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“In the Last Days It Shall Come to Pass”

“In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, ... for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”
—Micah 4:1,2

FROM THE STANDPOINT of mankind’s wisdom, what the future holds for the human race is at times dreadful and at other times promising. This paradoxical situation is due to man’s inability to solve the growing problems in the world. Neither is he able to sustain those things which at times show promise for man’s future. For many people, this

is a cause for growing perplexity, anxiety and distrust. Conversely, others hope that possible catastrophes can be averted through science or the efforts of the world’s well-meaning statesmen. Such is the uncertainty with which human wisdom views the future.

The Bible alone presents us with an accurate depiction of the things which would come to pass during the time in which we presently live, “in the last days.” It has forecast the present “distress of nations, with perplexity,” and a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” (Luke 21:25,26; Dan. 12:1) From these Bible prophecies we understand that this distress and trouble will not touch just one or two countries, but rather it will impact all nations.

The Scriptures also present us with a preview of the ultimate outcome of the present world distress. This broader viewpoint of that which is to take place as a consequence of events during the “last days” is most encouraging. God’s promises include the bright prospect of the establishment of his long-promised kingdom throughout the earth under the rulership of Christ, which will bring peace, joy and everlasting life to all who obey its righteous laws. The writers of both the Old and New Testaments, inspired by God, speak about this glorious future time, which will follow the “last days” of this present world order. (Acts 3:21) In his kingdom, the Scriptures declare, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—Rev. 21:4

One of the Bible’s comprehensive descriptions of the things that will come to pass as a result of the events of the “last days” is found in the context which includes our opening text. We quote the entire passage: “In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be

established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”—Mic. 4:1-4

THE “LAST DAYS”

This marvelous description of a world at peace, enjoying security and prosperity, is introduced with the explanation that this new and righteous social order is to be established “in the last days.” From the standpoint of traditional theology, this would be an incongruity, for the “last days” have been long thought to signify the end of all human experience, a time when even the earth itself would allegedly be destroyed.

Belief in this unscriptural tradition is perhaps not held by as many now as in past centuries, but some still hold to it strongly. In reality, the prophetic “last days” of the Bible are actually the final days of the reign of sin and death, that period in God’s plan when the “kingdoms of this world” become the “kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.” (Rev. 11:15)

These last days of the present age are to be immediately followed by the thousand-year period of Christ's kingdom, that "dispensation of the fulness of times," when all things are gathered "together ... in Christ."—Rev. 20:6; Eph. 1:10

It is true that the Bible speaks of much trouble taking place in the "last days." It is during this period that the foretold "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation," occurs. (Dan. 12:1) In the various Bible prophecies this trouble is figuratively described using words such as fire, a great shaking, an earthquake, a storm, a flood, and a whirlwind. (Zeph. 3:8; Hag. 2:6,7; Rev. 16:17-21; Isa. 28:2; 66:15-18) In some respects, the foretold "distress of nations" is like all these upheavals of nature. However, if we try to interpret these terms literally, much confusion results, and we will fail to understand the true significance of these prophecies.

PREPARATION FOR THE KINGDOM

God's purpose in permitting this "time of trouble" is that by it the people and nations of earth might be humbled and made to realize their own inability to resolve the problems resulting from sin and selfishness. Only the breakdown of practically all man-made security and order throughout the earth will accomplish this. At first, many will continue to place their confidence in human governments and in other places of supposed safety, such as alliances, wealth or other man-made institutions. (Isa. 2:12-21; Rev. 6:15-17) However, the final breakdown of these presumed safety nets will ultimately cause the people to turn to the Lord as the only solution to the world's many problems.

THE LORD'S "MOUNTAIN"

The "mountain" of the Lord mentioned in Micah's prophecy is a symbolic reference to God's kingdom. It is this same symbolic mountain which is referred to by the Prophet Daniel as filling "the whole earth," and which "shall never be destroyed." (Dan. 2:35, 44,45) This kingdom will be established in "the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills," meaning that the people of all nations, great and small, will be subservient to it. Christ, God's appointed ruler, will reign "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."—Ps. 72:8

With the establishment of this kingdom, the people, prostrate and humbled, will say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob." (Mic. 4:2) They will then recognize that God's kingdom has been established on earth, in fulfillment of the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Under the rulership of Christ, this kingdom will be the greater fulfillment of the kingdom which God established in ancient Israel, over which David was made ruler.

The kingdom of Israel came to an end when its last king, Zedekiah, was overthrown and the people taken captive to Babylon. This did not imply the failure of God's promises, however, because he had foretold this very event, saying of Israel's kingdom, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:25-27) The "right" to God's kingdom of promise belongs to his only begotten son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus was the one destined to re-establish the "throne of David." Concerning this we read, "Of the

increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:7

In beautiful corroboration of this, the angel Gabriel announced to Mary, the mother of Jesus: “Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”—Luke 1:30-33

DAVID’S THRONE

The throne of David which is given to Jesus is not a literal chair or bench. Rather, it is symbolic of rulership and of divine authority as it will be exercised throughout the earth by Jesus during the thousand years of his kingdom reign. David’s rulership was centered on literal mount Zion in ancient Jerusalem. This fact is utilized in the Bible, in symbol, to also refer to Christ’s kingdom. Speaking prophetically of Jesus position as ruler, God said, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.”—Ps. 2:6

On this symbolic “holy hill of Zion” there will be associate rulers who will live and reign with Christ. (Rev. 20:4) The Prophet Obadiah refers to these as “saviours” who “come up on mount Zion” at the time when “the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.” (Obad. 1:21) In addition, we read in Revelation 14:1: “A Lamb

[Jesus] stood on mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." Verse 4 then identifies them as those who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."

Those with the Lamb on mount Sion have their Father's name written in their foreheads, which indicates that they are recognized as sons of God. The Apostle John, in his gospel account, said concerning the small remnant of Israel who believed on Jesus at his First Advent that they were given the right, or privilege, "to become the sons of God." (John 1:11,12) In God's plan, a fixed number had been predetermined for this high position, and the believers of natural Israel came far short of this at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. As a result, God turned to, or "did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14) Thus, in God's arrangement, believing Gentiles as well as the faithful remnant of Israelites would be joined together as members of the class spoken of as having the Heavenly Father's name written in their foreheads.

THE LAW FROM ZION

We see then that the greater mount Zion in reality refers to Christ Jesus and his resurrected footstep followers who prove "faithful unto death." (Rev. 2:10) Exalted to kingdom authority and power, this "Christ" class will constitute the spiritual rulers in God's kingdom. In the Prophet Micah's preview of the things which will come to pass as a result of the "last days" of this present evil world, we read, "The

law shall go forth of [from] Zion.” Thus, Zion represents the kingdom authority of Christ and his exalted, faithful followers, who together will dwell on the heavenly plane of existence, having been given the divine nature.—II Pet. 1:4

Micah wrote that while the “law,” the divine, heavenly authority of the new kingdom, will proceed from Zion, the “word of the LORD” will go out from Jerusalem. This is a very revealing addition to the kingdom symbolism. Literal Mount Zion was a part of the city of Jerusalem, and the entire city was considered the capital of the kingdom of Israel. Consequently, the city of Jerusalem is used as another symbol of Christ’s kingdom.

Mount Zion in the literal city of Jerusalem represents the spiritual phase of God’s kingdom under Christ’s rule. As part of king David’s rulership which was centered in Mount Zion, there were those who participated in the functions of that kingdom who lived and served in other areas of the city. Thus, we have a symbolic basis for a further truth concerning the kingdom which is taught in the Scriptures. There will be human representatives of God’s kingdom. This class will be instruments through which the “law” from spiritual Zion is to be made known and administered to the people as the “word of the LORD,” going forth, symbolically speaking, from Jerusalem.

The representatives and instructors of the earthly phase of the kingdom will be the most exalted and honored of God among men. The individuals chosen to constitute this class will have proven their worthiness for such an exalted position prior to the opening of the Christian age at Pentecost. Having

previously been tried and found faithful during their earthly sojourn, when awakened from the sleep of death they will at once receive the reward of their faithfulness. This is the class of individuals referred to by Paul as those who endured greatly, that they “might obtain a better resurrection,” and who, at the moment of their resurrection, will be fully “made perfect” as humans.—Heb. 11:35,40

EFFICIENT SERVICE

These “Ancient Worthies,” as they have come to be called, will minister among and be seen by mankind. The glory of their perfection will serve as a constant, noble example, and all will have the opportunity to attain the same standard of perfection. The fact that these Ancient Worthies will be part of the earthly phase of the kingdom is fully attested by Jesus’ words to the unbelieving Jews who rejected him. He said, “Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out”—that is, thrust out from a position of kingdom leadership due to unfaithfulness.—Luke 13:28

The work of the earthly phase of God’s kingdom will necessitate the establishment of a perfect government among mankind, with perfect men and women in positions of control. The Ancient Worthies will receive their instructions from Zion, the spiritual rulers of the kingdom who will not be seen by natural sight. This tremendous work will necessitate the appointment of proper educational provisions and resources of every character and kind, that thus these earthly representatives can put forth “the word of the LORD” to all the people.

This noble work of elevating the human race, by sure and steady steps, will be the high honor to which the Ancient Worthies will be appointed, and for which they will come forth prepared once the passing away of the kingdoms of this world is complete, and the binding of Satan, the “prince” and “god” of this world, takes place.—John 16:11; II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:1,2

In referring to those who will be “seen” in the kingdom, Jesus mentions only the outstanding ones of previous ages—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets. However, in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, Paul presents a list which includes many others. He explains that time would fail him to mention all of those faithful ones of the past. (Heb. 11:32) We learn from Romans 11:4 that in the generation of the Israelites served by the Prophet Elijah there were “seven thousand” who had “not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.” We mention this to emphasize that the human representatives of the divine Christ, will, when raised from the dead, probably number many thousands, and they will be abundantly able to direct the affairs of the new government on a worldwide basis.

Those of mankind who accept this new rulership and conform their hearts and lives to its perfect standard of righteousness, will also have the privilege of cooperating in its work. This opportunity will first go to those of the natural seed of Abraham who believe and obey, the Israelites, but will soon embrace the people of all nations. Isaiah wrote that “all nations” will “flow” unto the mountain of the Lord.—Zech. 8:22,23; Isa. 2:2

In order to be associated with this new government and receive of its benefits, the people of all nations and races will have to conform to its "ways" and walk in the Lord's "paths." To do this will, among other things, necessitate the beating of "swords into plowshares" and "spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Mic. 4:2,3) No such implements of destruction will be needed to enforce respect for, and obedience to, the law that goes forth from Zion.

During the earthly phase of the kingdom of God, all who willingly follow after God's laws and principles will realize, progressively, how satisfying and blessed it is. The obedient will find the gratification of every righteous desire and ambition, as they transform their character into the likeness of God. Then, at the end of a thousand years of Christ's kingdom, when the great work of restoration will have been accomplished, those who were instrumental in that work will shine forth among their fellowmen, and they will be held in "everlasting remembrance."—Ps. 112:6

Great will be the accumulating glory of these perfect Ancient Worthies who constitute the executive branch of the earthly phase of the kingdom. However, the glory of the heavenly phase of the kingdom will be "the glory that excelleth." (II Cor. 3:10) Our human minds can approximate, but cannot clearly conceive, the glory to be revealed in the Christ class throughout the endless ages of eternity.—Rom. 8:18; Eph. 2:7-22

THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

The grand covenant promise made to Abraham after he faithfully offered up his son Isaac in sacrifice points forward to the two phases of the kingdom which we have considered in the foregoing paragraphs. God said, “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore.” (Gen. 22:17) The “stars of heaven” and the “sand ... upon the seashore” show God’s intent of having both a heavenly and earthly phase to his kingdom, the end result and purpose of which is that “all the nations of the earth [shall] be blessed.”—vs. 18

In Romans 11:16-24, Paul speaks of the Abrahamic Covenant symbolically as a “root” out of which fleshly Israel, the “natural branches” originally grew. However, a majority of them were “broken off” for a time, due to failing to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Only a remnant of the Jews followed after Jesus at his First Advent. Gentile believers, “wild” branches, were grafted in after most of the natural branches were cut off because of unbelief. This root covenant bears two distinct kinds of branches, each of which, in the order of God’s plan, will bear perfect fruitage of character—first, the spiritual class being developed during the present age, and second, the earthly class to be brought to human perfection in the kingdom.

At the time it was given to Abraham, it was the earthly aspect of God’s promise which first began to be developed, through Isaac, Jacob, and the nation of Israel. However, in the order of the promise’s grand fulfillment, both as to time and to glory, it is the spiritual which is first, and afterward the

natural, or earthly. Because the prospective heirs of the spiritual phase of the kingdom have been promised “glory and honour and immortality,” their trial has been much more severe than that which mankind will endure in its future judgment day. The consecrated followers of the Master during the present age have suffered persecution for righteousness’ sake, while the obedient of the world under the arrangements of the kingdom will be rewarded for righteousness and punished only for unrighteousness.—Matt. 5:10-12; Isa. 25:8

It is because the authority and power of the divine Christ, exercised through the earthly representatives of the kingdom, will protect and bless the righteous, that it will then be possible for every man to dwell “under his vine and under his fig tree.” None will be permitted by threats of violence, or otherwise, to “make them afraid,” or to “hurt nor destroy.”—Mic. 4:4; Isa. 11:9

DEATH DESTROYED

Even death will be destroyed in the mountain of the Lord. God will “swallow up death in victory,” the prophet declares, to which Paul adds, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (Isa. 25:6-9; I Cor. 15:25,26) Concerning that future day of the kingdom we also read, “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick,” because “the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.” (Isa. 33:24) The provision for this forgiveness will have previously been assured through the redemptive work of Jesus, the “Lamb of God.”—John 1:29; Acts 5:30,31

The destruction of death implies also the resurrection of those who have died. In the complete

prophetic outline of the things which in the “last days” shall come to pass, this is included. Paul said that there “shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” (Acts 24:15) The “just” are those who make up the elect classes who are resurrected to immediate perfection, some to the spiritual plane and some on the earthly plane, to serve in the two phases of the kingdom. All the non-elect, the “unjust,” are also to be awakened from the sleep of death.

Jesus explained that these “unjust” will come forth to “the resurrection of judgment,” of which the awakening from the sleep of death will be but the first step. (John 5:28,29, *Revised Version*) These “come forth” to judgment [Greek: *krisis*]. If, during this judgment period, they willingly accept the provisions of God’s grace through Christ and obey from the heart the righteous laws of the kingdom, they will be restored to human perfection and live forever. Any who willfully disobey after coming to a full knowledge of God’s righteous laws, which we believe will be very few, will be judged unworthy of life.—Isa. 65:17-25; Acts 3:22,23

When viewed from the standpoint of the promises of God, the conditions which will finally result from the events of “the last days” are most encouraging. It will, indeed, bring the answer to every Christian’s prayer, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) Let us continue to offer this prayer and endeavor to be faithful in telling the whole world the good tidings of the kingdom which will soon come! ■

Hear God's Wisdom

Key Verse: *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

—*Proverbs 1:7, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Proverbs 1:1-9

their children—Do you hear me?—after offering correction regarding an unwise path. The child heard, of course, for they were just a few feet away. However, did they really hear in the sense of listening and understanding? In other words, was the correction taken to heart?

The Apostle James, in his epistle, addresses the issue of hearing. “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, ... be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”—James 1:19-25, *NKJV*

Jesus called to our attention one of the great blessings

OUR KEY VERSE IDENTIFIES fear as the essential first step in our quest to know God. This, however, is not fear expressed as dread or horror, as some imagine. The “fear of the LORD” encouraged by Solomon is better defined as reverential fear or awe for our Creator. This godly fear opens our ears to hear God’s instructions. What he has to say to us matters greatly. Often parents ask

given us. “He said to them, He who has ears to hear, let him hear! But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.” (Mark 4:9-12, *NKJV*) Blessed are our ears, that they can both hear and understand God’s wisdom.

In this global pandemic, our present crisis, the speed with which ordinary life unraveled has been shocking. The embellishments of modern life such as restaurants, sports, movies, so long taken-for-granted, have suffered greatly—perhaps permanently. Society has been shaken to the core. People of faith, no longer allowed to congregate physically, have turned to modern technology to meet and worship “virtually.” We who believe the Scriptures have a firm foundation in these trying times. We hear the wise counsel of God.

“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks”—that is, hear him! “For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven. Now this, Yet once more, indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”—Heb. 12:25-28, *NKJV*

Hearing and heeding the wisdom of God, as expressed in the Scriptures, we have come to understand his plans. We have gained a deeper grasp of his divine character, further strengthening our faith. May our faith in his kingdom remain unshakable as we hear God’s wisdom. ■

Receive Wisdom

Key Verse: *“The LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.”*
—*Proverbs 2:6, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Proverbs 2:1-11

Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.” (Prov. 2:1-5, NKJV) The value of gaining divine wisdom is under-appreciated. Its rewards are inestimable!

Receiving wisdom from God is not a passive experience. The foregoing Scriptures make that plain. We must treasure God’s commands, incline our ears, apply our hearts, cry out for discernment, lift up our voices, seek and search for understanding. During the California Gold Rush of the nineteenth century, many frantically left all behind to go and seek treasure. They had heard and believed that there was much gold to be found, and so they risked life and limb to get a share of the riches. That is the level of urgency we should have in seeking wisdom. Truly, there is treasure of exceeding and eternal value in the Scriptures. In it is found the wise counsel of

THE KEY VERSE IMPLIES

that the wisdom the Lord desires to give us has two components. They are knowledge and understanding. We are admonished, “My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment,

God—divine wisdom.

The psalmist affirms the value of coming to an understanding of God's ways. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward." (Ps. 19:7-11, *NKJV*) Wisdom is a gift that God earnestly desires to give us.

We have all received various gifts in our lifetimes. Some we highly valued and others less so. Generally, the esteem we hold for a gift results from the thoughtfulness we perceive behind its selection. When the gift-giver has put a lot of time and consideration into choosing the gift, endeavoring to make sure it is just the right thing, we appreciate it the more. Upon opening the gift, we may exclaim, "It's perfect!"

Our Heavenly Father has put much time and effort into preparing the gift of wisdom for us. May we realize the value of it, and the love and sensitivity God has expressed in giving it. If we mindfully live by the precepts of wisdom taught in the Scriptures we will see the enormous benefit of this gift. It likewise is perfect.

Job eloquently spoke of wisdom in his treatise on this subject. His words are an apt conclusion to this lesson. "Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its value, ... Then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out. And to man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:12,13,27,28, *NKJV*) May our hearts be open to receive the wisdom of God. ■

Wisdom's Blessings

Key Verses:
“Receive my instruction, and not silver; And knowledge rather than choice gold; For wisdom is better than rubies, And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.”

**—Proverbs 8:10,11,
New King James
Version**

**Selected Scripture:
Proverbs 8:8-21**

gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.”—Ps. 115:3-8, NKJV

It has been observed that those who come into sudden wealth often descend into dissipation. Their riches

THREE INVALUABLE TOOLS

are offered in our Key Verses to successfully meet the challenges of life. They are instruction, knowledge and wisdom. These are much needed in this world's chaos. In the present climate of uncertainty, spawned by a pandemic, we may hear of a person leading “a charmed life” and envy them. Realistically, the efficacy of a “charm” is dubious. Such things are the imaginative concoction of our fallen race and a poor substitute for the Father in Heaven. The psalmist summed up this point well: “Our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their idols are silver and

are quickly brought to naught by the purchase of expensive jewelry, cars, palatial homes, or other perceived luxuries of life which they desire. Assuredly these are nice things, but they cannot satisfy the deep longings of the soul. Experience teaches us that a complete filling of the soul's hunger comes, in a lasting and profound manner, through partaking daily of the wisdom in God's Word. God declares in Proverbs 8:8, "All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; Nothing crooked or perverse is in them." (*NKJV*) The Apostle John echoes this thought as to the purity and perfection of God's being. "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." (I John 1:5, *NKJV*) Most people of faith affirm that God is light. However, they perhaps fail to see the other side of the equation, "In Him is no darkness at all."

Our Selected Scripture passage enumerates wisdom's blessings. First and foremost is wisdom's value, which is superior to all material wealth. Next in order is the blessing of humility. "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate." (Prov. 8:13) To be liberated from the love of evil, practicing pride and arrogance, plotting evil schemes, and speaking hurtful things is a great blessing. It makes life richer and more blessed. Kings, rulers, princes, nobles, and judges may rule well by wisdom's counsel and soundness. (vss. 14-16) Thus we also, as followers of Christ, may experience wisdom's blessings.

Verse 21 is a fitting close to this lesson. It reveals the summation of wisdom's benefit to us. "That I [wisdom] may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, That I may fill their treasuries." Our treasuries will be filled if we gain wisdom. The true value of wisdom is this: we will be wise enough to realize the value of personal integrity, a righteous reputation, and a closer walk with God. Truly, these are wisdom's eternal blessings. ■

The Way of Wisdom

Key Verse: “Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.”

—*Proverbs 9:9, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Proverbs 9:1-12

confident in the pursuit of our spiritual growth.

Wisdom’s pillars may well illustrate key components of the Christian life. Baptism, forgiveness of sin, justification, sanctification, adoption into the divine family, fellowship with the Father and the Son, and knowledge of God’s Word are seven very strong pillars. These support the house we dwell in by faith. Paul tells us that Christ Jesus is the builder of this spiritual house. He has been “counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the

THE VIRTUES AND BENE-

fits of seeking wisdom are extolled in our Key Verse. The invitation to enter wisdom’s “house” as illustrated in our lesson is very compelling. In building her house, wisdom hewed out seven pillars to support it. (Prov. 9:1) Massive and strong, they support the entire superstructure of the edifice. It is a safe place, built to endure. In its environs we may feel secure, at peace and

hope firm to the end.”—Heb. 3:3-6, *NKJV*

In addition to the security of this refuge, other enticements are placed before us. Wisdom “has slaughtered her meat, She has mixed her wine, She has also furnished her table. She has sent out her maidens, She cries out from the highest places of the city, Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, Come, eat of my bread And drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding.” (Prov. 9:2-6, *NKJV*) Jesus echoed this message of bounty in his parable of the wedding feast. “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; ... saying, Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”—Matt. 22:1-4, *NKJV*

As we walk in the way of wisdom, we each have enemies to contend with. If none other, we may often be our own worst enemy. The brokenness of our frail and sin-tainted humanity humbles all of us in many ways. (James 3:2) Paul confessed, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:24,25, *NKJV*) Walking in wisdom’s way does not justify us. Only Jesus’ shed blood can do that. However, walking in that way does impart to us holiness in our thoughts, words and actions. We “forsake foolishness and live, And go in the way of understanding.”—Prov. 9:6, *NKJV*

Our Selected Scripture passage closes with a time-proven maxim. “The fear [reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you.” (vss. 10,11, *NKJV*) This blessing is within our grasp if we walk in the way of wisdom. ■

Elect and Sanctified

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”
—I Peter 1:2

WHEN JAMES STOOD UP before the council of brethren at Jerusalem to sum up the findings of that group of consecrated followers of Jesus relative to the position of Gentiles in the Gospel church, he included in his remarks the statement, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” (Acts 15:18) This indicates that every feature of the Heavenly Father’s plan has been working out according to a divinely fixed purpose, and that those who would be coworkers with God in his plan must of necessity conform to its requirements. In our opening text the Apostle Peter, addressing the church made up of both Jews and Gentiles, describes its members as being “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”

How does God’s foreknowledge operate with respect to those striving to follow in the footsteps of Christ? Has he arbitrarily chosen them in advance

as individuals, and apart from any qualifications which they may possess? The Scriptures do not so indicate. Jesus, the Head of the church class, was indeed chosen as an individual to fill the position which he occupies in God's plan. (Matt. 12:18) Even with him, however, God's election was not so arbitrary that the Master would have gained the position to which he had been selected, had he failed to qualify under testing and trial. The Apostle Paul was chosen from his "mother's womb." (Gal. 1:15) In his case, just as with Jesus, the Heavenly Father exercised his ability to know in advance that Paul would possess certain qualifications which would be needed in order to fill the place in the divine arrangement for which he was chosen. Yet, Paul was tested greatly to ensure that he would remain obedient to the Father's will and purpose.

Thus we see that even with the two outstanding personalities—the Head of the church, and the great Apostle to the Gentiles—although God chose them in advance, it was not irrespective of their qualifications, nor of the requirement of obedience. There is no record in the Scriptures that others of the church have been selected in advance as individuals even in this limited sense. God has the ability to do this if he wished, and without in any way interfering with the individual's free choice in the matter, for he can foreknow what a person will do without the necessity of controlling his actions.

CONFORMED TO HIS IMAGE

What, then, does Peter mean by the "foreknowledge of God," through which the followers of the

Master are made of the “elect?” Paul answers that question, saying, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom. 8:29) To phrase this another way, it means that if we wish to be among those who are elected in harmony with the conditions of God’s foreknowledge we will need to become copies of God’s dear Son, for it has been divinely predestined that only such can be counted in as among the “many brethren” of the firstborn class. How many of the individuals in this class God may have chosen in advance because he knew that, when given the opportunity, they would meet his predestinated conditions is quite unimportant. The truly important consideration is that we become conformed to the image of his Son. Paul, who was chosen as an individual, understood this and wrote of the necessity to keep his fallen nature under control and “bring it into subjection,” lest, after having preached to others, he himself might be a “castaway” [Greek: unapproved, rejected].—I Cor. 9:27

THROUGH SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is both a setting apart to God and to his service as well as a process of being made holy. The first step therein is the consecration of ourselves to do the Father’s will—an unreserved dedication of all our time, strength, and means to the holy purpose of God. It is the giving up of our own will and accepting God’s will as the supreme authority of our lives. The act of consecration, when we answer the call, “give me thine heart,” is but the beginning of sanctification, the expression of our

desire to be set apart and to be made holy in the divine service.—Prov. 23:26

From the time this first important step toward sanctification is taken, God begins to work in us, and if our consecration was genuine, we begin to co-labor with God. Paul speaks of it as working out our salvation, even as God works in us to do of his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12,13) In our text Peter speaks of God's part as "sanctification of the Spirit," meaning that the Heavenly Father works in us to further advance the process of our sanctification through the influence of his Holy Spirit. One of the definitions Jesus gave of the power of God which works in us as Christians was the "Spirit of truth." (John 16:13) This Spirit is the power or influence of God's mind, his thoughts over our lives, and his thoughts reach us through the written Word.

Jesus prayed to his Heavenly Father on behalf of his followers, saying, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17) The entire Word of God is a work of the Holy Spirit. Hence, the sanctifying effect of God's Word in our lives comes about by means of the influence of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, it is the power of the Word itself which also works in us and by which we are sanctified. Jesus said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John 17:19) The fact that Jesus had never been a sinner points out to us that sanctification does not mean a turning from sin to righteousness. Rather, it means a setting apart to God and to the doing of his will, and the demonstration of a holy character under severe trial and testing, after one has already dedicated his life to serving righteousness.

In the Master's whole life we have a wonderful example of what our own sanctification must be. Jesus said, "For their sakes," I sanctify myself. Jesus was sanctified through the Spirit, or by the Word of truth, even as we are. His sanctification began at the time of his consecration, even as ours does. It was then that Jesus expressed his desire to do all that was written of him in the "volume of the book." (Heb. 10:7-9) It was in carrying out this consecration that his sanctification was accomplished. It was in the "volume of the book" that Jesus found the complete expression of God's will for him, which was that he should lay down his life in sacrifice for his church and for the whole world. Thus his sanctification was for the sake of his church, because it led him to sacrifice his life for them.

In another way also Jesus' sanctification was for our sakes and serves as an example. This is very important because making our calling and election sure depends upon our being "conformed" to his image. (Rom. 8:29) We are guided by the same Word of truth that revealed the Heavenly Father's will to Jesus, hence sanctification means the same to us as it did to him. One of the very critical elements of sanctification that we see exemplified in Jesus is his obedience to the Heavenly Father, and his "delight" in so doing. As prophesied by the psalmist, Jesus' heartfelt desire was, "I delight to do thy will, O my God."—Ps. 40:8

OBEDIENCE

In our opening text the apostle speaks of the principle of obedience, indicating that it is closely connected to the basic principle of sanctification.

“Through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience,” Peter states. This suggests that as our sanctification is accomplished it will be manifested in our obedience to the divine will. It was because of Jesus’ unqualified obedience to his Heavenly Father that he could say, “I and my Father are one.” That is, I have the same purpose as my Father; I have no will but to do his will.—John 5:30; 6:38; 10:30

It was this fullness of sanctification which the Master sought in his followers. To this end he prayed: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” (John 17:21) It is by obedience to the divine will, to which complete sanctification leads, that we become one with the Heavenly Father as Jesus was at one with him. It is only by meeting the exacting predetermined requirement that each member of this class be conformed to the image of the Son, that we may hope to be among the elect of God.

EVIDENCES OF SANCTIFICATION

The only perfect example of a sanctified life which we have to guide us is that of Jesus. Even the great Apostle Paul admonished us to follow him only to the extent that he followed the Master. (I Cor. 11:1) Inasmuch as the will of God expressed through his Word is the same for us as it was for Jesus, and we are to be conformed to his image, it is highly important that we look unto him and be guided by the perfect example of his wholly sanctified life.

Jesus possessed a perfectly balanced character of holiness. He was patient, longsuffering, gentle and kind. At the same time, he was resolute and firm in

his stand for truth and righteousness. These are all godlike characteristics and abound in every sanctified life. In themselves, however, they are not necessarily evidences of sanctification, for sanctification is much more than righteous elements of character. When God created our first parents, he implanted in them his image, and despite six thousand years of a downward trend away from holiness, some of the original godlikeness is still to be found. Noble-minded men and women are to be found in all walks of life. This does not mean that they are sanctified, nor that they are filled with the Spirit of God as it emanates from his Word. It demonstrates simply that traces of his image remain in them despite man's fallen nature.

However, in the life of the consecrated Christian these noble qualities are augmented by the infilling of God's Spirit. Hence, they should become dominant, and more manifest. In the case of Jesus there was not a single trace of imperfection or sin to mar the beauty of his character. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (Heb. 7:26) Because of this he was able to say to his disciples, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." That is, the righteous qualities of the Heavenly Father's character were fully displayed in the life of his beloved Son.—John 14:9

In addition to his righteous and holy character, however, Jesus' sanctification set him apart to carry out the divine will for his life in conjunction with his Father's plan of salvation for the lost race. This phase of his sanctification required much more than living a righteous life. God's will for Jesus was that, first of all, he was to die as man's Redeemer.

However, in the laying down of his life he was to be a servant, a co-worker with God with respect to various details of his plan. He was to lay the foundation for the Gospel church by the selection and training of the apostles. He was to bear witness to the Truth amidst the crooked and perverse generation of his day. Furthermore, it was by his preaching of unpopular truth and exposing popular error that he incurred the enmity of the religious rulers of his day, an enmity which finally resulted in his death.

Our sanctification calls for the same kind of service. We, too, like the Master, are called upon to lay down our lives in sacrifice. In fact, God's will for us in this respect is identical to what it was for the Master, so much so that Paul speaks of our being "planted together in the likeness of his death." (Rom. 6:5) In laying down our lives in sacrifice, we are to serve the brethren. Jesus served his immediate brethren, the disciples of his day, and we serve one another, building one another up in our most holy faith.—Rom. 12:1; Gal. 5:13; Jude 1:20

We too are commissioned to bear witness to the truth by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, hence activity in the work of witnessing is a necessary part of a sanctified life. (Matt. 24:14; John 15:27; Acts 1:8) This is not a matter which our Heavenly Father has left as an optional choice, nor is it relatively unimportant. If our consecration to do God's will was genuine, then every expression of his will should be considered as a mandate which leaves us no alternative but to obey. If we are truly emptied of self, and the influence of God's Holy Spirit is unobstructed in our lives, then we will delight in every phase of the divine will, even as Jesus did.

FORETOLD SUFFERINGS

Peter's reference in our text to "sanctification of the Spirit" is in a sense a statement of the theme of his epistle. In the 11th verse of the opening chapter, he speaks of the "Spirit of Christ" which through the prophets "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Time and again throughout the epistle Peter makes it clear that the church participates in those foretold sufferings, as well as in the promised glory. He writes, for example, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."—I Pet. 4:12,13

In this manner we see emphasized that "sanctification of the Spirit" means the same for us as it did for Jesus. For him it meant first suffering and death, and then the glory which followed. In our text these two objectives of sanctification are alluded to in the expression, "Unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." First we are sanctified "unto obedience," and our obedience leads to suffering, trials, and eventually death.

SPRINKLING OF THE BLOOD

It is interesting to note that according to our text, "sanctification of the Spirit" is said to be unto a "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," but not by that sprinkling. True, our standing with the Heavenly Father is only by virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ. Indeed, as Paul says, we are "justified

by his blood.” (Rom. 5:9) However, the construction of Peter’s words in our text indicates that the reference is to a future “sprinkling of the blood,” and that it is for this work of sprinkling that we are now being sanctified or set apart to divine service.

In Hebrews 12:22-24, the apostle is enumerating the many glorious things to which we of the Gospel church are approaching, and among them he mentions, “To Jesus the mediator of the new testament [Greek: covenant], and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” All the faithful members of the Christ class, those who suffer and die with him, are elsewhere described by Paul as having been given the “ministry of reconciliation,” and are being prepared and qualified during the present life for a future service of being “able ministers” of the New Covenant. (II Cor. 3:6; 5:18) They will share in the work given to Jesus as the mediator of the New Covenant—the “one mediator between God and men.”—I Tim. 2:5

Part of the ministry in preparation for the New Covenant is that of sacrifice and service. It is this phase of the ministry in which the truly sanctified followers of the Master participate at the present time, as they lay down their lives daily in the Lord’s service. However, there is a future ministry of glory that follows the work of sacrifice. That will be at the inauguration of “a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah,” and through them with the whole world of mankind. (Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:8) This glorious work was prefigured by the mediating of Israel’s Law Covenant by Moses, and in connection with that work there was a sprinkling of blood.—Heb. 9:18-20, *English Standard Version*

Prior to the inauguration of the old Law Covenant by Moses, he did a work of sacrifice. As recorded in Exodus 24:4-8, oxen were slain, and part of their blood was sprinkled upon the altar of sacrifice, and the remainder was poured into basins. The Hebrew word translated "basins" has more the thought in the English of a cup or small bowl. It was from these vessels that the blood was sprinkled upon the people when the Law Covenant was enjoined upon them.

We have in this a beautiful picture of the manner in which the sanctified of the present age will participate in the future "sprinkling" of the blood of Jesus Christ. Part of the blood which Moses obtained from slaying the oxen was poured upon the altar. Here is illustrated how our sacrifice is made acceptable to God. We are only acceptable because Jesus poured out his perfect human life as a ransom sacrifice, satisfying the demands of God's justice, and thus releasing us from Adamic condemnation. We are then "accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood."—Eph. 1:6,7

The remainder of the same blood which Moses obtained was to be held for another purpose, which was that of sprinkling "both the book, and all the people" as a means of sealing the covenant. (Heb. 9:19) This blood was held in basins until Moses had finished reading the Law to the people. We think it is reasonable to conclude that these vessels pointed forward to the many members of Christ's symbolic "body," those who are now being sanctified "unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The vessels Moses used had no blood of their own. They had to be filled with the blood of the oxen which Moses slew. We likewise

have no blood—no life of our own. The life we now live is by “the faith of the Son of God.” (Gal. 2:20) We add nothing to the value of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice.

If our sanctification is complete, however, leading us to full harmony with God, and to oneness with him and with Jesus, we will become vessels by which the benefits of Christ’s blood, his life, can be made available to the people in the next age. Concerning this class, God said, “I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.” (Isa. 49:8) This simply means that God will use his sanctified people of this age, Jesus and his church, as the instruments for establishing a “New Covenant” with Israel and all mankind during the coming age of God’s earthly kingdom.—Matt. 6:10

Thus, the apostle’s expression, “Unto ... the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,” is his way of explaining the great objective of our sanctification. We are being set apart and made holy, not merely for the service of the Lord now, but more particularly for that glorious service of the future, that service of God through which his promises to bless all the families of the earth will be fulfilled. (Gen. 22:18) This will be the glorious climax of our ministry of the New Covenant, and what a blessed prospect it is!

When we see the wide scope of God’s purpose in and through the church, the word “elect” does not convey the same restricted meaning as it has to many in the past. It is not that God elects some and ignores others. Rather, the elect are chosen to be instruments of blessing for all. When we realize this, what an incentive it should be to strive to meet the foreordained

qualification of the elect—namely, to be conformed to the image of God’s dear Son.

There is but one way in which this can be done, and that is by being emptied of self and being filled with God’s Holy Spirit. This cannot be accomplished in a moment, but it is the work of a lifetime. However, if we are yielding to the influences of the Spirit, we should daily find ourselves rejoicing more and more in the will of God, even though his will at times may mean our loss of earthly blessings of one kind or another. We should find that as earthly blessings vanish our heavenly joys increase, and the joy which is set before us is furnishing inspiration to continue on faithfully in the way of sacrifice. We are assured that if we endure faithfully, even unto death, we will share Christ’s glory, and together with him have the privilege of imparting the blessings of life to all the willing and obedient of mankind. Surely the prospect is glorious! ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JUNE 4—“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 Peter 1:7 (Z. ’95-135 Hymn 197)

JUNE 11—“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.”—Philippians 3:13 (Z. ’95-250 Hymn 196)

JUNE 18—“In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”—Psalm 16:11 (Z. ’96-54 Hymn 337)

JUNE 25—“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”—Colossians 4:2 (Z. ’96-163 Hymn 241)

Companions of Them So Used

“Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; ... and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.”
—*Hebrews 10:32,33*

IN CONNECTION WITH THE ministry of the Apostle Paul we hear much about such able and zealous fellow servants as Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and Luke, the beloved physician. Important and helpful as these brethren undoubtedly were to the apostle, there were others who also greatly assisted him in his ministry of whom we do not hear very much.

In his extensive journeys to establish and serve the churches, or when he remained for a time at one place, Paul evidently had in his presence a small group of faithful brethren, never seeking or gaining prominence, but choosing rather to serve humbly in the background. They would write his letters, for his eyesight was poor; and after writing them, they would deliver them. They ministered to his personal needs; they shared his trials, his dangers, and, some perhaps, even his imprisonment.

In Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth he writes, "Aquila and Priscilla salute you. ... All the brethren greet you." (I Cor. 16:19,20) Toward the end of his letter to the Romans, we read, "Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you." (Rom. 16:21-23) At the end of the letter to the Colossians we find the statement, "Written from Rome to the Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus." In his letter to the Colossians Paul says, "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you."—Col. 4:14

Because of his poor eyesight, no doubt, various brethren often wrote his letters from his dictation. He added his signature in his own handwriting, however, as a gracious token of his love, as indicated in his letter to the Thessalonian brethren, where he writes, "I Paul add the greeting with my own hand, which is the credential in every letter of mine. This is my handwriting." Then follows that sweet benediction with which he closed so many of his epistles, "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."—II Thess. 3:17,18, *Weymouth New Testament*

We do not know very much about most of these brethren who so constantly waited on and assisted Paul. However, we do know that their service was indispensable to him, and from what he sometimes wrote of these brethren we know he loved and depended on them and appreciated their sacrifices.

ARISTARCHUS FROM MACEDONIA

One of these was a man named Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, a trusted friend and traveling companion to Paul. We first hear of him in connection with the riot that occurred in Ephesus toward the end of Paul's long stay in that city during his third missionary journey. Apparently, some of Paul's ministry in Ephesus had been directed against the worship of false gods, and this preaching had begun to have an impact. In recording the incident, Luke writes, "A certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; Whom he called together, ... and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands."—Acts 19:24-26

Seeing their livelihood thus threatened, the silversmiths stirred up the whole city, and "Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia," and Paul's companions in travel, were taken into custody. When the uproar eventually subsided, Paul called his disciples to him, and embraced them, and departed for Macedonia. (Acts 19:29-41; 20:1) This was the initial record of Aristarchus' companionship with Paul and of sharing his experiences and persecutions.

When Paul returned from Macedonia, he and a few of his little band of followers, including Aristarchus, went to Troas, where they remained for seven days. On the last day of his stay there, and not knowing when he would again see these brethren, he continued preaching until midnight. One of his audience,

a young man named Eutychus, sitting in a window, was lulled into a deep sleep, and fell from the window, and was taken up dead. Paul restored the young man to life and resumed his preaching “even till break of day.” We can imagine that the apostle would surely have used this unique occasion to preach the wonderful doctrine of the resurrection. Then, the record states, “he departed,” continuing on his journey with his faithful companions.—Acts 20:1-11

Aristarchus was with Paul in Troas, and now went along with him, eventually arriving in Caesarea, and then Jerusalem. Evidently he kept in close touch with the apostle, for about two years later, when Paul boarded a ship at Caesarea to be taken as a prisoner to Rome, Aristarchus accompanied him. (Acts 27:1,2) It was no doubt on that long, perilous voyage, during which Aristarchus saw further evidences of Paul’s great courage and trust in the Lord, and he most surely continued to serve the apostle well as they journeyed.

It seems certain that Aristarchus faithfully accompanied Paul all the way to Rome and remained with the apostle during his confinement. In a letter Paul wrote from Rome to Philemon, he says, “Greetings to you ... from Epaphras my fellow prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus; and from Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.” (Philem. 1:23,24, *Weymouth*) Paul here makes a distinction between Epaphras, whom he describes as his “fellow prisoner,” and the others, including Aristarchus, whom he calls his “fellow workers.”

However, in a letter to the Colossians, also written from Rome, Paul states, “Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you.” (Col. 4:10) Indeed, Aristarchus

had long been Paul's companion, helper and fellow worker in Christ, but now, apparently, he was also with him as a prisoner. We hear no more about this faithful, loyal saint, but tradition says he died a martyr. If so, just as he was Paul's companion in travel, so was he his faithful companion in sacrifice, and in death.

TYCHICUS OF ASIA

Another of these humble companions of the Apostle Paul who quietly served in the background was Tychicus, of Asia, and possibly from the city of Ephesus. He also knew Aristarchus, and no doubt these two were very good friends. We can imagine that in addition to being faithful helpers of Paul, they also supported each other, and shared many times of close fellowship together.

Tychicus was probably involved with Paul and Aristarchus in that trouble in Ephesus, as previously noted. When Paul left Ephesus and went to Macedonia, and then returned to Asia, we read that Aristarchus, "and of Asia, Tychicus," accompanied him, and they both later went with Paul to Troas. (Acts 20:4,5) As was the case with Aristarchus, Tychicus most likely was also part of "Paul's company" who eventually came to Caesarea and, finally, Jerusalem.—Acts 21:8

Some years later, when Paul was confined in Rome, Tychicus, like Aristarchus, was there with him. It was to Tychicus that Paul dictated the letter to the Ephesian church. As Paul would speak, Tychicus would write concerning many vital truths, for example: "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his

promise in Christ by the gospel: ... to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, ... According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Eph. 3:6-11

Though not specifically recorded, we can surmise that Tychicus might have paused in his writing from time to time and inquire of Paul as to a fuller explanation of “the mystery,” and of the “eternal purpose” of God. Along with all their trials, cares, and the responsibilities of the churches, what marvelous fellowship these brethren in Christ must have had. How close they must all have been! In the very face of Paul’s own approaching judgment by the Roman authorities, what an example of faith and sacrifice he was to his companions as they heard him dictate these words: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”—Eph. 4:1

Tychicus not only recorded this epistle for Paul, but he was also to carry it to the Ephesian church. Paul writes in that letter, “That ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you, ... that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.”—Eph. 6:21,22

It was evidently about this same time that Paul also wrote his letter to the Colossians, for again it was Tychicus who likely wrote a portion of this letter, and also bore it to the church at Colosse, for Paul says in it, “All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you.” Then he manifests his love and affection for Tychicus, speaking of him as “a beloved brother, and a faithful

minister and fellowservant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you, ... that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts.” (Col. 4:7,8) It would seem that Tychicus possessed that wonderful talent of bringing comfort to the brethren. It was a talent which Paul himself must greatly have appreciated during the years of his confinement in Rome.

Later, we read of Paul’s purpose to send Tychicus to Crete to see Titus. (Tit. 3:12) Thus, we surmise that Tychicus was reunited with Paul after delivering the letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches. It is not clear whether this reunion of Paul and Tychicus occurred at Rome or at some other location. Some Bible commentators suggest that Paul, following his first imprisonment under “house arrest” in Rome, was released and perhaps traveled again for a season to visit the brethren. If so, it may have been during this time that the apostle met up again with Tychicus.

The last mention of Tychicus is in Paul’s final epistle, his second letter to Timothy, written from Rome during his final imprisonment, and shortly before his death. In the closing verses of this letter, Paul reveals how greatly he longed for the fellowship and comfort of the brethren, for at this time of his great need he was almost alone. He beseeches his beloved Timothy, “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.” Continuing, he says that Crescens had departed to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. “Only Luke is with me.” (II Tim. 4:9-11) As for Tychicus, he could not now comfort the apostle, for at this moment that faithful fellow servant in Christ was on another long journey for Paul: “Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.”—vs. 12

The Scriptures tell us nothing more about Tychicus. One wonders if that “beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord” managed to return to Rome in time to once more see the one whom he had so long and faithfully served, and so greatly loved—to comfort his heart. Whether yes or no, the Scriptures clearly indicate that Tychicus was a faithful companion and coworker with Paul all the way to the end of the apostle’s life.

EPAPHRAS—MINISTER TO THE COLOSSIAN CHURCH

Epaphras was from Colosse in Asia Minor, and no doubt a very close friend of Paul. We find him bringing greetings and visiting the apostle at Rome at the time Paul is writing his letter to the Colossian brethren. Quite possibly Epaphras was an elder in the Colossian church and even helped establish it, for there is no record that Paul ever stopped there. In his letter the apostle says that Epaphras “is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.”—Col. 1:7,8

Epaphras may have conferred with Paul at Rome for some time, for later in the same letter Paul again mentions him. “Epaphras,” Paul writes, “who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.”—Col. 4:12,13

Paul greatly appreciated one such as Epaphras, who was fervent in prayer, for he so prayed himself. We recall what he said to the brethren in his letter

to the Romans: “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.” (Rom. 15:30) Paul understood that fainthearted, halfhearted prayers had no place in the life of the follower of Christ. Rather, he believed and urged that one should pray with his whole heart, fervently, as did Epaphras—and he loved him for it the more.

This visit with Paul at Rome may have continued for some time, for we find that when the apostle later wrote his letter to Philemon, Epaphras is again mentioned as being present with him. In fact, some of the brethren mentioned in the letter to the Colossians are also mentioned in the letter to Philemon. Paul cites Epaphras, Mark, Demas, Luke and Aristarchus, previously considered, as all sending their greetings to Philemon.—Philem. 1:23

In reality, there were not many with Paul at Rome. As he contemplated the approaching termination of his ministry, he must oft times have reflected on his lifelong, loving but perilous service to the brethren. At the end he would say, looking about him thoughtfully, “These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.” (Col. 4:10,11) Among those who were a comfort to Paul as he spent himself in the service of the Lord and the brethren was Epaphras, the one who was always laboring fervently for the brethren in prayer.

As with Jesus there were only a few, so also was it with Paul. Yet how tightly these faithful few clung to Paul. They gathered close about him, ministering to him, comforting, praying, laboring, carrying forth the Gospel, the instructions, the encouragement, to

the churches scattered about in Asia, Macedonia and Greece. They went on long, perilous, and weary journeys. Among these loyal saints was Epaphras, Paul's "fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus."

OTHER COMPANIONS

Demas was one of those mentioned by Paul as being among his fellow laborers, in his letters to the Colossian brethren and to Philemon. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul urged him to come to him as quickly as he could. It was at that time also that Paul wrote to Timothy that "only Luke is with me." Why was he alone, except for Luke? Paul tells us that some were on journeys, others he had sent to minister to other churches, but Demas had gone back into the world. Paul must have surely been saddened that one of those he had numbered among his brethren and companions had forsaken the Lord and the Truth. So he wrote to Timothy, "Come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica." (II Tim. 4:10,11) How dearly, therefore, Paul loved and appreciated those few who were faithful under those hard conditions to the very end.

Among these faithful brethren who strengthened and ministered to Paul must be numbered another little group of friends. They brought love and comfort to Paul at a time of his special need. We are told about them in the last chapter of the Book of Acts, which describes the end of Paul's long journey by ship from Caesarea to Rome. We read from Luke's narrative: "We came the next day to Puteoli; Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

And from thence [that is, from Rome] when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.”—Acts 28:13-15

Who were these brethren who came several days' journey to meet and to greet Paul before his arrival at Rome? We do not know their names, and probably Paul himself did not know them personally. However, they evidently knew of and loved Paul, and they traveled great distances to bring him their love, comfort and companionship. How beautiful is the statement that when Paul saw this, “he thanked God, and took courage.”

There was nothing lacking in Paul's faith and trust in the Lord. He would have made his calling and election sure, we believe, with or without the fellowship and sacrifices of the brethren. Yet, even for one such as Paul who had rock-solid faith and courage, the hard road of sacrifice was no doubt made a little smoother, a little less arduous, by the comfort, prayers and encouragement of the less significant among the brethren. Although Luke does not tell us who these brethren were that journeyed far to bring comfort to Paul as he neared Rome, it seems certain that their names are written in large letters in the “Lamb's book of life.”—Rev. 21:27

We recall what Paul wrote to the Hebrew brethren, partially quoted in our opening text. “Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.” (Heb. 10:32-35) That evidence of their love and compassion cost the brethren reproaches, afflictions, the spoiling of their goods, their freedom, and sometimes their very lives.

None of us who walk in the steps of the Master can be likened to Paul, Peter, John, or the other apostles. Many do not have five talents, or even two. However, each one, no matter how humble, can provide comfort and support to those who may have greater opportunities or talents for service in the Lord’s vineyard. All of us, in fact, can minister one to another, pray for each other, and reflect to one another that love which emanates from our Heavenly Father. As did Aristarchus, Tychicus, Epaphras, and those unnamed saints who greeted and strengthened the Apostle Paul on the road to Rome, let us be faithful “companions” of all our fellow brethren, even to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. ■

*My song shall be of Jesus, His mercy
crowns my days:
He fills my cup with blessings, And tunes
my heart to praise.
My song shall be of Jesus, The precious
Lamb of God,
Who gave himself, my ransom, Who bought
me with his blood.*

The Rest of Faith

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
—Matthew 11:28-30

THIS INVITATION WHICH

Jesus extended to all who are “heavy laden” was addressed in the first instance to the people of Israel, being the closing remarks of a short sermon in which he exposed the pride and hypocrisy of their religious rulers. He gave a brief explanation of John the Baptist’s ministry, saying that to those who could accept him and his message, he fulfilled the prophecy of Mala-

chi concerning the coming of a symbolic Elijah, who would perform a work of reformation in Israel. (Mal. 3:1; 4:5,6; Matt. 11:7-10,14) However, not many were thus affected by John’s ministry, so Israel as a whole, held tight under the leadership of the scribes and Pharisees, remained unconverted.

Jesus likened the Israelites to “children sitting in the markets, calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they

say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” (Matt. 11:16-19) Under the direction of their religious rulers, the Israelites as a whole were not prepared to accept any teachings or leadership which were not in harmony with their humanly conceived traditions.

Jesus knew that this was true. At the same time, however, he realized that there was a remnant of the people who were sincerely looking for help. There was a minority who were not satisfied with their rulers, and who were more or less crushed under the burdensome load which had been thrust upon them. Jesus referred to this on another occasion and severely rebuked the hypocritical religious leaders, saying, “Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.”—Luke 11:46

The Pharisees had manufactured an excuse to prejudice the people against John the Baptist. Simply because he was extremely temperate in his eating, they said he was possessed of a devil. When, on the other hand, it was observed that Jesus followed the usual eating habits of his time, they said he was a glutton and an excessive wine-drinker. This was their worldly-wise and prudent method of preventing the people from giving serious attention to Jesus’ teachings. The Master recognized their sham, and in prayer to his Father said, “I thank thee, ... because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”—Matt. 11:25

It was to these “babes” that Jesus especially addressed the words of our text: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” Being sincere

of heart, they longed to be released from the burden of the Mosaic Law, and the still heavier weight of human traditions and burdens laid upon them by the hypocritical leadership of the Pharisees. Such humble and sincere ones must have rejoiced when they heard Jesus' invitation, although at the time they could but partially comprehend its meaning. Not until the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost did they begin to understand the full depth of meaning contained in these wonderful words of the Master.

THE BURDEN OF SIN

It is only those who "labour and are heavy laden" that are seeking relief from their load. The Law which was given to Israel at the hands of Moses, while a perfect expression of God's righteous requirements was, nevertheless, burdensome to the Israelites, for it was beyond their ability to keep. In addition, the religious rulers of Israel had heaped additional burdens upon the people. Their inability to keep God's law was the result of sin. In reality, the people's inherited sin was the real burden which prevented them from keeping the Law, and which eventually led, for each one individually, to death.—Rom. 3:10,23; 7:10-14

The whole world of mankind is likewise weighted down with sin. The psalmist wrote, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 51:5) Like David, any person who is sincere of heart, and honestly endeavoring to live a righteous life, realizes how imperfection hinders him from attaining the goal which he seeks. He is "heavy laden" and realizes that he cannot be wholly pleasing to God while laboring under the load of sin. To these

Jesus says in his invitation, “Come unto me, ... and I will give you rest.”

A REFRESHING REST

The Greek word translated “rest” in Jesus’ promise means, by implication, “to refresh.” What a refreshing experience it is for all who, wearied with their endless yet futile struggle against sin and its degrading influence in their lives, recognize Jesus as the great sin-bearer. As prophesied by Isaiah, God laid upon Jesus “the iniquity of us all,” making possible freedom from the burden of sin. (Isa. 53:6) This does not mean a release from the responsibility of doing the best we can to struggle against the weight of Adamic imperfection. God expects us to do this. Our rest of heart and mind is in the assurance that if we do the best we can, our sincere and honest efforts, though imperfect, will be acceptable to the Heavenly Father through the redemptive work of our beloved Redeemer.

In Hebrews 4:10, the Apostle Paul speaks of a “rest” into which we have the privilege of entering. This is a rest based on faith in Christ, and the apostle explains that those who enter into it cease from their own works, “as God did from his.” God ceased from his work pertaining to the human creation in the sense of assigning the further accomplishment of his purposes to Jesus, with full confidence in the willingness and ability of his Son to complete it. We, too, put our trust in Jesus, knowing that through him every provision has been made whereby we can serve the Heavenly Father’s cause acceptably.

In Paul’s reference to the Christian’s rest he uses a Greek word which conveys the thought of a “resting

place,” or “abode.” It suggests the idea of permanency, and not merely a temporary refreshing rest. We are indeed greatly refreshed by accepting Jesus’ invitation, “come unto me.” However, if by faith we continue to lean upon the Master and upon the divine promises which are made sure through the value of his shed blood, this first refreshing experience will grow into a life of continuous peace and satisfaction from dwelling in the “abode” of the Lord.

This rest does not mean freedom from trials. Neither does it imply inactivity, nor a ceasing from laboring in the Lord’s vineyard. It does not remove the experiences of difficulty and hardship associated with the “good works” for which all of God’s people are to be zealous. (Tit. 2:14) Indeed, the Apostle Paul had entered into this spiritual rest of faith, but he wrote to the church at Corinth saying, “When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.”—II Cor. 7:5

Similarly, our rest does not come from having all trouble and cause for worry removed, but from the assurance that the Heavenly Father will be with us and strengthen us in our every time of need. God allowed Paul to be “troubled on every side,” but he did not leave him comfortless, for in the next verse the apostle writes, “Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.”—vs. 6

God has unlimited ways by which he comforts and strengthens his people in their troubles, and it is important to watch carefully for his providences on our behalf in order to be in a position to obtain the greatest possible blessing from them. Paul saw in

the coming of Titus a manifestation of God's love and care. Let us be on the alert to recognize those he may send to comfort us in our times of need. It may indeed be a brother or sister who, with a good "word spoken in due season," helps to lift a burden from our hearts, or to comfort us in a great trial. (Prov. 15:23) It also may be a refreshing and encouraging experience which the Lord permits us to enjoy—some evidence, perhaps, that he is blessing our labors in his vineyard.

HIS GRACE SUFFICIENT

No true child of God ever feels satisfied with what he is able to accomplish in the Lord's service. We are all handicapped by imperfections of one sort or another. Our time and strength are limited, and while we sing, "O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise," we are ever conscious of the fact that the one tongue we do have is greatly deficient. At best, it is a "stammering tongue" which fails to declare the glory of the Lord as we so earnestly long to do.—Isa. 33:19

All the other aspects of our fallen human nature are likewise imperfect. Quoting the words of another hymn, we may desire to have our feet "swift on errands, Lord, for thee," yet we frequently stumble. Our hands, also, often fail to respond to the desires of our hearts as we would like when we endeavor to put them to work for the Lord. What great rest of soul there is, however, in the realization that God is looking upon our hearts. In his merciful kindness he "remembereth that we are dust," members of the sin-cursed and dying race, and so does not expect us to serve him

perfectly according to our outward efforts.—Ps. 103:14

In one of the Apostle Paul's experiences, we have a good example of the Lord's viewpoint in this respect. At the time of his conversion, he was blinded by the dazzling brightness of that "light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun." (Acts 26:13) Although a few days later when visited by Ananias, Paul received a restoration of his sight, it is likely that he had poor vision for the remainder of his life. Naturally this would be a great handicap, especially in his studies and writing. This is likely what he referred to as a "thorn in the flesh," and about which he prayed earnestly to the Lord that it might be removed. Paul believed that he could serve God much better if his eyesight were fully restored.—II Cor. 12:7,8

The answer to Paul's prayer, and the apostle's humble submission to the divine will should be of great encouragement to us. The Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul's reaction to these reassuring words of the Lord should serve to guide and comfort us when we feel the limitations imposed upon us by our imperfections. He wrote, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—vs. 9

HIS YOKE

Our wonderful rest in Christ can be understood and appreciated better when considered in association with his invitation to take upon ourselves another burden, described as a "yoke." Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you." (Matt. 11:29) To be made free from sin and imperfection does not imply a life

of idleness, nor does it mean a carefree, aimless sort of existence. We come out from the bondage of sin that we might become servants of righteousness by taking Jesus' yoke upon us. It is in this yoke that we find our abiding rest.

It is through Christ's yoke that we become united with him. He shares the load, bearing all of it that exceeds our own strength and ability. This is the thought suggested by Paul when he said that because of his infirmities the "power of Christ" would rest upon him. Paul would like to have done more and better work in the Lord's service, and he believed that this would be possible if his eyesight were fully restored. However, since this was not the Lord's will, and because he was assured that divine grace would be sufficient for him, he not only could rest, but also "glory" in his infirmities, because the power of Christ could thus be more fully demonstrated.

"LEARN OF ME"

Jesus' invitation, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," suggests that it is only by being yoked together with him that we can truly discover that he was indeed "meek and lowly in heart." Furthermore, it is these very qualities of his character which make his yoke easy and his burden light. The scribes and Pharisees were arrogant and domineering. They were overconfident about their positions of authority, and had instituted harsh, repressive measures in an effort to maintain their lordship. This meant that their yoke was heavy and burdensome, yet they refused to lift as much as a finger to help those who were struggling under its load.

How different it was with Jesus! He was meek and lowly. He had sympathy for the people and was always ready to extend mercy to erring ones who recognized their sins and sought forgiveness. He was “touched with the feeling” of the people’s infirmities. (Heb. 4:15) In spite of the “contradiction of sinners,” Jesus maintained his humble attitude of heart, and was composed before his enemies. The “joy that was set before him” of being with his Father in his throne gave him strength to endure unjust humiliation and disgrace in the eyes of his fellow Israelites. (Heb. 12:2,3) He was glad to humble himself, knowing that God, in his own time and way, would bless him beyond measure.

Now we are yoked together with this meek and lowly one. We are weak, but he is strong. He knows our every imperfection, our every limitation, and will allow just that portion of the load to come upon us which we are able to bear. The remainder he will carry himself, doing so in the spirit of true understanding and sympathy. Jesus knows our every weakness and adjusts our load according to our ability to bear. In this way his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

The Christian way, according to the flesh, is not an easy one. It is “narrow” and difficult. (Matt. 7:14) When we think of Paul’s experiences, for example, we realize that he did not have a life of ease, nor was the burden of the work which he bore a light one. From the standpoint of the flesh, Paul was seemingly crushed under the weight of the burden which was given him to bear. Nevertheless, he viewed his load as a “new creature” in Christ Jesus. This enabled him to refer to his burden as a “light

affliction,” which was only “for a moment,” and to express full confidence that it was working out for him “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”—II Cor. 4:17

Despite the fact that Paul endured troubles on every hand, he enjoyed that blessed rest which Jesus promised to all those who go to him in sincerity and humility, who learn of him, and take his yoke. It is important for all who are yoked together with Christ to be guided by his example of meekness and lowliness. Indeed, our agreement to take his yoke implies humble submission to his will.

If we are not meek and lowly we will want to walk in our own way rather than follow the leadings of the Master. To the extent that we do, we will be working against Jesus instead of working with him. Instead of lightening our burdens, we will increase them due to self-will until, under the direction of divine providence, we are brought back into full submission and cooperation as yokefellows with the Lord. Thus it is that trials which are borne in humility and submission to God’s will are “light,” while possibly the same experiences, if mixed with the will of the flesh, could be very burdensome.

Paul wore Christ’s yoke in the spirit of true meekness. He did not attempt to guide himself, but humbly placed himself under subjection to Christ, walking together with him in humble obedience. Sometimes the pathway led to prison and the stocks; other times to public beatings and stonings which left him near death. He encountered perils of the sea and perils of the land. Tiring labor and painful toil also often were his lot. Yet he viewed his yoke as “easy” and his burden as “light,” because Christ was with him.

Thus Paul had peace, rest and joy, even while he suffered, and finally died.

A REST OF MIND

Many of the Lord's dear people can testify that they, like Paul, have enjoyed a sweet and blessed rest, even in the midst of distress, sickness, persecution, and when surrounded on every hand by enemies of Christ. Certainly, it is not a rest of the body, but of the mind and heart. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."—Isa. 26:3

None can know the blessedness of this rest until it is experienced, and none can experience it except by taking the Master's yoke, and learning of him. Doing so, we learn what an understanding and gracious partner he is. We learn how sympathetically he bears every burden which is too great for us. We learn in every time of trial as he comforts us with the assurance that his grace will be sufficient for all our needs.

The world is feverishly seeking rest, security and happiness in various ways, but not finding them. Some are looking to wealth, thinking that therein is the secret of contentment and rest. Others try to forget their burdens by burying themselves in worldly pleasures, only to find their efforts futile and that their cup of pleasure turns to bitterness and disappointment.

We are in the world, but not of it, and by being yoked with Christ we find a rest that is genuine and abiding. The fullness of this rest will be attained only if we seek it in a "meek and quiet spirit." (I Pet. 3:4)

Jesus himself enjoyed peace and rest of heart and mind because he meekly and quietly yielded his all to the doing of his Father's will. (John 5:30) To the extent we come short along this line, our rest will not be complete, and the burden we are called upon to bear will seem heavy.

Let us cultivate the graces of meekness and patient submission to the will of God. To do this we will need to have confidence in his love and care, and to realize that in his infinite wisdom he knows what is best for us. This will not be easy for the flesh, but as New Creatures our joy will increase. In looking back and noting the blessings which have accrued from walking with the Lord, we will be able to praise the way he has led us day by day.

THE PROPER MOTIVE

Another important secret of true rest as we are yoked with Christ is to have the proper motive, which is love. To the extent we view our experiences from any other standpoint, we will be unsuccessful in attaining the full rest for which we labor. Love "beareth all things," Paul wrote. (I Cor. 13:7) If love prompted our consecration to God, and in love we are laying down our lives as Jesus did, trials and abuses which may come upon us will be seen in their true perspective—as pertaining only to our fleshly interests. Thus, as we truly love the Lord and his will, we will be able to "bear" all things.

Many of our burdensome experiences of life result from the loss of something. It may be our health, reputation, friends, money, or something else considered by the flesh to be valuable and important. Our consecration, however, calls for giving up all of

these. Hence, we should be concerned only with walking faithfully as true yokefellows with Christ. The loss of these things, therefore, should indeed be looked upon as a “light affliction,” insignificant when compared with the joys and blessings which come to us as a result of taking the Master’s yoke and learning of him.

From whatever proper standpoint we may consider it, the Master’s yoke is easy and his burden is light. There is no other path that is so rich in meaning and so satisfying in daily experience as the Christian way, yoked together with Christ. However, even after yielding our wills to him and taking his yoke, our complete rest and joy will be realized only by maintaining a humble submission to him, strengthened in this by a full confidence that his way is best, and that eventually it will lead to an eternity of rest beyond the veil. (Ps. 18:30-32; 32:8) “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.”
—Heb. 4:9,11 ■

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Mythili Muthiah, Chennai, India—April 20.
Age, 63

Brother Tom Marshall, San Francisco, CA—April 25. Age, 98

Brother Basavaraj Moses, Mysore, India—April 28.
Age, 67

Sister Marion Ketko, Detroit, MI—May 1. Age, 81
Sister Hemalatha, Bangalore, India—May 23. Age, 60

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M. Davis

Internet Broadcast of Convention
Vancouver, BC June 13,14

W. Dutka

Internet Broadcast of Convention
Vancouver, BC June 13,14

A. Fernets

Internet Broadcast of Convention
Vancouver, BC June 13,14
Portland, OR 19-21

H. Montague

Internet Broadcast of Convention
Portland, OR June 19-21

D. Rice

Internet Broadcast of Convention
Portland, OR June 19-21

*“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”
—Hebrews 10:24,25, English Standard Version*

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CONVENTIONS

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

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Numerous conventions in upcoming months have been canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Those that the Dawn is aware of at this writing are indicated as POSTPONED or 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.

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 7—POSTPONED TO 2021—Contact J. Elbert. Phone: (732) 710-8754 or Email: obe3@comcast.net

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 13,14—CANCELED—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—Contact B. Smith. Phone: (250) 947-8802 or Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 19-21—CANCELED—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—Contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 438-1086 or Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 18-23—CANCELED—GENERAL CONVENTION ECHOES WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

CENTRAL OHIO CONVENTION, August 1,2—CANCELED—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—Contact L. Winske. Phone: (614) 579-5045.

BIBLE STUDENTS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 5-9—CANCELED—Contact M. Davis. Email: lmkdavis@earthlink.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 5-7—CANCELED—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—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—POSTPONED TO 2021—Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 25-27—NEW LOCATION—Little Pine Island Camp, 6889 Pine Island Drive NE, Comstock Park, MI 49321. Contact T. Malinowski. Phone: (616) 304-7691 or Email: Malinowski.TJM@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

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 21,22—CANCELED—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE. Contact R. Brand. Email: blatbrand@aol.com