

The DAWN

VOLUME No. LXXXVIII, Number 4
(USPS 149-380), April 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Published monthly by The Dawn Bible Students Association, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. \$12.00 a year.

ARGENTINA: A. Lupsor, Calle Almirante Brown 684, Monte Grande C.P, 1842 Buenos Aires

AUSTRALIA: Berean Bible Institute, P.O. Box 402, Rosanna, Victoria 3084

BRAZIL: A Aurora, Caixa Postal 50088, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, CEP 20050-971

BRITISH ISLES: Associated Bible Students, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, HP5 3ED, England

CANADA: P.O. Box 1565, Vernon, British Columbia, V1T 8C2

FRANCE: L'Aurore, 45, Avenue de Gouvieux, 60260, Lamorlaye

GERMANY: Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung, Postfach 11 03, 64368 Ober-Ramstadt

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073 USA

INDIA: The Dawn, Blessington, #34, Serpentine Street, Richmond Town, Bangalore 560025

SPAIN/ITALY: El Alba/Aurora, Associazione Studenti Biblici, Via Ferrara 42, 59100 Prato—Italia

HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

Higher Than the Angels 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

God's Chosen Servant 16

A Resurrected Savior 18

An Enemy Destroyed 20

A God of Righteousness 22

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

God Endows the New Creature 24

Hope Which Enters Within the Veil 38

Lessons from the Life of Lot 52

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 37

OBITUARIES 51

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 62

Higher Than the Angels

“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”
—*Hebrews 1:4*

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY of humanity there have been miscarriages of justice due to the unwisdom and prejudice of those whose business it is to judge and punish accused violators of the law.

In most cases these unfortunate experiences are little publicized, and soon forgotten by all except the individuals directly concerned. It was different, however, in the case of the man of Galilee who was hung upon a cross until he died—not because he had violated any law of his day, but because of religious prejudice and intolerance. Here, indeed, was a travesty of justice, but it was destined to mark a turning point in man’s history, and to introduce an entirely new concept of religion in the earth. At this season of the year, when many bring to remembrance the events of twenty centuries ago, we likewise call to mind their eternal import in the plan of God.

There were a few who did not lose faith in Jesus when the mob cried for his death. Among these was

Mary Magdalene. She went to the tomb of her beloved Master early in the morning after the Sabbath and found it empty. She notified Peter and John, who came to the tomb and confirmed her findings. They returned to their home, but Mary tarried. It was then that she saw two angels in white at the head and at the feet of where the body of Jesus had lain.—John 20:1-12

Mary was weeping bitterly, and in answer to questions put to her by these heaven-sent strangers, she explained that the body of her Lord had been taken away and that she did not know where to find it. Outside of the tomb another stranger approached her, and he also wanted to know the cause of her distress. She thought this man was the gardener, and supposing that he had been in the general vicinity most of the time since Jesus died, thought he could give her some information as to who had taken away the body, and where it had been taken, so she asked him about it.—vss. 14,15

This stranger, who appeared as a gardener, did indeed know what had become of Jesus' body, for he was the resurrected Lord himself! With the tone of voice and manner of speaking with which she was familiar, and which on many occasions no doubt had stirred her very soul, he now said to her, "Mary." (vs. 16) He did not look like Jesus, and he was not dressed as Jesus normally had been. However, it was the voice of Jesus, and Mary knew then that he was no longer dead. Mary was convinced that she had seen Jesus, but she understood also that now he was different.

Later, the risen Jesus joined two of his disciples who were walking toward Emmaus and conversed

with them. They did not recognize him until he offered thanks at the evening meal. Here again it was evidently the tone of his voice and his familiar way of expressing thanks and breaking bread that caused them to know that their guest was the Master. (Luke 24:13-32) On another occasion, he appeared in an upper room where his apostles were conferring. They had locked the doors for fear of the Jews, but Jesus came into the room just the same. This time he appeared in such a manner that they recognized him by sight.—John 20:19,20

Mary had seen a “gardener.” Two of the disciples had seen and conversed with a “stranger.” The apostles in the upper room saw the Master as he formerly appeared. Later, a group of them saw him on the lake shore, and thought he was a fisherman. Jesus was with them forty days after his resurrection, but they saw him only on a few brief occasions. (Acts 1:1-3; I Cor. 15:3-7) He was indeed different, to such a degree that they were perplexed and puzzled about just how they still could be his disciples.

ALL POWER GIVEN TO HIM

After Jesus was raised from the dead, he announced to his disciples that “all power in heaven and in earth” had been given to him. (Matt. 28:18) If we, by faith, accept this as a statement of fact, there is no obstacle to our believing that one who possessed such power could come and go as the wind, and reveal himself to human eyes in any manner he chose—as a gardener, a stranger, in a locked room, or by the lake shore. Jesus, in coming to earth to die for the sin-cursed race, humbled himself and was made human, a “little lower than the angels.” Now he had been

rewarded for his faithfulness, and was the exalted Jesus, a spirit being, having been made “so much better than the angels.”—Heb. 2:9; 1:4

Mankind honors its heroes and rewards those who risk death in order to save or benefit others. There is a righteous principle involved in this, one which had its origin with the Creator. He thus honored Jesus for his faithfulness. He rewarded his Son with glory, honor and immortality. He exalted him higher than the angels, and above every name that is named. (Phil. 2:9,10) He whose wisdom and power operated to create the universe now used that power to raise Jesus from the dead and give him a nature high above all other creations—the divine nature.

Mere man has been able to unloose an infinitely small fraction of the atomic and nuclear energy created by God but does it at the risk of committing international suicide. God, who created that energy, and therefore is vastly superior to it, laid hold upon the dead Jesus who, although dying for the sins of the world was, nevertheless, unjustly killed. God restored him to life, and exalted him to his own right hand, giving him “all power” in heaven and in earth. We are awe-inspired with the thought! Is it any wonder that divine intervention such as this should have such a profound effect upon the course of the world? Indeed, the direct use of divine power by the Creator to raise his Son to share his own immortal nature marked the beginning of a new age—the Christian age!

CHRISTIAN AGE NOT ALWAYS “CHRISTIAN”

We should not labor under any misapprehensions concerning the Christian age. Many things have

occurred during the time since Jesus' resurrection, and in the name of Christianity, which have not been Christian and are not taught in the Bible. It has not been Christian for one nation to go to war against another in the name of Christ. The Crusades were unholy and unchristian. The Holy Inquisition was not Christian, but was the product of inhuman religious intolerance, and among the most unholy of all the practices of the Dark Ages.

The persecution of millions among various ethnic groups and nationalities has not been Christian. Likewise, the fear-instilling teaching of eternal torment for the unconverted is wholly unchristian. All of these, as well as many other beliefs and practices, have been the result of unscriptural tradition and superstition handed down from one generation to another. That they were believed in and practiced in the name of Christ has confused the true principles of Christianity in the minds of millions.

It is this obscured conception of Christianity that has caused so many now to lose faith in the Bible. The enlightenment of our day is causing many thinking minds to realize that a religious system which has promoted such practices and beliefs is one that the world would be better off without. Thus, we should not be surprised if such a conclusion is reached by the unbiased, unprejudiced, thoughtful person. However, the hidden jewels of truth can be found in the Bible if the earnest truth-seeker will push aside the superstitions and traditions which have hidden them from view and seek them. In the light of present-day events these truths reflect beams of light from the God of heaven which

pierce the gloom and reveal the remaining steps to the human destiny of peace and everlasting life planned for mankind by the Creator.

HAS CHRISTIANITY FAILED?

To the extent that the moral and ethical teachings of Christ have been practiced, we have had a better world. Of this there can be no doubt. On the other hand, the failure of the nations, and of individuals comprising the nations, to practice Christian principles in all their dealings with one another, does not mean that Christianity has failed. For, strange though this may seem, Jesus did not commission his followers to convert the world to his way of life during this Christian age. To the extent that the world has been made better by the influence of his teachings in the lives of those who have been his true followers, it has thus far been a by-product of true Christian faith and work.

Jesus commissioned his followers to go into all the world and preach the “gospel of the kingdom,” and to do so “among all nations.” (Matt. 24:14; Luke 24:47) They were not to limit their field to one nation, but were to go to all. Those of any and all nationalities who believed and devoted themselves to the cause of Christ were to be accepted as his disciples. That every individual in all nations would become disciples was not expected. For the world in general who heard the message, it was to be merely in the nature of a “witness,” or testimony. Instead of all the world being converted by this effort, the Scriptures explain that its purpose has been merely to “take out” of the world “a people for his name.”—Acts 15:14-17

A great deal is said in the New Testament about the calling and development of this class, and much of it has been misunderstood. The promise is given that those who suffer and die with Jesus will live and reign with him. They are to share his glory, and to sit on his throne. Jesus promised to prepare a place for them, and to “come again” and receive them unto himself. (Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11,12; John 14:2,3) All these marvelous promises mean that the hope of the true disciples of Christ during this Christian age is to share the divine nature and glory which the Father gave to Jesus as a reward for his faithfulness. Hence, the apostle speaks of it as a “heavenly calling.”—Heb. 3:1

The selection of these by God, based upon their acceptance of and loyalty to the Gospel as preached by Jesus’ disciples, has been the divine program for this age. It began at Pentecost. There the invisible power of God, the Holy Spirit, came upon the waiting disciples, enlightening their minds and giving them power of speech to declare the message of truth concerning the purposes of God. The response on that first day was tremendous, but the enthusiasm of the believers was commingled with persecution by the intolerant and prejudiced. The battle between light and darkness was on, and the struggle has continued until this day. Moreover, the truth and those who have believed in it have most often been on what appeared to be the losing side.

It was thus with Jesus, who, although the “light of the world,” was crucified. He told his disciples that they also were to be the “light of the world.” (John 8:12; Matt. 5:14) Although they have let it shine as brightly as possible, it has been but a

glimmer in the world of darkness and sin. The light-bearers have been ridiculed, ostracized, persecuted and even killed. Jesus foretold this, saying, “In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) His followers have overcome, too, not by conquering the world, nor by ruling over it through the civil powers, but by overcoming its spirit of selfishness in their hearts and, like Jesus, laying down their lives in sacrifice that others might be blessed.

Indeed, it may have appeared that the true followers of the Gospel of Christ have always been, whether literally or figuratively, on the execution gallows. On the contrary, it has been an altar—God’s altar of sacrifice. His people have, like Jesus, been proving their love for his ways and principles by faithfulness in sacrifice. They have been demonstrating their unselfishness, their devotion to righteousness, and their harmony with the divine principles of justice and love. They have loved their enemies as God has enjoined through Jesus. They have, in short, qualified to be associated with the highly exalted Jesus in the future work of restoring humanity to life upon the earth.

MANKIND TO BE RESTORED

This, then, has been God’s work for his people during the Christian age. In it we see a further manifestation of divine wisdom and mercy. Paul speaks of Christians as “labourers together with God.” (I Cor. 3:9) Surely the Creator, with his infinite wisdom and power, does not need help, especially the very limited aid that could be given to him by imperfect, dying human beings. However, he has

arranged it that way, and there must be a reason for it. One of the titles applied to Jesus in his relationship to God and mankind is that of Mediator. (I Tim. 2:5) His footsteps followers of the Christian age are designated as ministers of reconciliation. (II Cor. 5:18-20) They are to share in the future mediatorial work of Jesus, which will reconcile the estranged world to God. Thus, the fallen race will have representation among those who will assist the Lord in preparing the way for their return to favor with God and to life.

We said that the promises relating to the calling and selection of Jesus' disciples during the present age have been misunderstood. From these same promises the erroneous doctrine has been deduced that the Creator never intended that man should remain a human being, and that his human existence is but the first stage in his life; that death is but the portal into the next phase, which is to be spiritual, or heavenly. The thinking is that all who accept Christ as their Savior before they reach death as a human being, go to heaven. Those who do not, it is claimed, go to a place of eternal torment and there suffer for all eternity, with no possibility of release.

Due to this misunderstanding, the real destiny of the human race has been overlooked. Few have noticed the many promises of God to resurrect the dead to life on the earth and give each individual an opportunity to be reconciled back to God, that they might live on the earth forever. The Scriptures clearly state that God "formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." "The earth hath he

given to the children of men.” (Isa. 45:18; Ps. 115:16) The divine program in selecting the called out class of the Christian age is that they, in heavenly glory with Christ, exalted high above angels and principalities and powers, should, together with him, be the source of life-giving blessings for all mankind. Thus, God’s ultimate design for the majority of mankind is that they live here on the earth—a home especially designed and created for them—and enjoy the eternal blessings of life specifically provided for them.

The little nucleus of disciples who followed Jesus from place to place throughout Judea properly marveled at the mighty miracles he performed. He had at his command the power of God’s Holy Spirit, which he could employ in many ways to benefit the people. The disciples gazed in awe at these things, and doubtless the more so when on one occasion Jesus said to them, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” —John 14:12

Back in the age before Christ came, God manifested his presence with his people Israel in connection with the Tabernacle and its services. On their Atonement Day, as recorded in Leviticus chapter 16, the blood of a bullock and a goat was taken into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and sprinkled upon, and in front of, the mercy seat. The Most Holy was symbolic of the presence of God, and that the blood of Jesus actually did for the people what the blood of the bullock did representatively and pictorially. Paul says that the blood of “bulls and goats,” which were offered every year, could not actually take away

sins, but the offering of Jesus Christ, done only once, constituted a “sacrifice for sins for ever.”—Heb. 10:4,10-12

We are not to suppose that Jesus carried his human blood to heaven with him and sprinkled it upon a literal mercy seat. This illustration of the Scriptures is intended merely to convey to our finite minds the idea that the sacrifice of Jesus was well pleasing and acceptable to his Father, and that upon his return to the heavenly courts following the completion of his earthly ministry, the way was prepared for another phase of God’s plan for restoring a lost world.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

It was on the day of Pentecost that Peter explained how Jesus had been raised from the dead and highly exalted, and, he added, “hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear,” referring to the miraculous manifestation of God’s power, the Holy Spirit, which came upon the waiting disciples at that time. (Acts 2:33) Here the people of God were brought into contact with his power in a manner in which it had never before operated. It illuminated their minds to understand something of the glorious hope which was set before them in the Gospel. It gave them strength and courage to endure the suffering inflicted upon them by enemies of God. It was a token of the power with which they would be endued when, with Jesus, they would later be performing those “greater works” which he had promised as a result of his going to the Father.

Later, Peter said of the true disciples of Jesus, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and

precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.” (II Pet. 1:4) Jesus was exalted to the divine nature—the nature of God—and is now the “express image” of the Father. (Heb. 1:3) John further declares, “We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (I John 3:2) All of this is quite beyond our comprehension. However, to the extent that we can grasp the thought, it is not surprising to realize that if a company of imperfect, dying human beings is to be exalted above all other creatures, and given the very nature of God and partake of his glory, we should not be surprised that it was essential first of all that Jesus should go to his Father, and, as Paul expresses it, “appear in the presence of God for us.”—Heb. 9:24

Jesus made it possible for God’s work of this age to begin, as it did, at Pentecost. That work has continued, mostly unnoticed and unknown to the world. Its implications are so far-reaching and its magnitude so great, that there is little wonder it should be misunderstood and misrepresented. The language and promises of the Bible have been lifted out of their settings and given erroneous and unreasonable meanings. Spurious works, in the name of Christ, have been undertaken and established through misunderstanding the divine program. Meanwhile, the whole human creation of God has groaned and travailed together in pain, waiting for “the manifestation of the sons of God”—that is, waiting unknowingly for the work of this age to be completed, when all those called to be sons of God and joint-heirs with Jesus shall be exalted to live and reign with him in the kingdom of blessing now near.—Rom. 8:19-22; Rev. 20:4,6

“THY KINGDOM COME ... IN EARTH”

When we use the word “kingdom” we are using a word which is very prominent in the Bible. Jesus taught his followers to pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) Indeed, the Creator’s will is to be done “in earth,” and for this we greatly rejoice. The term “kingdom” implies rulership, or control. In this case, it signifies divine control over the affairs of men. Jesus will be the ruler in God’s kingdom. His faithful followers, who died sacrificially as he died, will be associated with him. These mighty rulers will be invisible to men, even as God is invisible. We are not to suppose, however, that this kingdom will be indefinite and vague—a rulership consisting merely of an ideology which can be accepted or rejected by the people as they prefer.

Christ’s kingdom will have its human representatives and teachers. The Scriptures tell us who they will be. For example, Peter said that David had not ascended into heaven. (Acts 2:34) Jesus also said that no man had ascended up to heaven. (John 3:13) On another occasion, Jesus said that among those born of women there was none greater than John the Baptist, yet the very least one in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John. (Matt. 11:11) These statements all refer to individuals who served God prior to the Christian era. They reveal that, unlike the servants of God during this age, these “Ancient Worthies” were not given a heavenly hope.

The psalmist speaks of these as the “fathers” in Israel, and the promise is that they shall be made “princes in all the earth.” (Ps. 45:16) Jesus refers to them—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets—

and indicates that when his kingdom is ruling in the earth, these shall be the recognized representatives of it. (Luke 13:28) In this we see again that God's power will operate to raise the dead and install these well qualified men and women as the earthly representatives of the spiritual Christ.

God has promised to intervene in the dark and ominous conditions presently upon the world of mankind by means of the kingdom of Christ, for which so many have prayed for two thousand years. He has already used his power to exalt Jesus far above the angels, and the footstep followers of the Master are destined to share that glory with him. Divine power will soon be used again to restore the Ancient Worthies to fullness of life on earth, and these two companies, selected from among the fallen race, will work together—one in heaven and one on earth—for a thousand years to re-establish divine principles in the hearts of mankind. Thus, all the willing and obedient will attain the blessings of life and peace, and will dwell forever upon the earth, man's eternal home. ■

2020 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

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

Memorial Services in MP3 format are available for download at:

dawnbible.com/memorial

God's Chosen Servant

*Key Verse: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."
—Isaiah 42:1*

*Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 42:1-9*

up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." (Isa. 42:2) In so doing, he gave a message of hope and compassion to the downtrodden common people in Israel who were suffering under the yoke of Roman oppression. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."—vss. 3,4

Christ faithfully laid down his life as a sacrifice for all. (I Tim. 2:4-6) Thus we are assured that God's plan of salvation will provide an opportunity for each member of the human family to attain life under the provisions of the New Covenant. "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a

OUR KEY VERSE IS A PROPHETIC reference to Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. He is the Father's agent through whom the divine plan to bless the human family during the promised kingdom of righteousness is to be achieved.—Matt. 12:15-21

During his earthly ministry Jesus demonstrated meekness and humility as a servant of God—"He shall not cry, nor lift

light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”—Isa. 42:6,7

The complete nature of the servant described in this lesson was not understood for a time until after Christ’s death and resurrection. The Apostle Paul identifies the consecrated spirit begotten followers of Jesus as being “workers together with him” and that we should not receive God’s grace in vain. (II Cor. 6:1) The completion of Christ’s body as joint-sacrificers must occur before the promised earthly blessings will come to Israel and the world of mankind.

Such a prospect should inspire each of us toward faithfulness in our walk. It should motivate us daily to strive for holiness that we may be participants in the glorious work of helping to restore mankind to that harmonious relationship with the Heavenly Father that existed in the Garden of Eden prior to Adam’s disobedience.—Acts 3:20,21

The process of removing past sins and iniquities from the human family will be a gradual work wherein the divine law will be retraced in the hearts of all who desire to obtain God’s favor. This process will come about through adherence to the principles of righteousness that will be enforced when Satan is bound for a thousand years, and no longer able to deceive the people.—Rev. 20:1-3

The glorious outcome of this program for reconciling mankind back to God will result in the complete eradication of evil and the institution of peace, harmony and perfect conditions to be enjoyed forever by all who love the Creator supremely. (Rev. 20:10-15; 21:4-6) How wonderful it will be when the following sentiments are expressed by all intelligent beings: “Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.”—Ps. 86:11,12

A Resurrected Savior

Key Verses: *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”*
—*I Corinthians 15:19,20*

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians 15:1-8,12-23

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.”—vss. 3-6

“Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” (vs. 8) These words remind us that Paul was not a disciple of Christ during our Lord’s earthly ministry. In fact, while known as Saul of Tarsus, he was a bitter enemy of those who followed Jesus. Nevertheless, even as he persecuted these believers,

THE APOSTLE PAUL declared to Christian believers that God’s plan of salvation for the human family is predicated upon Jesus’ death and resurrection. The understanding and acceptance of these two elements are essential for all sinners who ultimately will receive a future life, either in the heavenly domain or here on earth during God’s kingdom.—*I Cor. 15:1,2*

“I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

Paul received a heavenly vision of the risen Christ and thenceforth became an ardent servant of God. (Acts 9:1-17) Since it was necessary for all the apostles to be eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection, Paul was able to give a personal testimony that he also had seen the risen Lord, although in a miraculous manner as he caught a momentary glimpse of Christ's glorious personage.

Paul's message to the brethren in Corinth was forceful and logical. It stressed the importance of believing in the reality of Jesus' resurrection, because without an appreciation of this doctrine, there would be no basis for any future hope of life. Our Key Verse further emphasizes the futility of our living just for the present limited span of existence which ultimately will result in death, as mankind's experience has shown. Instead, we are encouraged to seek the exalted prospect of being a part of the class known as "firstfruits" who will be united with Christ to help assist mankind back to perfection.

The Heavenly Father designed a plan of redemption before the foundation of the world for the restoration of the human family from the curse of sin and death. His only begotten Son came to earth as the man Jesus to provide the ransom price necessary to accomplish this. Through his faithfulness, he became the first of the "firstfruits" class that has slept in death and is now exalted to power and divine glory. Faithful followers of the Master during this Gospel Age will assist in the work of reconciling mankind to God as they are brought back from the grave in the coming kingdom of righteousness.—I Cor. 15:15-23

Surely, all will praise and honor the Creator of the universe forever and ever for his character attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power. All, too, will praise his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, who conquered sin and death. We can indeed affirm, "He is risen!"—Matt. 28:6 ■

An Enemy Destroyed

Key Verse: *“The king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.”*
—Esther 7:2

Selected Scripture:
Esther 7:1-10

Our Key Verse depicts the king’s pleasure in attending a banquet Esther arranged for him and his subsequent offer to fulfill any request she might desire as an acknowledgment of his appreciation of her hospitality.

“Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king’s damage.”—Esther 7:3,4

THIS LESSON DESCRIBES the struggles of Jewish exiles in Persia during the reign of King Ahasuerus. Under divine providence and through a unique set of circumstances, Esther, a Jewish maiden, became queen. Subsequently she was used as the instrument of deliverance from the murderous designs of Haman, who plotted to have her people exterminated, even though at the time he did not know of her ancestry.

Our Key Verse depicts the king’s pleasure in attending a banquet Esther arranged for

In response to the king's inquiry as to who would dare commit such an act upon her people, Esther exposed the truth about Haman in that he was not a faithful servant but was more interested in his fame and status. While Ahasuerus arose in anger and stepped into the palace garden to reflect upon the matter, Haman fell to the foot of the couch which Esther used for the banquet and began to plead for his life. As the king returned and viewed the scene, in his wrath he ordered Haman to be hanged.—vss. 5-10

One important lesson from this narrative is that of having faith in God. As members of the house of servants, the situation of Israel would turn out favorably later through God's overruling providences. (Heb. 3:5) The Jewish people who were spared from extermination on this occasion, despite great adversity in their lives down through the ages, have been preserved by God as a people. They have not been destroyed, as was the plan of Haman.

Devoted followers of Christ are identified as members of the house of sons. (vs. 6) No matter what difficulties we may experience in life, they serve the purpose of testing our faith—"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 1:7) The Scriptures affirm that if we are obedient to the Heavenly Father's principles, we can be assured that the outcome will be glorious. As noted in this precious promise, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. 8:35,38,39 ■

A God of Righteousness

Key Verse: *“I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.”*
—Isaiah 61:8

Selected Scripture:
*Isaiah 61:8-11;
62:1-3*

DURING OLD TESTAMENT times, the Jews had a unique relationship with God who especially favored them prior to their rejection of Jesus as their Savior. God told them, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.”—Amos 3:2

The Prophet Isaiah foretold of Christ’s earthly ministry involving Israel. (Isa. 61:1,2) During our Lord’s First Advent, while reading in the synagogue, he identified himself as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon

me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”—Luke 4:18-21

Our Lord's message was addressed to those humble Jews who realized their undone condition, were ready to accept him as the Messiah, and were desirous of becoming participants in the heavenly phase of the promised kingdom of righteousness. The reaction of many who heard Jesus' words was one of unbelief as well as hostility. Some desired to kill him, but his hour had not yet come to die, and he skillfully passed through their midst and departed to another location.—vss. 28-30

As a mediator between Jehovah and Israel, Moses revealed God's righteousness and his word by giving them the Law. "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"—Deut. 4:5-8

Our Key Verse alludes to God's displeasure with Israel's iniquity in bringing forth offerings to him from blemished animals as opposed to giving the very best from their flocks. Thus the Lord illustrated the wayward course of his chosen people as "robbery for burnt offering."

The foregoing lesson should be deeply engrained in the hearts and minds of all consecrated followers of Christ. At the present time, we are to be faithful in fulfilling our commission to preach the glad tidings of salvation and manifest holiness in our walk. By so doing, we may entertain the hope of promulgating the "everlasting covenant" that will result in blessings to all the human family when God's righteous rule is established on earth. ■

God Endows the New Creature

*“The hearing ear,
and the seeing eye,
the LORD hath
made even both of
them. Love not
sleep, lest thou
come to poverty;
open thine eyes,
and thou shalt be
satisfied with
bread.”*
—Proverbs 20:12,13

A VERY IMPORTANT LESSON for every Christian to learn is the fact that all the blessings which he enjoys are his as a result of the grace and mercy of God. This is true, also, of the natural man, who, as a product of the Creator, properly owes all that he possesses to him who is the fountain of life and of all blessings.

Among the gifts with which God has bestowed the natural man are the five senses of hearing, sight, taste, smell, and touch. Much that makes life truly enjoyable is communicated to the intelligence through these senses. In the symbolisms of the Scriptures, our Heavenly Father employs these natural senses to illustrate his endowment of the footstep followers of Jesus. Thus we find that hearing, sight, taste, smell and touch can all be viewed, symbolically speaking, from a spiritual perspective, in which we find valuable lessons to assist us in our

growth and development as “new creatures” in Christ.—II Cor. 5:17

In our opening text are mentioned two of the senses with which both the natural man and the New Creature are provided. Added is the reminder that it is only when one is awake that he enjoys the blessings that reach him through a proper use of the senses with which he is provided. This is true in a very marked way with the followers of Christ, who are admonished not to sleep as do others, but to be awake and alert that they may at all times be responsive to the blessings which can be theirs by the proper use of divine provisions.—I Thess. 5:6

As noted also in our opening text, if we are idle and drowsy, loving to be at ease in our walk with the Lord, the result is sure to be “poverty,” and a consequent loss of the proper use of all of our spiritual senses. The apostle reminds us that the nourishing, life-giving food provided by God belongs only to “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”—Heb. 5:14

FEELING AFTER GOD

The sense of touch, or feeling, is used in the Scriptures to symbolize not only a similar gift with which New Creatures in Christ are endowed, but also to illustrate qualities of mind and heart possessed by those who desire to be in harmony with the Creator, even before they become Christians. The apostle speaks of those who “feel” after the Lord. (Acts 17:27) The illustration here is that of one feeling for an object with his hands, when neither sight nor hearing yet reveals its whereabouts or identity.

Man, when originally created, was given the quality of worship and reverence, and with it, a sense of dependence upon the Creator. As a result of the fall the race has mostly lost contact with God. However, there have been those throughout the ages who have longed to be in harmony with him, and these have reached out for him. God's recognition of those who "feel" after him is manifested through his giving them eyes to see and ears to hear the truths pertaining to his plan, and their part therein. From among those whose response continues to be enlarged, he calls his people.

This longing desire of the individual to be in harmony with God, and to serve him as well as to depend upon him, does not cease with the divine recognition and call. It continues to operate as an important quality in the character of the New Creature, only now it is not a mere feeling after God, but a passionate and enlightened desire to be pleasing to him, and to know and serve him better. David expresses the true feelings of every dedicated follower of Christ, saying, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."—Ps. 42:1

A proper feeling after God has associated with it a keen realization of our dependency upon him. If we are truly humble, we will seek the blessings from God which we so sorely need, and which he alone can provide. The humble-minded among the Israelites at the time of Jesus' First Advent earnestly sought the blessings which they believed he was able to give. One of these said, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole." (Mark 5:28) Here the close relationship between the sense of touch and

the receiving of blessings from the Lord is emphasized.

When the Master revealed himself to Mary following his resurrection, and Mary sought to embrace him, Jesus said, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” (John 20:17) The New Testament use of the Greek word here translated “touch,” shows its meaning to be that of making contact with the hope of receiving blessings. Jesus’ statement to Mary, therefore, is merely explaining to her that until he ascended, and, symbolically speaking, presented the atoning value of his ransom sacrifice into the hands of the Father’s justice, he was not in a position to grant her the blessing which alone would be of eternal value to her.

Now, however, the blood has been applied for those who receive and respond properly to God’s invitation, and by faith they are able to make contact with him who is the source of life and blessing. Symbolically speaking, then, our spiritual sense of touch is that quality which prompts us to seek divine blessings, and to worship at the throne of heavenly grace. Our natural sense of feeling and touch should neither influence us, nor be our guide as New Creatures. God guides us by drawing nigh to us, enabling us to hear his Word of truth and see the vision of his great plan.

THE HEARING EAR

The blessing of spiritual hearing is of inestimable value. Jesus said to his disciples, “Blessed are ... your ears, for they hear.” (Matt. 13:16) The blessing to which he referred by this symbol is described earlier in this chapter, where the Master said to his

disciples, “It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 13:11) Jesus did not tell the disciples that they were to be congratulated because of their ability to fathom the mysteries of the kingdom, but reminded them that the understanding which they enjoyed had been “given” to them.

Referring to Israel as a whole during the time of his ministry, Jesus explained that their ears were “dull of hearing.” (vs. 15) Because of this, it was not given them to know the mysteries of the kingdom. In the case of these, the gift of hearing was withheld because of their lack of appreciation and hardness of heart. In verse 17, Jesus also spoke of other men who were as godly and zealous as the disciples, and yet they could not “hear.”

Why so, since these included “many prophets and righteous men?” Jesus said that they desired to hear these things, but failed in their attempt, because it was not God’s due time to reveal these truths. From this we can see how greatly favored of the Lord we have been if we have been given ears to hear, and hearts to appreciate the glorious Gospel of the kingdom—God’s “plan of the ages.”—Eph. 3:11, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*

Let us not think for a moment that we have attained this wonderful knowledge through any brilliancy of our own. We are to remember that there are others who have been similarly blessed, and who also have this mark of divine approval. A proper attitude of humility before the Lord, in view of the great things he has done for us, should make us careful in our judgment of one another and in our dealings with our fellow brethren in Christ.

If we properly appreciate God's gift of the hearing ear, we will endeavor to use the gift to his glory. Jesus said to his disciples concerning statements of truth he had made to them, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." (Luke 9:44) Evidently Jesus' thought here is that the disciples should give special attention to what he was saying. The importance of properly using the sense of hearing given to us by the Lord is further emphasized in Proverbs 8:32-34, where we read, "Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors."

Of special interest to the Christian are the words of Jesus recorded in Revelation 3:20, where he says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Here we have brought to our attention our part in connection with the hearing of the Truth, that is, the privilege of responding, and inviting the Lord to come in and sup—dine and fellowship—with us.

The apostle further admonishes that we be not merely hearers of the Word of God, but also doers. (James 1:22) If the Lord has blessed us with a hearing ear, so that through this medium we have been made acquainted with him and his glorious message of truth, we should act in harmony with what we have heard. We should be "doers" of the Word. If we expect to continue receiving the blessings of the Lord, we cannot go on in life as the world does, merely being glad that we know something of the Word of truth, but otherwise doing nothing about it.

“HEARKEN, O DAUGHTER”

Through the psalmist, the Lord prophetically addresses those whom he invites to become a part of the bride class, saying, “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.” (Ps. 45:10,11) Here, we are told not only to incline our ears to hear the words of the Lord, but upon hearing, we are to forget all other considerations except that of doing his will. Even such things as important and dear to us as our own people must take second place in our lives, if God’s gift of a hearing ear is to result in the rich blessings he intends for us.

Isaiah 55:3 reads, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” To “incline” our ears unto the Lord means to give close and undivided attention, to shut out from our hearing, as far as possible, that which distracts from what the Lord is saying to us. Only those who thus incline their ears, through making a full consecration to do God’s will, and faithfully carrying it out day by day, can expect to receive God’s covenant blessings. Thus, again, we are reminded of our part in the receiving of this gift of spiritual hearing. If we fail to use it, or misuse it, we will be depriving ourselves of the rich spiritual blessings that otherwise could be ours.

In another place, the Prophet Isaiah states, “Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.” (Isa. 30:21) Here, the use of the symbolism of hearing ears indicates that it is

through this spiritual sense that God reveals his will to us through his Word, to guide us in the way we should serve him. If our ears are dulled to the hearing of God's instructions, we will be uncertain of the direction in which we should walk, and the manner in which we should serve.

EYES TO SEE

In Matthew 13:16, partially quoted earlier with regard to spiritual hearing, Jesus also says, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." This is to be esteemed a great blessing from the Lord, and another means by which we are able to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Spiritual vision is closely related to spiritual hearing, yet the symbolism brings additional thoughts to mind. Ability to hear the Word of the Lord seems to be related more particularly to God's invitation to serve him, and our heartfelt response. Spiritual sight conveys the thought of the ability to discern not only God's will for us in our service to him, but also his plan in general, especially the wondrous truths pertaining to the establishment of his kingdom.

This thought is suggested in Isaiah 33:17, where we read, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." The "king" whom we see by spiritual vision, is Jesus, as God's agent. The Apostle Paul speaks of this, saying, "We see Jesus, 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) What a great blessing it is to be able thus to "see Jesus." Millions are able to see Jesus as a teacher of high moral

ethics, and a leader in other respects, but only those who are blessed with true spiritual vision, see him in his true position in God's plan as the Redeemer of the world.

Millions who have hailed Jesus as the Redeemer have not been blessed with an understanding of the words they used. They have not discerned Jesus as the "only begotten of the Father," who was "made flesh" for the suffering of death as a "ransom for all." (John 1:14; I Tim. 2:5,6) Not discerning this, they have understood only that which they have learned through human philosophy, which has come far short of the full meaning of this all-important truth.

The vision of seeing Jesus includes more than our discerning the ransom feature of God's plan, fundamental though this is. The Messianic promises of the Scriptures reveal Jesus also as the future king of earth who, reigning for a thousand years, will subdue all enemies under his feet, and, at the close of that reign, deliver up the kingdom to his Father.—Rev. 20:4,6; I Cor. 15:24-28

The apostle says, "But now we see not yet all things put under him." (Heb. 2:8) That which we do not yet see as an accomplished fact is that which the prophet speaks of as the "land that is very far off," as earlier quoted. True spiritual vision, then, enables us not only to discern the purpose of Christ's coming to earth to die as man's Redeemer, but also to understand that the work of redemption is a necessary precursor to his glorious kingdom reign soon to come. It is the ability to understand and "see" what has already been accomplished, and to look forward to the fulfillment of that which has been promised, which has blessed our spiritual vision of God and his plan.

THE PURE IN HEART SEE GOD

Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8) Here is spiritual discernment that enables us to see beyond the divine plan to perceive the character that is revealed in its author. Such ability to see is given only to the “pure in heart.” If in our hearts there is still some room for self, rather than undivided devotion to God, our vision will come short of actually beholding the glorious character of our Heavenly Father.

If, on the other hand, we can truly say from the heart, “None of self, and all of thee,” and are prepared to fully enter the way of self-sacrifice to do the Lord’s will, our devotion is rewarded even now with faith’s vision of the glory of God. If we continue our wholehearted devotion to the Heavenly Father faithfully even unto death, our vision of faith will be rewarded with the glorious privilege of being in the actual presence of our God and seeing him face to face.

SPIRITUAL TASTING

When God enlightens us, and we find him whom we seek, he gives us the great joy of knowing that he is good, gracious, loving and kind. David refers to this using the symbol of taste, saying, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Ps. 119:103) Taste conveys the thought of experience. In the natural realm, we may see food that appeals to the eye, but when we experience its taste and find that it is good, the appraisal of sight has been verified. So in spiritual things, when we have “tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,” it means that we have appropriated these to ourselves and proved

their value by means of our own experiences.—Heb. 6:4-6

This thought is borne out by the words of David: “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” (Ps. 34:8) In other words, tasting of the Lord’s goodness involves the putting of his promises to the test through our experiences. By trusting him in all things, we are given the additional assurance, through our own experiences, of God’s blessing upon us.

The Apostle Peter exhorts that those who have “tasted that the Lord is gracious” should “desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” (I Pet. 2:2,3) Verse 1 admonishes the laying aside of “all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.” Those who do this, Peter says, are like newborn babes. They are pure, innocent, unassuming and wholesome. The apostle’s illustration is evidently the same as that employed by Jesus when he said, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. 18:3

Having employed the illustration of newborn babes, it was but fitting that Peter continue with a logical sequence of symbolism by using the food of infants to picture the purity of the Word of God, upon which we feed and grow strong in the Lord. The apostle thus illustrates the purity and nourishing qualities of our spiritual food and its power to promote growth as New Creatures.

EATING THE BOOK

A still further aspect of taste is brought to our attention in Revelation 10:9, where God’s plan is likened

to a book, which, when eaten, is sweet to the taste, but causes bitterness in digestion. Here we are told what to expect as a result of fully appropriating the truths of God and applying them in our lives. The promises of God are always sweet, and how we rejoice in them, savoring every blessed assurance of his Word by which he tells of his love and tender care.

However, we are not to forget that obedience to God's will and Word leads to bitterness of experience through trial and persecution. No one could rejoice in the sweetness of the Father's Word more than did Jesus, yet his faithfulness to it led to suffering and death, even the cruel death of the cross. Those who are following faithfully in the Master's footsteps should not expect to have experiences different from his.—Matt. 10:22-25

SWEET-SMELLING SAVOR

The symbolism of smell is used in the Scriptures to convey the thought of sacrifice and devotion. In Ephesians 5:2, the apostle says, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." By this language Paul takes our minds back to the services of Israel's Tabernacle, where, in connection with its services, incense was burned upon the golden altar in the Holy compartment, the odors of which penetrated beyond the second veil into the Most Holy.—Exod. 30:1-8

The regulations governing the services of the Tabernacle were very exact. On Israel's Day of Atonement, Aaron the high priest took the blood of the sacrifice into the Most Holy to sprinkle upon the mercy seat. However, it was essential that incense first be burned

at the golden altar in order that its smoke and odor enter the Most Holy prior to Aaron passing under the veil, else he would die as he entered the Most Holy. (Lev. 16:11-14) The smoke and odor of the incense was evidence that the sacrificial work had been properly carried out. That is why the sacrifice of Jesus is spoken of as “a sweetsmelling savour” to God.

The consecrated followers of Jesus are also invited to sacrifice, and to be baptized into his death. (Rom. 12:1; 6:3,4) Our work of sacrifice is directed particularly on behalf of our fellow brethren of the body of Christ. In Philippians 4:18, the Apostle Paul, alluding to the evidence of sacrifice on the part of the church at Philippi in sending him a gift while in prison at Rome, refers to it as “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.” Here we have the authority of Paul himself for applying the lessons of Israel’s Tabernacle to the church, as well as to Jesus. It shows, furthermore, that God is testing the sincerity of our dedication to him by the wholeheartedness of our sacrifice and service towards one another.

The symbolism of the sense of smell should also enable us to discern between true devotion to God, and mere lip service. It is a sense by which we may test, as it were, the value of truth, and its application in our own lives. Where we can smell no odor of sacrifice, we may well wonder how deeply the truth has taken hold of our spiritual life. Our vision of truth should reveal the privilege of sacrifice on behalf of others, and our heart devotion to the Truth should make us quick to lay down our lives that others may be blessed. Thus can the sweet odor of devotion be strong.

If these spiritual endowments of the New Creature are to react in genuine and lasting blessings to us as followers of the Master, it is important that we use them continuously. In the natural realm, when sleep overtakes an individual, all of his senses lie dormant. The apostle, however, admonishing us against spiritual weariness, says, “Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” (I Thess. 5:6) Remaining awake and alert, let us use the spiritual senses which God has so abundantly provided, in order that we may know him better and serve him more faithfully. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

APRIL 2—“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”—Galatians 6:10 (Z. '03-121 Hymn 277)

APRIL 9—“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.”—I Corinthians 9:24 (Z. '95-93 Hymn 183)

APRIL 16—“They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”—Malachi 3:17 (Z. '03-223 Hymn 322)

APRIL 23—“That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”—Luke 8:15 (Z. '03-408 Hymn 166)

APRIL 30—“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”—I Peter 2:9 (Z. '03-165 Hymn 236)

Hope Which Enters Within the Veil

“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.”
—*Hebrews 6:19*

TRUE HOPE IS A COMBI-nation of desire and assurance. One might desire something very earnestly, but if there were no assurance of ever obtaining it, he would have no basis for true hope. On the other hand, one might

know for certain that some tragedy was coming into his life, but because he would have no desire for it, it would be improper to use the word hope in connection therewith. We desire that for which we hope, and we hope for it because of being assured from reliable sources that our desire is to be realized.

So it is with the hope of the footstep followers of Jesus. Their hope is to be with the Lord, see him as he is, share his glory as his joint-heir, and be a partaker of the divine nature. (John 17:24; I John 3:2; Rom. 8:17; II Pet. 1:4) As human beings, we are

made to live on the earth. By nature, we are satisfied to have it that way, and do not inherently desire heavenly things. Heavenly desires, therefore, must be developed within us, and God does this for us by the power and influence of his Holy Spirit through the precious promises of his Word.

Even so, our desire for heavenly things is not based on actual knowledge of what they are like, for they are quite beyond human comprehension. The Apostle John speaks of this, saying, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." (I John 3:2) That is, we cannot fully grasp the height of glory and nature to which we are called. Of one thing we are certain, however, as John continues, "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Of Jesus it is written that since his resurrection he is the "express image" of his Father, and we are to be like him. (Heb. 1:3) Jesus said to his disciples, and to us, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2,3) Later, Jesus prayed for the fulfillment of this promise, saying, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." (John 17:24) The declaration that we are to see Jesus as he is, not as he was while in the flesh, proves that we will be like him. Such promises as these are just some of the unshakeable foundations of our hope.

In his prayer, Jesus said that the glory which the Father had given to him, he had given to his disciples. (vs. 22) At that time, the heavenly glory had

been given to Jesus only by promise. He did not actually receive it until after his resurrection, and he gave it to his disciples, and through them to us, in the same manner. It was a glorious legacy from the Father to him, and by promise he was sharing that assurance of hope with his followers.

The Apostle Paul speaks of rejoicing “in hope of the glory of God.” He also uses the expression “heirs of God.” We are “heirs of God” because, as Paul continues, we are “joint-heirs with Christ.” (Rom. 5:2; 8:17) We read these promises and they give us a firm foundation for our hope, yet we still have only a limited comprehension of what they actually mean. What is implied in the thought of rejoicing “in hope of the glory of God?” What do we know about God’s glory? Indeed, our reason helps us to grasp some things concerning his glory, but how far short our conceptions of divine glory must come!

We know something of God’s wisdom and power, for we see these attributes on display all around us, day and night. Everything created reminds us of them. Through his Word we have learned still more about God’s wisdom and power. We see the infinite wisdom of God exhibited through his plan of redemption for a lost race. We see his almighty power displayed in the resurrection of Jesus and in the “first resurrection” of his faithful footstep followers. We know it will be manifested still further when “all that are in the graves ... shall come forth,” and throughout the “times of restitution of all things.”—I Cor. 15:20-23; Rev. 20:6; John 5:28,29; Acts 3:20,21

The Bible also reveals God’s justice and love. He “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten

Son” to be man’s Redeemer. At the same time, the requirements of his divine justice were satisfied. By one perfect man, Adam, who fell from his perfection, sin and death came into the world. Likewise, one perfect man, Jesus, who maintained his perfection, provided a corresponding price, or ransom, to offset Adam’s transgression and afford the opportunity for life to the sin-sick and dying race. (John 3:16; Rom. 5:18,19; I Tim. 2:5,6) To the extent that our finite minds—fallen and imperfect as they are—can understand the operation of these attributes of God’s character in connection with his plan, it helps us to grasp the idea of his glory.

There is another element of God’s glory, however, of which we know very little. That is the glory of his divine nature. If faithful, we are to partake of this glory also. Peter wrote that we have been given “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.” (II Pet. 1:4) In brief, if we are faithful now in applying the principles of divine righteousness to the development of a holy character as set forth in God’s Word, we will be granted a share in his power and his wisdom. We will also be able to administer divine justice and love, for not only will we come to understand these attributes of his character fully, but they will become a very part of us. Thus, we will be made partakers of the divine nature—immortality.

“WITHIN THE VEIL”

As we have noted, it is impossible for our finite minds to grasp with any degree of fullness all that is involved in our glorious hope. However, in addition

to the many revealing and faith-strengthening promises that are recorded in the Bible, God has also furnished illustrations to help us understand to some extent the magnitude of the thought. One of these is suggested in our opening text. Here the apostle declares that our hope is an “anchor,” and “entereth into that within the veil.”

The reference here is to Israel’s Tabernacle in the wilderness. As the apostle reminds us, the inside of the tabernacle proper was separated into two compartments by a “veil.” The compartment beyond this veil was called the Most Holy, or the “Holiest of all.” (Heb. 9:2,3) The apostle further explains that the Most Holy was a figure or illustration of “heaven itself.” (vs. 24) Hence, when in our text he speaks of our hope as being an anchor which enters within the veil, it is another reminder that our hope is a heavenly one.

It is well to remember in this connection, however, that the Israelites as a whole did not have the privilege of going into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. Indeed, Paul says that into the Most Holy “went the high priest alone once each year.” This was in connection with the Day of Atonement sacrifices, when he sprinkled the blood of atonement upon the mercy seat. (vs. 7) The use of the most holy was very limited.

The apostle speaks of our hope entering “within the veil,” where Jesus our forerunner has already entered, having been made a “high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 6:19,20) This in itself reveals the height of glory to which we are called. It indicates that this hope is not shown in the camp of Israel, but by the priestly class. Indeed,

our hope is to be part of the Melchisedec priesthood, and share with Christ Jesus in the priestly work of blessing the people when the “better sacrifices” of the present Gospel Age are finished.—Heb. 9:23

This is quite in harmony with Peter’s statement that we are a “holy priesthood,” and that our present responsibility as priests is to offer sacrifices. Continuing, he informs us that faithfulness in our present sacrificial work qualifies us as part of “a royal priesthood.” (I Pet. 2:5,9) No wonder Paul describes God’s invitation to such glory as a “heavenly calling,” and explains that the “High Priest of our profession” is Christ Jesus. (Heb. 3:1) We should be inspired with such a prospect! Let us remember, however, that one of the important conditions attached to this heavenly calling is that we must sacrifice at the present time.—Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15,16

THE FURNITURE OF THE MOST HOLY

There was only one article of furniture in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle, but it was a very important one. Paul describes it as the “ark of the covenant,” which, he says, was overlaid with gold, “wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat.” (Heb. 9:4,5) Inasmuch as our hope is centered in the “Holiest of all,” it is evident that the Lord intended everything therein to foreshadow various aspects of that for which we hope.

THE GOLDEN POT OF MANNA

God provided “manna” for the Israelites to eat during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. By this manna they were kept alive. It was

necessary that the Israelites gather it each day, except that on the sixth day of each week they were to gather a double portion. This was in order that they would not have to work on the Sabbath day. In the Lord's providence the manna that fell on the sixth day would keep fresh an additional day.—Exod. 16:11-32

Jesus referred to this arrangement and spoke of the manna as being an illustration of himself, saying that he was the true bread which came down from heaven, and that anyone availing himself of this heavenly provision could live forever. (John 6:32-35,49-51) So it will be that during the "times of restitution of all things" the entire human race will be given the opportunity of accepting God's provision of life through Jesus. (Acts 3:20,21) They will live forever, but only if they continue to partake of the life-giving provisions made for them, just as the Israelites needed to gather and eat the literal manna every day.

However, there was a small portion of the manna provided to the Israelites which did not corrupt. This portion, by God's instructions, was gathered and placed in a "golden pot" in the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. (Exod. 16:33,34; Heb. 9:4) This manna did not need to be replenished, for by divine power it was kept from corrupting. There is an allusion to the significance of this golden pot of manna in the promise the Lord made to the church in Pergamos, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." (Rev. 2:17) This is a promise which all faithful followers of the Master can apply to themselves.

Of Jesus it is written that he brought “life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (II Tim. 1:10) If, as the Scriptures indicate, the manna in the wilderness was a picture of the “life,” though it be mortal, which mankind will be able to obtain through Christ, then it is logical to conclude that the manna which was placed in the golden pot and did not corrupt prefigured “immortality.” Thus, the hopes of perfect mortal life, or that of immortality, have been brought to our understanding “through the gospel.”

Jesus explained that his Heavenly Father was immortal, having life within himself—that is, life independent of all outside sources or sustenance—and that he would give this same type of life to his Son. (John 5:26) Jesus, having been given immortality at his resurrection, shares this reward with his followers—those who prove themselves “faithful unto death”—when they are resurrected. (Rom. 2:6,7; Rev. 2:10) How beautifully this highest of all planes of life was illustrated by the manna that was kept in the golden pot. It did not need to be renewed, and even the vessel in which it was kept, being of gold, also foreshadowed the divine nature. What a blessed hope it is that entereth into that which is within the veil!

AARON'S ROD THAT BUDED

Another article that was stored in the ark of the covenant was Aaron's rod that budded. The story of this rod starts with the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. The Lord destroyed these rebels with their families and sympathizers. Afterward there

was considerable murmuring among the Israelites. They still were not satisfied fully that the Levitical tribe, of which Aaron was the head, should be the exclusive servants in religious matters.—Num. 16:1-50

God instructed Moses to have the head of each of the twelve tribes bring his rod, and that all twelve rods were to be laid up in the Tabernacle. The Lord explained that he would indicate his choice by whichever one of these rods budded. “It came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the Tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.”—Num. 17:1-8

Then the Lord instructed Moses to take this rod into the Tabernacle where it was to be kept as a testimony against those who rebelled. (vs. 10) Thus Aaron’s rod that budded prefigured the fact that the true church, with Christ as its head, is God’s choice, his elect company, a “chosen generation.” (I Pet. 2:9) All whose hope enters into that which is within the veil have been called by the Heavenly Father and are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God.”—I Pet. 1:2

In the exercise of his foreknowledge, God ordained that each one who qualifies to be a part of this elect class must be “conformed to the image of his Son.” (Rom. 8:29) It is not an arbitrary choice, but one that is based upon the meeting of certain conditions, and those requirements are that we become copies of God’s dear Son. This thought was well illustrated in the case of Aaron’s rod. His rod was chosen because it brought forth buds, and flowers, and fruit.

It may have been this illustration that Jesus had in mind when he used the expression, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” (Matt. 7:20) Christians who bear the fruits of righteousness will certainly be known by God and blessed by him. They are his called and elect ones, yet it remains for each of us, “by patient continuance in well doing,” to make our “calling and election sure.” (Rom. 2:7; II Pet. 1:10) It is an inspiration for us to know that our hope which enters within the veil includes the blessed assurance that God has chosen us for this high position of sharing with Christ in priestly service for the blessing of the world of mankind in his coming kingdom.

THE TABLES OF THE LAW

The tables of the law given to Moses by God were also kept in the ark of the covenant, which means that they likewise foreshadowed something important pertaining to the development of the spiritual priesthood. (Deut. 10:2-5) These tables contained the Ten Commandments—the epitome of God’s law given to the nation of Israel. God explained that these tables of the law were given to Moses in order that he might teach the people.—Exod. 24:12

In II Corinthians 3:3, Paul speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit, explaining that it writes the “epistle of Christ” in the “tables of the heart.” He contrasts this with the writing of Israel’s law on “tables of stone.” In verse 6 the apostle shows that we are made “able ministers” of the New Covenant, as Moses was a servant of the Law Covenant. It seems clear that the apostle wants us to understand that these “able ministers” bear the same relationship

to Christ in connection with the New Covenant as the tables of stone did toward Moses in connection with the Law Covenant.

The Lord explained to Moses, as we have seen, that those tables of the law were given to him that he might teach the people. So the church, in association with Christ Jesus, are to be used by him to teach the people in the coming Messianic kingdom. Telling of him and about the grace of God manifested through him, these will testify to all that life is available through accepting Christ and obeying the laws of the New Covenant—the laws of the kingdom.

The circumstances under which the literal tables of stone were inscribed with the law of God are most interesting and revealing. Moses had been in the mount forty days and forty nights. When he came down, he saw the golden calf that the Israelites had caused Aaron to make. In his anger, Moses threw down the two tables of the law, destroying them. (Exod. 32:15-19) Later, Moses was again called to come up to the mount with two new tables of stone, upon which the Lord again wrote his law.

Concerning this second writing of the law by God, we read: “Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by

no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."—Exod. 34:4-7

One who is acquainted with God's plan can readily see that the various characteristics of his glory mentioned in the above passage are all revealed through his Word of truth. In other words, God's glory is shown to us by a knowledge and appreciation of his plans and purposes. His law, being inscribed on the tables of stone while his glory was being proclaimed, finds a counterpart in the experiences of true Christians, for it is God's law, written and working in our hearts, that gives evidence of God's mercy and grace, and thus shows his glory.

In keeping with this illustration we might say that throughout the entire Gospel Age the church has been with her Lord, symbolically speaking, in the "mount." They have been obscured and largely unknown to the world. All the while, the ministry of God's law has been preparing them for their future glorious position, when they will reign with Christ in glory, and as ministers of reconciliation, will share with him in his work as "mediator of the new covenant."—Heb. 12:24

When Moses came down from the mount there was a glory on his countenance. However, that glory, the apostle explains, was to be "done away." Our hope, based on the "ministration of the spirit," is the "glory that excelleth." (II Cor. 3:7-11) Paul also declares, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4) What a glorious hope, the "glory that excelleth," and which enters within the veil, is ours.

THE MERCY SEAT AND CHERUBIM

The cover on the ark of the covenant was called the mercy seat. It was a solid slab of gold, from which arose two cherubim. These faced each other, looking in toward, and down upon, the mercy seat itself. Between these cherubim, and upon the mercy seat, God spoke his commandments to the children of Israel, appearing in the form of a cloud of glory.—Exod. 25:17-22; 40:35; Lev. 16:2; Heb. 9:5

There are four key attributes which make up God's glorious character—wisdom, justice, love, and power. Since the promise is that we are to partake of the glory of God, and because our hope enters into that within the veil, it is not unreasonable to suppose that in this cloud of glory, above the ark of the covenant, we have a representation of God's wisdom. It is divine wisdom which encompasses and directs all of God's actions as well as his other character qualities. His attribute of justice seems well illustrated by the mercy seat. It was here that the blood of the bullock was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement, picturing the satisfaction of divine justice in order that God's favor might be extended to those for whom atonement had been made.—Lev. 16:11-14

The two cherubim illustrate well God's attributes of love and power. As they looked down upon the mercy seat they seem to suggest the idea of waiting until the blood had been sprinkled before starting out to carry the blessings of atonement to the people. God's power and love will indeed be the agencies by which the atonement accomplished by the blood of Christ will be speeded to a sin-cursed and dying world, in God's due time.—Jude 1:25; I John 4:7-10

It is God's infinite wisdom by which all the glorious attributes of his character are working together for the eventual blessing of the people. In like manner, it was by the appearance of the cloud of glory that the cherubim could see, symbolically speaking, when the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, and hence would know when it was time to begin their mission of blessing. Thus is shown the harmony of every aspect of God's glorious character in the carrying out of his plans and purposes for mankind.

The apostle says that the faithful church will partake of this wondrous glory: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:2) If we draw near to the Lord now, and allow the influence of his Spirit to transform us more and more into his likeness, and not become weary in well doing, but continue faithful even unto death, we will be raised into his likeness in the "first resurrection." Truly, our hope of glory "entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."—Heb. 6:19,20 ■

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 Frank Boychuk, Winnipeg, MB—March 9.

Age, 85

Brother Joe Cooper, Boise, ID—March 14. Age, 94

Sister Martha Duhaime, Groton New London, CT—

March 24. Age, 94

Lessons from the Life of Lot

“As it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”

—*Luke 17:28-30*

LOT WAS THE SON OF Abraham’s brother, Haran. In the opening verses of Genesis, chapter 12, we read concerning the time that God spoke to Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham, and told him to leave his country and go to an unknown land to which God would lead him. Abram, his wife, Sarai, his nephew, Lot, and their entourage did as God instructed and eventually entered the land of Canaan. There God promised to give Abram and his posterity all the land, to the east and west, north and south, as his and their inheritance. Notice that God did not speak directly to Lot, Abram’s nephew, nor did he make any promises to him.—Gen. 12:5-7; 13:14-17

Abram and Lot became so prosperous that the land they were sharing was unable to sustain the

flocks and herds of both families, so Abram told Lot it was time for them to separate. Abram discussed the matter at length with Lot, recommending that they should not have any quarreling between them, nor between their herdsmen, and reminding him that they were kinsmen. He said, “Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left. Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, ... So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan.”—Gen. 13:9-11, *New International Version*

As the senior member of the family, Abram could have selected the best pastures for himself and sent Lot elsewhere. However, he relinquished his privilege and allowed his nephew to exercise first choice. It is no surprise that Lot would desire to have the prime land, but it resulted that this act of self-interest brought with it a costly price. He must live in close proximity to the wicked city of Sodom. Surely Lot was aware of the city’s reputation before he decided to take up residence there with his family, as well as his flocks and herds. Yet he moved there, and ended up paying an enormous toll for this decision.

Lot may have thought that he could rise above the evil influences of that city and its wicked people, and continue to worship God as he always had. At first, perhaps, he was able to accomplish this, but it became increasingly difficult to endure such sinful surroundings. In Genesis 13:12 we read that Lot “pitched his tent toward Sodom.” In other words, he dwelt there. Before long, there was

even greater trouble. Marauding kings attacked, carrying off Lot and all his possessions. After a spectacular rescue by Abram and his army of servants, Lot returned to Sodom. (Gen. 14:11-16) There, he “sat in the gate of Sodom,” evidently serving in some official capacity for the city.—Gen. 19:1

Lot, we believe, did not make a wise choice in returning to Sodom. In fact, it would seem that God had given him the opportunity and incentive to choose a new location by allowing him to be captured and carried off, then rescued. Lot, however, did not see the leading of the Lord in this matter. He returned to Sodom despite the fact that by this time he was well aware of the terrible conditions there. (Gen. 13:13) Lot, who the Apostle Peter states was considered by God to be a righteous man, “was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard).” (II Pet. 2:7,8, *NIV*) Lot was surely distressed by the lives of those wicked people around him, and attempted to maintain, to the extent it was possible, his righteous standing before God. Yet, he chose to remain in the midst of that wicked and perverse city.

Abram, on the other hand, was content to live on the plains of Mamre, in the area of Hebron. (Gen. 13:18) Although it was not as fertile nor as easy to utilize as the more fruitful area of Sodom, it was quite adequate for Abram’s needs. He lived apart from the wickedness of the others and he was blessed, prospering abundantly.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM

Some period of time later, after God had changed Abram's name to Abraham, two angels appeared to Abraham and told him they were going to destroy Sodom because of the grievously sinful conditions existing there. (Gen. 18:20) Abraham was concerned that Lot would be swept away in the destruction along with everyone else and tried desperately to negotiate a delay from Jehovah. He began by asking God, "What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?" (vs. 24, *NIV*) God assured him that the city would not be destroyed if there were fifty righteous dwelling there. Abraham continued, asking God if he would destroy Sodom if there were forty-five righteous—then forty, thirty and twenty. Each time, God replied that he would not destroy the city. Finally, Abraham reduced the count to just ten, and was still told that Sodom would not be destroyed even if only ten righteous were found.—vss. 26-32

Abraham may have believed that there must be at least ten righteous people in Sodom, thinking that Lot's example could surely have converted a few individuals to the path of righteousness. He knew, of course, that the immediate members in Lot's family numbered four, which was a good start toward the required ten. As it turned out, however, those were the only ones who eventually escaped from the city before it was destroyed.

After assuring Abraham that the city would not be destroyed if ten righteous could be found there, the angels left Abraham and went to Sodom. Lot, who was sitting at the gate, saw them coming toward

the city, not knowing that they were angels. He immediately invited them into his home in order that they would have safe shelter. However, the unrestrained wickedness of the men of Sodom was revealed when, violating all the rules of hospitality and even ordinary civilized behavior, they attempted to enter Lot's home by force and snatch the visitors from their refuge there. Behind this lawless conduct was the inconceivably barbaric purpose of doing them great bodily harm.—Gen. 19:1-7

The men of Sodom, of course, did not realize that they were dealing with spirit beings, who were well able to fend off their attacks. Immediately, the men were struck blind by the angels, who then warned Lot to flee at once because the city was going to be totally destroyed at any moment.—vss. 10-13

Lot was not able to convince his sons-in-law of the seriousness of what was about to occur, and, therefore, Lot, his wife and their two daughters were the only ones who obeyed the angel's urgent warning to escape from Sodom. The angels told them to go to the mountains, but Lot asked to go to the small town of Zoar, which finally the angels agreed would be acceptable. Then the dreadful destruction began. The Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah out of the heavens, and in this way he overthrew those cities, including all those who lived in them.—vss. 14-25

As Lot and his family neared Zoar, his wife, ignoring the angels' command, looked back, perhaps mesmerized by the horrifying scene, and she became "a pillar of salt." (vs. 26) Concerning this, it has been suggested that perhaps in her turning to look back, she possibly stumbled and fell, becoming mired in

the thick, noxious mixture of mud, sulphur and bitumen, or tar. Unable to rise, and rapidly overcome by the poisonous vapors and viscous liquid, she quickly died, and soon became encrusted with the salt crystals which even now are prevalent in the area of the Dead Sea.

As far as Abraham was concerned, this was not a case of unexpected destruction. He had been forewarned that it was going to take place through the ministration of the angels. Lot also knew in enough time to escape, but the people of the city did not know. Their minds and hearts were not touched with gratitude for God's provision of all their material needs, nor to worship him for his goodness. They did not even care how wicked their lives had become, living as though there would never be a day of reckoning. If anything, their destruction was long overdue, not only for the sake of others, but for themselves as well.

LESSONS FOR US

The Apostle Paul reminds us that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," and that the events recorded in the Old Testament were "for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition." (Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:11) Certainly, the experiences of Abraham and Lot are examples from which we may gather important lessons, as well as warnings.

It is not difficult to see that Abraham represents those who maintain their faithfulness to God throughout many difficulties and trials. "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." (Gal. 3:9) Those who comprise the "little flock" of Jesus'

footstep followers do not exercise their own wills, but rather endeavor always to do the will of God. Since their goals are bent heavenward, they do not seek earthly advantage over neighbors, friends, relatives or business associates.

Are we always successful in suppressing our own desires and goals in favor of others' preferences and choices? Abraham, in our lesson, showed a righteous and humble character by gladly putting Lot's desires before his own, and he was greatly blessed because of it. He was a marvelous example for us to follow. In this regard, we are reminded of Paul's words, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."—Rom. 12:10

The impending destruction of Sodom was foretold, though the exact day was not known in advance. We believe from our understanding of prophecies now being fulfilled that the "present evil world" is similarly to be removed, and that the long-awaited establishment of Christ's kingdom, the "new heavens and a new earth," will soon take its place. (Gal. 1:4; II Pet. 3:11-13) However, the specific day and hour of the fulfillment of these events we do not know. Because of this, as followers of the Master, we are to have an ever greater desire to strive to be found faithful to our vows of consecration.

Lot, on the other hand, did not evidence very much concern about his relationship to God. He was blessed by God in general, but only because of his kinship to Abraham did he seem to enjoy specific blessings or protection. His decisions were based upon his preference for earthly prosperity and position for

himself and his family, rather than looking for the blessing of God through association with other godly people. He was a good man by ordinary standards. He had no desire to hurt anyone, and even risked his life to protect the angels. The Apostle Peter called him “righteous.” (II Pet. 2:7,8) Compromise with the world, however, always exacts its price. In the end Lot lost all that he valued—home, wife, position, everything except his life and that of his two daughters.

From the Scriptures we may understand that Lot is a fitting representation of the class described as a “great multitude” in Revelation 7:9, “clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” A few verses later it is said of these that they have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night.” (vss. 14,15) Being “before the throne,” they are righteous, but less faithful than those of whom the Lord speaks who will be granted to sit “with me in my throne.” (Rev. 3:21) Although we may view Lot’s life as representing a specific class as described above, it is important that we also look at his pattern of mistakes and poor decisions as object lessons and warnings, that we might avoid similar pitfalls in our Christian walk.

During the past two thousand years of the Christian age there have been individuals who have maintained their faithfulness to God in spite of the loss of their possessions, and even their lives, in God’s service. However, the great majority, we believe, have selected an easier course and have compromised with the world. They are, indeed,

fine citizens, but their careers, positions in the community, and opportunities for earthly prosperity, affect most of their decisions. As such, it is easy for them to be led away from a life of complete dedication to God.

The Apostle Paul says, "I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds." (I Cor. 3:10, *NIV*) The foundation, he goes on to explain, is Jesus Christ, and on this foundation one of two kinds of structures can be erected—by building either with gold, silver or costly stones, or with wood, hay or straw. The proving of each one's work will be by difficult experiences, "with fire," Paul says. "If what one has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." (vss. 11-15, *NIV*) Those who "suffer loss" are like Lot. They build their Christian life and character mainly with "wood, hay, and straw," and in the end lose every earthly advantage they have sought so diligently. Only their lives and the small amount of building done with "gold, silver, and costly stones" remain after the fiery trials prove them.

Like Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord will bring to an end this "present evil world," sweeping away its corruption, pride and deceit. Then God's kingdom, with Christ as its righteous ruler, will be set up. This will be the answer to the Christian's prayer of the past two thousand years, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10) Before this can take place, however, the last of the footstep followers of Jesus must complete their earthly walk, being found

“faithful unto death,” and receive the “crown of life” from their Lord.—Rev. 2:10

Abraham was called righteous, and he was faithful to God and his principles. He had few earthly ambitions, being content to live in tents as a pilgrim and a stranger. His hope, based on faith, was centered in “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Abraham was blessed also with a faithful wife, Sarah. Together, they are mentioned among the Old Testament heroes of faith.—Heb. 11:8-11

Lot also was a righteous man in his heart, but his actions were self-centered. He began his stay in Canaan living in tents, but soon he moved on to a more prominent place in a very wicked city. He was not looking for any other city, for a righteous city. He seemed to be resigned to occupying a place among the wicked heathen. Lot also had a wife who stands to this day as an example of unfaithfulness. As they fled from Sodom, she turned to cast a look back at everything she was leaving. In that action, she lost her life, failing to achieve the escape which had been provided by God. With sobering words, Jesus tells us to “remember Lot’s wife.”—Luke 17:32

Let us strive always to live our lives after the fashion of righteous and faithful Abraham. At the same time, let us steer clear of the self-seeking actions we see in Lot’s example, and thus avoid the kinds of pitfalls into which he fell. May we prove faithful so that after this present evil world is brought to an end, we will have a part in the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:18; 26:4; Acts 3:25 ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

J. Wesol

Internet Broadcast of Convention-
Albuquerque, NM April 10-12

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.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Numerous conventions in upcoming months have been canceled due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Those that the Dawn is aware of at this writing are indicated as CANCELED in the listing below. However, some of the canceled conventions may have an Internet broadcast alternative. Please contact the brethren shown in the listings below to find out whether a canceled convention will be broadcast on the Internet, and, if so, to obtain instructions as to how you can attend.

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

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 10-12—CANCELED—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

HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 3—CANCELED—Mandell Jewish Community Center, 335 Bloomfield Avenue, West Hartford, CT. Contact J. Slivinsky. Phone (860) 289-0116 or Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 23,24—CANCELED—College of DuPage, Student Resource Center, Room 2000, 425 Fawell Blvd, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137. Contact D. Whittaker. Phone: (630) 293-4810 or Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 23,24—CANCELED—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. For room reservations, contact Portofino Inn Burbank. Phone: (818) 848-5100. Deadline for special group rate of \$85.00 is March 31. Other information, contact T. Parkinson. Phone: (818) 247-9800 or Email: Ti77park@gmail.com

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 7—Falls Township Senior Center, 282 Trenton Road, Fairless Hills, PA. Contact J. Elbert. Phone: (732) 710-8754 or Email: obe3@comcast.net

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 13,14—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada. Contact B. Smith. Phone: (250) 947-8802 or Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 19-21—Monarch Hotel & Conference Center, 12566 SE 93rd Avenue, Clackamas, OR 97015. Phone: (503) 652-1515. Contact hotel for reservations. Other information, contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 438-1086 or Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 18-23—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. See pp. 59-61, this issue. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

CENTRAL OHIO CONVENTION, August 1,2—Tolles Technical Center, 7877 US Hwy 42 South, Plain City, OH 43064. Contact L. Winske. Phone: (614) 579-5045.

BIBLE STUDENTS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 5-9—Orle Gniazdo, ul. Wrzosowa 28 A43-370, Szczyrk, Poland. For information go to bible-studentsconventions.com or contact M. Davis. Email: lmkdavis@earthlink.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 5-7—Seattle Scottish Rite Center, 1207 N 152nd Street, Shoreline, WA 98133. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (206) 518-2678 or Email: laurie@flinn.us

TENNESSEE VALLEY CONVENTION, September 11-13—Comfort Inn, 4725 University Drive (HWY 72), Huntsville, AL 35806. For reservations, phone: (256) 562-2525. For special rate of \$75.00 per night, mention Bible Students Rate, and make reservations by August 31. For other information, contact R. Armstrong. Phone: (256) 281-6807 or Email: robin@exzaktec.com

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, September 12—RESCHEDULED FROM 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

COLORADO CONVENTION, October 2-4—Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 17140 West Colfax Avenue, Golden, CO 80401. Contact M. Homolka. Phone: (307) 267-5853

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 24,25—South Seminole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact C. Goodman. Phone: (407) 695-6815 or Email: clmgoodman@gmail.com

“Exert all your strength in the honourable struggle for the faith; lay hold of the Life of the Ages, to which you were called, when you made your noble profession of faith before many witnesses.”—I Timothy 6:12, Weymouth Translation