the prophet saw them as representative of God's character attributes, all of which demonstrate his holiness. Isaiah knew that, at the time he saw this vision, the "whole earth" was far from being filled with these holy qualities which would reflect the glory of the Lord. This assertion of the seraphim, nevertheless, would assure him that the time was yet coming when this would be true, and that by responding to the call of service, he would be joining a cause destined to result in

certain and ultimate blessings for all mankind, to the glory of God.

Explaining further the progress of the vision, the prophet says that “the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.” (Isa. 6:4) This may have indicated to Isaiah that a door of opportunity was opening for him to enter the divine service. Realizing that he was utterly unworthy of the opportunity that was thus being suggested to him, and in sorrow and regret he said, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”—vs. 5

It is important to note the two contrasting thoughts which Isaiah puts together in the foregoing words, “Woe is me! for I am undone,” and “mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” He knew this heavenly vision meant that he was being called into the divine service. However, at the same time, as he considered the holiness of the one he was called to serve, he was struck with the sense of his own sins and his lack of ability to enter upon such a sacred and exalted ministry. While he understood that he was being summoned to speak for God, yet he thought, and properly so, that being a “man of unclean lips,” he could not adequately and acceptably show forth the praises and glory of the one whom the seraphim were proclaiming as “Holy, holy, holy.”

As the vision progresses, Isaiah soon discovers that the Lord knew about his unclean lips, and that in spite of this, he was calling him to service. The prophet then realized that God did not intend to use his lips while they were unclean, but rather, had made

provision whereby they could be cleansed. Hence it was that Isaiah says he saw one of the seraphim come unto him, “having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” What wondrous grace is here manifested! It reveals God’s ability to use those who are imperfect by making provision whereby they can serve him in spite of the handicap of Adamic sin.

Properly enough, God did not extend the actual call to service until he had first given Isaiah the assurance that, in responding, his service would be acceptable. It is at this point that the prophet hears the inquiry from the Lord, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Realizing that he was a man of unclean lips, Isaiah would have been presumptuous to have responded to this invitation had not the Lord previously made a provision whereby his lips could be made clean. Being thus assured, and devoted in heart to God, Isaiah’s response was immediate and without reservation: “Here am I; send me.”—vs. 8

GOD’S APPROVAL NOT MEASURED BY RESULTS

When Isaiah responded in the affirmative to God’s invitation, indicating his willingness to go and speak for him, he received instructions as follows: “Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. ... Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.”—Isa. 6:9-12

From the human standpoint, this was not a very bright prospect for the prophet as he entered upon the divine service. Here the Lord was warning him that, in going forth in his service, he must not expect that a majority of the people would rally to the cause. He must expect, rather, that from the human viewpoint, his entire ministry may well seem to end in utter failure. However, God wanted Isaiah to know that he was to continue in this service even though meager results were visible. He wanted Isaiah to go and speak for him, irrespective of whether or not those who heard appreciated it. He wanted the prophet to sound forth his praises because he had seen his glory and could not refrain from proclaiming, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts." Isaiah understood the meaning of what was implied in the vision and was faithful to it.

PAUL'S OBEDIENT RESPONSE

Paul's vision came to him under different circumstances from those in which the Lord revealed himself to Isaiah. Nevertheless, in principle, the import of the vision was the same. In it, Paul received a glimpse of the divine character which previously had not been apparent to him. The vision to which Paul later said he was not disobedient, however, did not all come to him on the Damascus road. It began there, and continued throughout his Christian walk. It was the effect of this greater understanding which later caused the apostle to write, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? ... For of

him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”—Rom. 11:33-36

Paul’s sense of his unworthiness to enter the divine service would be deeply impressed upon him by the details of the vision in which God called him to be an ambassador. In all good conscience, he had been persecuting the church of Christ. Being an ardent Jew, he would, of course, be enthusiastic about the promised Messiah, but now it was revealed to him that he was, in fact, opposing that purpose. In persecuting the followers of Christ, he had been persecuting Christ himself, the long-awaited Messiah. He had been in direct opposition to the purpose of God as it was then being worked out in the hearts and lives of his people. What humility this would engender!

As we trace the experiences of the great Apostle Paul, we cannot help being impressed with the truthfulness of his words spoken to King Agrippa in which he explained that he had not been disobedient to the heavenly vision. From the time that he received the Lord’s vision on the Damascus road, until his sacrificial work was completed in Rome, Paul’s every talent was devoted to the work of glorifying God. This work led to suffering, privation, imprisonment, stripes, hunger, weariness, persecution and finally death, yet he never wavered in his determination to be obedient to the heavenly vision.—II Cor. 6:4-10; 11:23-31

THE VISION OF TRUTH

It is important to note that the “visions” which came to those such as Isaiah, Paul and others are not to be identified merely by the special miraculous circumstances which may have accompanied these experiences. Rather, the primary import in all of

these was the understanding of some portion of the divine character and plan which God desired to make known at certain times to his servants. It is interesting, yea, thrilling, to note in the Scriptures the accounts of the understanding which God provided to his people from the days of Abel down to Paul, John and others of the apostles. In addition, and of great significance to us, is the understanding of truth through the enlightenment of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit, with which the Lord has favored his people since Pentecost.

Abel was granted sufficient insight into the will of God to be able to exercise his faith by bringing a flesh and blood offering to the Creator. Enoch saw enough of the divine character and plan to enable him to prophesy that the Lord would eventually come to execute judgments in the earth. Enoch was faithful to this vision, the record being that he “pleased God.” Noah was given understanding, particularly concerning events then due. In the faithful carrying out of his part in the divine arrangement for that time, he cooperated with God in furnishing us valuable information pertaining to the prophetic signs of the time with which another world is now ending.—Heb. 11:4-7

Abraham was given insight in which he saw the divine purpose to bless all the families of the earth. How Abraham must have rejoiced in the knowledge of God’s character, which thus came to him in the revelation of such a far-reaching plan of blessing. God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, and continued thereafter to reveal to him many things in connection with his plan which was to be carried out through Israel as types and shadows of greater

things to come. How Moses must have rejoiced in the knowledge of God thus shown to him. These and many others were taken into the divine confidence and used to further record the heavenly purposes which, when understood, reveal the true character of our God.—vss. 8-34

When Jesus came, he was favored with understanding surpassing anything that had yet been experienced. Matthew 3:16 says, “The heavens were opened unto him.” To him the knowledge of the divine arrangements was opened wide and, because of this, he certainly must have seen, as none other had ever seen, the glory of God. This was the inspiration of the Master’s life. For the joy that was thereby set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame, and is now set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.—Heb. 12:2

All the apostles, together with Paul, were favored with an understanding of heavenly truths through the enlightening power of God’s Holy Spirit. This did not come to all of them in the same way, nor under the same circumstances. Nevertheless, they all saw the glory of God as it was revealed in the divine plan of salvation, and they were obedient to that vision.

HEAVENLY TRUTHS HARMONIOUS

The knowledge with which God has favored his faithful people throughout the ages has always been harmonious. It has always had to do, in one way or another, with revealing the one glorious and eternal purpose of God as it centers in Christ Jesus, our Lord. After the apostles died, discernment of the divine plan and purpose was measurably lost, particularly during the period of the Dark Ages. Only a very

limited few during this time held onto the truths given by Jesus and the apostles, and these few were compelled to flee into a wilderness condition where, providentially, they were nourished of God.—Rev. 12:6

Finally, in the present “harvest” period, which is at the end of the Gospel age, a glorious and resplendent vision of understanding has been made available to God’s people through the Scriptures. Truly, we have been given the blessed privilege of joining Isaiah and saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts.” Jesus had promised that when he returned, he would “gird himself” and come forth and serve his people “meat in due season.” In fulfillment of this promise, a “faithful and wise servant” was used to draw together from the Scriptures the doctrine and principles which constitute the foundation of our faith.—Matt. 24:45,46; Luke 12:37,42,43

In one sense, there is nothing new in the truths which have been revealed during this harvest period, because they are all based upon the testimony of the Scriptures. However, our present understanding is more glorious than any that has ever been given to God’s people previously, barring only that which was given to the Master when the heavens were opened to him. This should not surprise us, however, because in its entirety is included the significance and glory of all previous knowledge provided to God’s faithful servants.

Our present understanding of truth encompasses all that had been previously seen by Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. It affords the real understanding of what is meant by the statement that Jesus brought “life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (II Tim. 1:10) In it we see

the true significance of what was revealed to Paul when, in vision, he was “caught up to the third heaven.” (II Cor. 12:2-4) It enables us to comprehend the significance of that wondrous vision Peter, James and John were given when they were with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Matt. 17:1-9) It reveals the mystery, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) In our symbolic spiritual vision we find the true meaning of that which was revealed to, and spoken by the mouth of all God’s holy prophets since the world began—namely, the glorious hope of the “restitution of all things,” now so near at hand.—Acts 3:20,21

The knowledge of God which we are blessed to have is one in which he has revealed his glorious character to us. Through it, we see that our Heavenly Father is a God of love. We observe also his marvelous and infinite wisdom. We see his true justice and righteousness, and how they work in harmony with his great love. Finally, we understand the necessity of divine power for the carrying out of God’s loving designs for the blessing of all the families of the earth. Indeed, our vision of truth harmonizes and expands upon all the insights that previously have been given to the people of God. Thus we can have full confidence in the Word of God, that everything spoken therein will not return unto him “void,” but will accomplish all his righteous purposes and prosper in them.—Isa. 55:11

ARE WE OBEDIENT TO THE VISION?

God has favored us with much spiritual understanding, revealing to us his glorious character in a way that most have not understood nor appreciated. Is that vision of truth continuing to speak to us, as

God revealed it to Isaiah and Paul? Is it still saying to us, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" If we still hear that question being re-echoed in our hearts, are we continuing to respond in the words of Isaiah, "Here am I; send me?" If the Gospel message of truth is continuing to mean this to us, are we taking advantage of the opportunities of service which divine providence is setting before us?

Isaiah did not ask how many converts he would make when he answered the call to service. Paul did not respond to the vision on condition that the Lord would bless his efforts with immediate and apparent results. Some results did attend the apostle's ministry, and he was blessed with the privilege of establishing ecclesias in various parts of the then civilized world. Yet, near the end of his life, Paul was mostly alone, and even realized the fact that some of those whom he had reached and loved and served had turned away from him and from the doctrine he had so faithfully taught. Our obedience to the heavenly vision must, likewise, be undertaken without consideration to the matter of whether or not our labor for the Lord will be rewarded with immediate fruitful results.

If we have properly understood God's Word of truth, it will have revealed to us the fact that we are members of a fallen and condemned race and, in the filthy rags of our own righteousness, we could not render acceptable service to God. At the same time, if our faith can grasp the full sense of divine grace that is revealed in the Scriptures, we will know that, through Christ, there is provided a "robe of righteousness" which covers our imperfections, and that in this robe we have a standing

before God, and the assurance that our imperfect works are acceptable to him.—Isa. 61:10

We will not, therefore, be deterred from responding to the vision with our whole hearts on the grounds that we are not good enough. Rather, we will thank God for the justification that is made possible through the blood of Jesus and, in faith, devote ourselves fully to making known the divine glories as they have been revealed to us. We will realize that henceforth we are to be wholly devoted to showing forth the praises of him who hath called us “out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Pet. 2:9) Our response, moreover, will not be in word only, but in deed and in truth. (I John 3:18) We will gladly obey at the cost of anything, whether it be sacrifice, toil, weariness, persecution, pain, or finally, death. Our attitude will not be, “Must I do this or that?” but, “May I sacrifice and be of service?”

Like Isaiah we, through the vision of truth, have seen the character of our Heavenly Father. We view him in his glory and beauty, “high and lifted up,” and we recognize the splendor of his Son, Christ Jesus. We can see their stately stepplings, as together they march on to glorious victory in the establishment of the Messianic kingdom now so near at hand.

If we are to be accounted worthy of having the privilege of being participants with God and Christ in the glorious work of the kingdom, we must now continue our response to the heavenly vision in terms of full devotion to the Lord. Such a devotion will not permit us to stop short of surrendering all that we have to the divine service, and to the glory of the Lord. Thus, like Paul, may we be found obedient “unto the heavenly vision.” ■

A Peculiar People

*“Who gave himself
for us, that he
might redeem us
from all iniquity,
and purify unto
himself a peculiar
people, zealous of
good works.”*

—*Titus 2:14*

IN TODAY’S USAGE, THE word “peculiar,” when referring to people, most often denotes those who are thought of as odd, strange, or even eccentric by those who have observed their manner of life, behavior or appearance. As a result, such persons are frequently

viewed in a negative or derogatory light. While many have, perhaps, similarly viewed those spoken of in our opening text as “peculiar,” that is not the essence of Paul’s statement. Here, rather, the apostle speaks of the divine viewpoint of those who strive to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and who seek to do the Heavenly Father’s will. To God and his son, Christ Jesus, these individuals are “peculiar” in an entirely different sense.

The Greek word translated “peculiar” in our text is *periousios*, which, according to Professor Strong, means that which is special, or beyond the usual. *Thayer’s Greek Definitions* adds that it refers to those selected by God “for his own possession.” Thus the apostle is stating that this people whom Christ purifies “unto himself” are esteemed by him

and by the Heavenly Father as something of great value to be held dear and cherished. Similar language was used by God concerning Israel when he established his covenant with them. He promised, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."—Exod. 19:5,6

High indeed was the possibility of Israel's relationship with God, but it was dependent upon continued faithfulness in obeying his voice and keeping his commandments. Ultimately, as a nation, Israel failed along these lines. Finally, they rejected Jesus, their Messiah, and were cast off from the hope of continuing to enjoy the chief place of favor in the divine arrangements. Concerning this Paul explains: "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."—Rom. 11:7

The apostle explains, however, that a remnant of individuals from among Israel qualified for the chief blessing which would come to those who accept Christ and follow in his footsteps. This agrees with the statement concerning Jesus which says, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." (John 1:11,12) However, there was not a sufficient number among the Jews who received the Master to make up the foreordained special people of God, so this calling was opened up to the Gentiles.

Explaining this, using the symbol of an olive tree, Paul says that the Gentile branches are grafted into

the Jewish olive tree to take the places of the natural branches that were broken off because of unbelief. These “wild” Gentile branches, together with any remaining Jewish branches that were not cut off, constitute “spiritual” Israel. Together, these branches partake of the “root and fatness” of the Abrahamic promises which give this symbolic olive tree life and sustenance, so that it may bring forth the fruitage of holiness.—Rom. 11:17-20; 6:22

TAKE HEED

Israel’s standing as God’s peculiar treasure continued only as long as the nation was zealous for hearing and obeying the voice of God. We, also, who have come into this favored position as spiritual Israelites can hope to be reckoned among God’s choice treasure only if we are, as stated in our opening text, “zealous of good works.” The apostle warns us to “take heed,” for if God spared not the natural branches, he will certainly not spare us if we become unfaithful.—Rom. 11:21

Without zeal for doing God’s will, and for engaging in “good works,” no one can hope to be a part of God’s peculiar people. While God may exercise a measure of tolerance toward “lukewarm” Christians, such cannot for long remain within the inner circle of his special treasure. (Rev. 3:15,16) Whatever may be their final destiny, such cannot hope to be a part of that “royal diadem” in the hand of God which will be used by him for the accomplishment of his purposes toward the children of men.—Isa. 62:3

The example of zeal which we should endeavor to emulate is that which was displayed by Jesus. The zeal of God’s house consumed him, and we are

called to follow in his steps. (Ps. 69:9; John 2:17) Jesus' zeal was manifested in the sacrifice of his earthly life, which he voluntarily laid down on behalf of all mankind. We are invited to lay down our lives for the brethren, and to let our light shine before men. (I John 3:16; Matt. 5:16) Jesus' sacrifice constitutes the basis of redemption for both the church and the world, and no matter how much zeal we might display, our sacrifice would not be acceptable apart from the Master's ransom sacrifice. (I John 2:2) However, if in full faith we dedicate our lives to be "zealous of good works," we have the assurance of being "holy and acceptable" in God's sight.—Rom. 12:1

HE GAVE HIMSELF FOR US

In our text, the apostle tells us that Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." As members of the condemned and fallen race we were contaminated with sin, because "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) Jesus' redemptive work makes it possible for us to be made free from "the law of sin and death," and acceptable as joint-sacrificers with him. (Rom. 8:2) However, the mere fact that we accept this provision of divine grace is not sufficient to constitute us a part of God's peculiar people. In addition to this, the apostle says, we must be purified.

This purification is affected by the "washing of water by the word." (Eph. 5:26) This is a cleansing from all fallen fleshly propensities. It is the washing away of selfishness and self-will so that the divine will may reign supreme in our hearts. This cleansing must be thorough if we are to be God's peculiar people. It must be more than a mere passive submission to

his will. It is to be a consuming zeal for the accomplishment of the divine will irrespective of what the cost to us may be. To be purified in such a manner will mean that we are, indeed, a people “zealous of good works.”

These “good works” for which we are to be zealous are God’s works. It was so in Jesus’ case. He came, not to do his own will and work, but the will and work of his Father. (John 6:38) The night before he died, in a prayer to his Father, Jesus said, “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” (John 17:18) This is a wondrous partnership in which we are invited to share. The way by which we can commend ourselves to the Lord in connection therewith is through our zeal for the work that is being done. As workers together with God, we are endeavoring to set everything else aside in order that we may zealously engage in that which he has put into our hands to do.—I Cor. 3:9; II Cor. 6:1

The Apostle Peter also speaks of the consecrated followers of the Master as being a “peculiar people.” (I Pet. 2:9) The Greek word used by him has the thought of a “purchased” people, or a people acquired by purchase. The thought is similar as that outlined by Paul in our text. This people has been purchased at great cost, even by Jesus’ laying down his life for them. Being acquired at so great a sacrifice, they are precious in his sight, a very special treasure.

A CHOSEN GENERATION

Peter mentions other characteristics of these peculiar people. He says, for example, that they are a “chosen generation.” In I Peter 1:2 we are told

that this special group is “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.” Paul explains the manner in which God’s foreknowledge operates in connection with this elect people, saying, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”—Rom. 8:29

Here again we are reminded of the condition requisite to being the peculiar people of God, that condition being zeal for good works. God has predetermined that each one of this class must be conformed to the image of Christ. The zeal of God’s house consumed the Master, and if we are like him, conformed to his image, then the same zeal will consume us. The Master’s zeal was for the good work of God, and our zeal must also be for God’s work. In this regard, it will not do merely to be zealous without schooling our desires by the word of God. Such zeal could in fact be working in opposition to the designs of the Heavenly Father. Rather, our zeal must be controlled by the divine will. Then it will result in blessings to others and bring honor and glory to the Lord.

God wants us to “give diligence” to make our “calling and election sure,” and if we do, we will become more and more conformed to the image of his beloved Son. (II Pet. 1:10) To be like Jesus we need to know him. This we do through the Word of truth. As we note the details of his consecrated life we are at once impressed with the full extent to which he sought to know and to do his Father’s will at all times and under all circumstances. Even in the most trying moments of his earthly walk he lifted up his heart to God and said, “not my will, but thine, be done.”—Luke 22:42

Jesus met temptation by appealing to the expressed will of God—“it is written.” (Matt. 4:4,7,10) He was faithful in prayer, and could say to his Father, “I knew that thou hearest me always.” (John 11:42) The Master let his light shine so faithfully that it finally cost him his life. He was ever on the alert to bless others, even the little children. Jesus put all of his hours toward the glory of his Father and the service of his disciples and others as he had opportunity. Such is the portrait of the Master as revealed to us in his life of devotion and sacrifice. God has set the requirement that if we are to be a part of the “chosen generation” of this age, we must be conformed to the Master’s image.

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

“Ye are a royal priesthood, an holy nation,” the apostle asserts. (I Pet. 2:9) Here again the language God employed to describe his chosen people of the past is applied to spiritual Israel. The nation of Israel was designated “a kingdom of priests,” but to retain that title required continued zeal for the doing of God’s will. (Exod. 19:5,6) This zeal was lacking, and now the title is transferred “to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”—Matt. 21:43

The priests of Israel represented God among the people. Their work was twofold. They offered sacrifice, and they dispensed the blessings of God to the people. All Israel, in fact, was to be a nation of priests in the sense that they were to represent God before the rest of the world. However, they fell short in attaining this high position of divine favor. Now this title and privilege belong to God’s peculiar people of the present age. In I Peter 2:5 the apostle explains

that these constitute a “holy priesthood,” consecrated to offer up sacrifices. Peter also says that they are “built up a spiritual house.” This is a reference to the symbolism of the temple as the meeting place between God and Israel. The people came to the Temple to receive God’s blessings. So God’s peculiar people are to be the channel of divine blessings to the whole world when the work of sacrifice is complete. What wondrous grace is thus bestowed upon those who are “zealous of good works.”

AN HOLY NATION

To be holy means to be pure and blameless. The holiness for which God is looking in his people is that which is suggested by the plate of pure gold which was attached with a cord of blue to the mitre which Israel’s High Priest wore on his forehead. Engraved upon the gold plate were the words, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD.” (Exod. 28:36-38) The thought evidently is that of an unmixed and whole-hearted devotion to God. To the extent that Israel’s worship and service were in harmony with the inscription visible on the forehead of the High Priest, they were “accepted before the LORD.”

God expects that his peculiar people of the present age will be undivided in their devotion to him. We are not to be “double minded.” (James 1:8) There may be very little danger today that we will worship Moloch or other heathen deities. However, there are many “idols” which our wayward hearts may set up, and through the worship of which we would become unholy in our devotion to God. There is the god of pleasure; the god of wealth; the god of ease; the god of pride and ambition. There is also the dangerous

god of “self.” How we need to be on the alert lest we become worshippers of self and self-will. To qualify as a part of God’s holy nation of today, only the divine will is to rule supreme in our hearts and lives.

God wants us to be, as the Apostle Peter states, “obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts. ... But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” Then the apostle quotes from the Old Testament, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (I Pet. 1:14-16; Lev. 11:44,45) The entire text in Leviticus from which Peter quotes, reads, “I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

God is here reminding Israel that he was exclusively their God. Later, through Amos, God declared, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” (Amos 3:2) God is pure and sinless from whatever standpoint we may view him, but in this and the Leviticus passages he seems to be emphasizing the point that he had not been a God to any other nation in the same way as he was to Israel. It is upon the basis of this holiness toward them, that he asked them to be holy toward him. He had no other people; they were to have no other gods.

The same thing is true today. God loves all nations and peoples, and has promised blessings for them in due time. However, he considers the “holy nation,” the footstep followers of Christ, as being his peculiar people. To these he becomes Father, Helper and Friend. He engraves them upon the palms of his hands, and they are as dear to him as the apple of his eye. His name is written in their foreheads. He

provides for all their needs, gives them strength when they are weak, comforts them when they are discouraged, and sustains them when they are sorrowful. In the end, he will exalt them to his own nature. Indeed, they are a peculiar treasure unto him, and no good thing will he withhold from them.—Ps. 17:8; 84:11; Isa. 49:16; Phil. 4:19; Rev. 14:1

SHOWING FORTH GOD'S PRAISES

After applying these various symbolically descriptive titles to the followers of the Master, the apostle Peter explains the practical significance of what they all imply. He says, "That ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (I Pet. 2:9) This, after all, is the objective of the "good works" for which God's peculiar people should be zealous. All that is done by the Christ, head and body, both in this age and in the next, shows forth the praises of God.

The Messianic age work of healing the sick and raising the dead will certainly show forth God's praises. When, through the instrumentality of the Christ, the knowledge of God's glory fills the earth as the waters cover the sea, all mankind will praise the Lord. (Hab. 2:14) Then every creature in heaven and in earth will praise "him that sitteth upon the throne," and will also give glory to "the Lamb that was slain." (Rev. 5:12,13) Those who are privileged to share in that future work of filling the earth with the glory of God will be those only who previously have zealously sacrificed all their earthly interests in showing forth the praises of the Lord "in the midst of a crooked and perverse" generation, among whom they presently "shine as lights."—Phil. 2:15

The extent to which the light of the Gospel penetrates the darkness of this world is not the responsibility of the Christian, but we are responsible for letting the light shine. Whether men hear or whether they forbear does not affect the obligation imposed upon us by divine grace to show forth the praises of God, who has called us out of darkness into the light of truth. We are sacrificing priests to this end; we are a holy nation for this purpose; we are a chosen generation to be the light of the world. A consuming zeal for carrying on this good work as God directs in his Word, and in recognition of the fact that it is all by his grace that this privilege is extended to us, means that God will continue to encircle us with love as his peculiar people.

Being zealous of good works does not mean that we can earn our way into the kingdom, nor does it indicate that salvation is of works, and not “by grace ... through faith.” (Eph. 2:8) It does mean, however, that we will be demonstrating our faith by our works. (James 2:17,18) We will realize that we do not belong to ourselves, but to God, and are privileged to serve him forever. It means that we qualify to be God’s peculiar treasure by showing our appreciation of what he has done for us. If we really appreciate God’s love, we will want to tell everybody about it, and by doing this, we show forth his praises. Let us daily have zeal such as Jesus had—zeal which will fully consume us in our Heavenly Father’s service as his peculiar treasure. ■

“... So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

—Ephesians 2:7, New American Standard Bible

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M. Balko

Sacramento, CA February 14-16

O. B. Elbert

Sacramento, CA February 14-16

M. Ensley

Sacramento, CA February 14-16

L. Griehs

Australia:

Melbourne, Victoria

January 31-February 2

Eastern Victoria 3

Nambour & Gympie,
Queensland 6,7

Brisbane, Queensland 8,9

Sydney, NSW 11-15

H. Montague

Sacramento, CA February 14-16

R. Niemczyk

Sacramento, CA February 14-16

J. Parkinson

Sacramento, CA February 14-16

D. Rice

Sacramento, CA February 14-16

J. Wesol

Chicago, IL February 23

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CONVENTIONS

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

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 14-16—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact hotel for room reservations. Phone: (916) 923-1100. Specify “Bible Students” to receive special rate. For other information, contact K. Freer. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.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

NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION, March 14,15—Holiday Inn Gulfport/Airport, 9515 Highway 49, Gulfport, MS 39503. For room reservations, contact Holiday Inn. Phone: (228) 679-1700. Other information, contact M. Costelli, PO Box 6235, Gulfport, MS 39506. Phone: (228) 861-2822 or Email: michael@simpkins-costelli.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

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 4,5—Quality Inn Troy, 2537 Rochester Court, Troy, MI 48083. Contact P.Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588 or Email: nemeshfp@aol.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

NIGERIA CONVENTION, April 11—Agwa Ecclesia, Uzi Obudi Agwa, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact V. Ekeh. Phone: 2348080205812 or Email: abiblestudecc@yahoo.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 18-23—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

*I stand all astonished with wonder,
And gaze on the ocean of love;
And over its waves to my spirit
Comes peace like a heavenly dove.*

*I struggled and wrestled to win it,
The blessing that setteth me free;
But when I had ceased from my struggles,
His peace Jesus gave unto me.*

*He laid his hand on me and healed me,
And bade me be every whit whole;
I touched but the hem of his garment,
And glory came thrilling my soul.*

*The Prince of my peace is now present,
The light of his face is on me:
O listen! beloved, he speaketh:
"My peace I will give unto thee."*

*The cross now covers my sins;
The past is under the blood;
I'm trusting in Jesus for all;
My will is the will of my God.*

—Hymns of Dawn