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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

Divine Intervention Near 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

Joseph Envied by His Brethren 14

Pharaoh Elevates Joseph 16

Joseph's Brethren Tested 18

Joseph Reveals Himself 20

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

The Book of Esther—*Part 1 of 2* 22

A Contrite and Humble Spirit 38

Contending Earnestly for the Faith 51

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 64

OBITUARIES 37

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 63

Divine Intervention Near

*“In the days of
these kings shall
the God of heaven
set up a kingdom,
which shall never
be destroyed.”*

—Daniel 2:44

THE SCRIPTURES TEACH that the only permanent solution to the world’s many problems will come as a result of divine intervention in the affairs of men. Two events this year—the ongoing world-wide Coronavirus pandemic,

and the widespread social and political unrest both in this country and abroad—have brought heightened consideration of whether the solutions to these and other problems plaguing mankind can only come by means of a higher power than any earthly leader, government or institution.

While many may contemplate the need for divine intervention on man’s behalf, not many are able to exercise such a faith, hence they continue to look to human devices and plans to resolve the world’s myriad problems. Relatively few believe the promises of God’s Word, that Messiah’s kingdom is soon to be established on the earth, bringing peace and happiness to all mankind. Jesus intimated that

there would be a lack of faith at this time and raised the question, “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”—Luke 18:8

Sincere students of the Bible know that in the past God has intervened in world affairs. Thus, they can have confidence in his promises to do so again. To these, the world’s hopes for the future are as bright as the promises of God. These promises are exceedingly bright, and assure us that the Sun of righteousness will “arise with healing in his wings,” bringing life and joy to all. (Mal. 4:2) Such a faith can permit us to rejoice, even in the midst of present turmoil.

THE FLOOD

At the time of the flood, in the days of Noah, God intervened in the affairs of men and the result was the ending of a world: “The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” (II Pet. 3:6) Jesus, in his prophecy of circumstances that would exist in the earth at the present time, referred to the days of Noah, and used conditions prevailing then to illustrate what was to take place now. In keeping with this, the Bible makes it plain that divine intervention at this time also results in the ending of a world: “this present evil world.”—Gal. 1:4; II Pet. 3:7

The destruction of the world that existed before the flood did not destroy the earth, nor will the overthrow of Satan’s world at this time destroy man’s earthly home. Rather, God will establish a new world, or order of things, described by the Apostle Peter as a “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (II Pet. 3:13) This means that if we truly want God to intervene and resolve the chaos

of the present world, we should be prepared to consider what he has foretold as the only solution for the distressed nations—namely, the replacement of all fallen human arrangements and institutions by the kingdom of Christ.

JESUS IS BORN

The Christian world claims to believe in the miraculous birth of Jesus as the world's Redeemer, Savior and Messiah. For two millennia the refrain of the heavenly host has been repeated, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:13,14) Are we now to conclude that the Creator has lost concern for the people living on this planet? True faith says: Certainly not. Surely God is just as interested now, and as fully able, as he was when he sent his only begotten son into the world, to intervene in world affairs and to establish order in the place of present trouble and distress. This is what God has promised to do, and, therefore this should be the blessed hope of all true believers.

Thirty years after his birth Jesus entered upon his ministry, one which was characterized by miracles. Not only did he affirm that he had come to begin fulfilling the Messianic promises of the Old Testament, but he backed up his claim by providing samples, through his miracles, of what his future kingdom would do for the people when finally established worldwide. He healed the sick and raised the dead, and this God has promised to do on behalf of all mankind when he answers the Christian's prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

It was God's arrangement that his only begotten Son should die as man's Redeemer, hence Jesus' enemies were permitted to crucify him. Following this, God's power was wondrously manifested in raising him from death. The fact of Jesus' resurrection is one of the fundamentals of Christian belief. If we accept this truth it should not be hard to believe that God is able to use his power to complete his program of blessings for the people. It would be inconsistent to believe otherwise.

Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus came the miracle of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit, or power of God, was poured out upon the waiting disciples, enabling them to carry on with the program of miracles introduced by the Master. Paul warned, however, that these miraculous "gifts" of the Holy Spirit would cease in the church, and they did. (I Cor. 12:29-31; 13:8,13) Nearly two thousand years have passed since, hence it is no wonder that so few are now able to believe in miraculous, divine intervention.

Miracles have continued throughout the present age, but these have been mostly miracles of grace in the hearts and lives of individual Christians. God has worked mightily in his church, preparing its members for future association with Jesus in the glory of the Messianic kingdom. However, the world in general has not been aware of this. The footstep followers of Christ have appreciated it only because, by faith, they have been able to look at and understand things unseen by the natural eye.—II Cor. 4:17,18

God's plan for these is that they be exalted to heavenly glory and reign with Jesus in the Messianic

kingdom. (Gal. 3:8,16,27-29; Rev. 20:6) Through this kingdom arrangement the remainder of mankind are to receive blessings of health, life and peace upon the earth. Many have overlooked the fact that heavenly promises are made only to the church, a “little flock,” and do not, therefore, represent God’s plan for humanity as a whole. (Luke 12:32) As a result, the general idea has developed that present conditions here upon the earth are to continue indefinitely, and that God’s interest in the people is primarily to save as many of them for heaven as possible.

This, however, is not God’s plan for humanity. Since the death and resurrection of Jesus, God’s work in the earth has been that of preparing the followers of his Son for their share in his kingdom. Hence, there has been very limited interference in the course of the world in general. God foretold this period of silence in the affairs of men, saying, “I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.”—Isa. 42:14

AS TRAVAIL UPON A WOMAN

Not only does God explain that for a long time he would refrain from interfering with the downward course of man, but he also reveals the manner in which his silence would be broken—namely, that he would “cry like a travailing woman.” This, of course, does not mean a literal or audible cry. God explains what he means, saying in the remainder of the text, “I will destroy and devour at once.” The preceding verse is also enlightening. It states: “The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir

up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.”—Isa. 42:13

The symbolic language of these verses denotes that the first thing to expect when God breaks his silence is a time of destructive trouble upon the systems and institutions of earth. The Apostle Paul presents a similar thought, employing also the symbolism of a travailing woman as mentioned in the foregoing passage. Paul says, “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”—I Thess. 5:2,3

While it is inevitable that many people lose their lives in this prophetic time of destruction, yet primarily it is a world order that is to be destroyed, to be replaced by a new, righteous kingdom. In the symbol of travail, we have the suggestion that the trouble would come in spasms, continuing until the birth of the new order. Through certain fulfillments of prophecy, as well as by events of history, these spasms of “travail” started to become most notable beginning at the time of the First World War.

Since that time, further spasms of trouble have come upon the world. These have been of different kinds. During the past century, we have seen additional wars, economic depression, recessions, revolutions, political upheavals, social instability of many kinds, and even religious turmoil, all of which give witness to the passing of a world. These processes continue today, and they are working exactly as the prophecies indicate they would, as “travail upon a woman with child.”

There may yet be brief periods of easement, but the present world, under the rulership of Satan, must give way to the kingdom of God under the leadership of Christ. The Scriptures assuredly promise that eventually a new world will emerge from the trouble. It will not be fashioned by man, but by God. As stated in our opening text, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: ... It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."—Dan. 2:44

DIVINE METHOD OF INTERVENTION

God's method of intervention is not spectacular nor supernatural, but nevertheless it is most effective. The spasms of trouble often come upon the world unexpectedly, "as a thief in the night." God's strategy is such that the very things which people may hail as products of their own wisdom, and which they imagine will bring them peace and safety, are in reality tools which help bring to an end the present world order. That is why the apostle foretold, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction shall come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child."

One important aspect of divine intervention in the affairs of this world is that of increasing knowledge among the masses of mankind. Accompanying this has been the explosion of technology and the availability of instantaneous communication among the people. One can easily see the close relationship between these conditions and present world chaos. However, few as yet recognize that the increase of knowledge is by divine appointment. It is referred to by the

Prophet Daniel, who said that in the “time of the end,” many would “run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” This prophecy also associates the increase of knowledge with a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.”—Dan. 12:1,4

The increase of knowledge is symbolically foretold in the Book of Psalms by the use of the term “lightning.” We read, “His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.” (Ps. 97:4) Note how the trembling of the earth’s present social order is here shown to result from God’s “lightnings.”

When Jesus was asked what would be the signs of his second coming, he explained that “as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall the coming (Greek: *parousia*, meaning presence) of the Son of man be.” (Matt. 24:3,27) The word translated “lightning” in this passage has the thought of enlightenment from the heavens. It is the Greek word *astrape*, from the root word *aster*, meaning “a star.” Inasmuch as Jesus emphasized that the light of his presence would shine from the east to the west, it means that in this respect it would be like the light of the sun, the earth’s star—a worldwide diffusion of light, affecting all humanity.

In II Thessalonians 2:8,9, the “brightness” of Christ’s coming [*parousia*: presence] is again mentioned. Here, the effect of this bright shining is shown to be the destruction of the great systems of iniquity which have come about by “the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” The dissolution of all systems founded by this archenemy of God is a necessary prerequisite to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

Such are some of the prophetic references which indicate that God intervenes in world affairs at this end of this age by causing a great increase of knowledge to reach the people. What this increase of knowledge has done, and is continuing to do to a world order, is a matter of record, clearly discernible to those who are acquainted with the fundamental causes of present world distress.

The increase of knowledge, in bringing to light the hidden things of darkness and superstition, has started the masses of mankind on the march to supposed freedom, and toward what is perceived as "rights" of every conceivable kind, whether real or only fancied. Such things lead presently to confusion, and even anarchistic conditions, but these, too, are signs that the old order is crumbling. We thank God, however, that this is not to be the end result of the increase of knowledge peculiar to these last days. While the first effect of the bright shining of Christ's presence is that of making the earth "tremble," the light will continue to increase until, under the ministration of Christ's kingdom, it will bring health, true freedom, and everlasting life to all mankind.

The fullness of light and knowledge resulting from the presence of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom is described, as previously noted, as being like the sun—"the Sun of righteousness," which arises "with healing in his wings." From east to west that sun will shine, and upon every continent and the isles of the sea the soothing, life-giving powers of divine light will be felt for the good of all people.

With God's new world established, the enlightenment will continue until it embraces every phase of

human experience, including a true understanding of the Creator as a God of wisdom, justice, love and power. Concerning this the prophet declares, “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9

In order for the people to then obtain the blessings of the kingdom it will be necessary for them to render willing obedience to the knowledge they have received. What wondrous blessings will come to those who obey! Divine power will fly to their aid to assist in their full recovery from sin and death, and to bless them with life everlasting. Full obedience to the knowledge which will then fill the earth will mean a turning from selfishness to love; from war to peace; from riches for some and poverty for others, to plenty for all. Every person will dwell “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

ALL ENEMIES DESTROYED

Divine intervention at this time means the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, and the Apostle Paul explains that Christ will reign until all enemies are put under his feet, the last enemy to be destroyed being death. (I Cor. 15:25,26) This means that more is to be done for the people than to merely put a stop to war, social unrest and economic hardship. If in the past it has seemed that God has not been interested in the welfare of humanity simply because he has not answered all their conflicting prayers, let us remember that it is because he has been developing a much more far-reaching program for the everlasting future of the world and its inhabitants.

The prophet declares that Christ shall reign as “The Prince of Peace,” and “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” (Isa. 9:6,7) This will mean universal and everlasting peace among the nations and within nations; peace in every community; peace in every family; peace in every heart; and, above all, peace between God and men. Without this latter peace, indeed, there could be no genuine peace of any kind.

With peace between God and men established by Christ, the great Mediator, and based upon the merit of his atoning blood, all the other blessings promised by the Lord will flow to the people in a never-failing “river of water of life, ... proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” In the revelator’s symbolic description of kingdom blessings flowing to the people he tells us that on either side of this symbolic river will be the trees of life, and that the leaves of the trees will be for the healing of the nations.—I Tim. 2:5,6; Rev. 22:1,2

When the final spasm of the great “time of trouble” will have finally prepared the people for the kingdom of Christ, how much they will need to be healed! (Zeph. 3:7,8) They will rejoice when they realize that all the honorable and righteous blessings they have been made to desire by the increase of knowledge are provided for them, and much more. In this kingdom there will be spread for all nations and peoples a “feast of fat things,” the prophet declares.—Isa. 25:6-9

Among the “fat things” is listed the fact that God will “wipe away tears from off all faces.” To wipe away all of mankind’s tears will require the awakening of the dead. This, too, is on the agenda

for God's new world. Knowing that he would raise the dead in his own due time, God has permitted the world to continue on its downward way into death while he has been preparing the kingdom agencies, the "sons of God," for their future work. (Rom. 8:19) Now that preparation work is about complete. Already God has broken his silence, and the present world under Satan's dominion is being shaken to the core, and will not stand, but will soon be replaced by a "kingdom which cannot be moved." —Heb. 12:26-28

The sincere and honest-hearted of the world are planning as best they can in order to keep the present order afloat. How happy they will be when they learn that God has done the planning for them, and that his plans are even now unfolding. Ere long they will result in the setting up of the long-promised kingdom of Christ. Let us continue to pray for that kingdom, in the realization that the answer to our prayers will mean the fulfillment of the legitimate "desire of all nations." (Hag. 2:7) When we pray for the kingdom we are praying for divine intervention in world affairs in the only way that God will answer. His kingdom is nigh at hand. Let us continue to pray for its soon establishment, that it might bring to an end "earth's weary night" of sin, suffering and death. ■

Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.

—Ezekiel 37:13,14, *New International Version*

Joseph Envied by His Brethren

*Key Verses: "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."
—Genesis 37:3,4*

*Selected Scripture:
Genesis 37:3-35*

TODAY'S LESSON COMMENCES in Canaan and is a reminder of the heritage of faith possessed by the patriarchs. They held fast to God's wonderful promise that through Abraham and his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed.—Gen. 22:15-18; 37:1; Heb. 11:8-22

Our Key Verses assert that Jacob, whose name God had changed to Israel, loved and esteemed his son Joseph most highly. He had been born through Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. Having received from his father a coat of many colors as an evidence of special status, Joseph's brethren envied him.

Resentment towards Joseph continued as he told them of matters about which he dreamed. "Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the

field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.”—Gen. 37:5-8

Joseph recounted another dream in which he described how the sun, moon and eleven stars made homage to him. Not only did his words evoke his brethren’s continued anger, but even Jacob rebuked him by inquiring whether his dream implied that his parents also would be required to bow down to him. Nevertheless, Jacob reflected upon the matter, possibly considering that God may have had some plans for Joseph’s future exaltation.—vss. 9-11

When Joseph was seventeen years of age, Jacob sent him to Shechem to check upon the wellbeing of his brothers who had traveled from home to feed their flocks. Eventually, Joseph found them in Dothan, and as he approached them their anger and jealousy towards him overflowed and they conspired to kill him. Through the intervention of Reuben and Judah, Joseph’s life was spared, and after being cast into a pit he was sold to traveling merchants and taken to Egypt. Joseph’s brothers took his beautiful coat of many colors, dipped it into the blood of a young goat and showed it to their father. Upon seeing the blood-stained coat, Jacob was distraught, thinking that his beloved son had been killed by a wild beast.—vss. 12-35

Although the details of this narrative are very painful and happened during Old Testament times, the conduct of Joseph’s brethren provides an important lesson as to the type of individuals we ought to be. “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful.” (I Cor. 13:4, *Revised Standard Version*) May the import of this admonition be daily made manifest in all of our dealings with our brethren as well as the world of mankind with whom we come in contact. ■

Pharaoh Elevates Joseph

Key Verses:
“Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.”
—Genesis 41:39,40

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 41:25-49

FOLLOWING JOSEPH’S arrival in Egypt, he had many experiences which helped to prepare him for a prominent role of leadership in this foreign land. Initially he was sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, who recognized his strength of character and placed him in a position of authority to administer affairs relating to his household. Subsequently, Joseph was falsely accused of indiscretions involving Potiphar’s wife and he was imprisoned. While incarcerated, Joseph found favor with the prison keeper because of his integrity and organizational skills.—Gen. 39:1-23

“And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison,

the place where Joseph was bound. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.”—Gen. 40:1-4

While in prison, both the butler and the baker experienced dreams which troubled them, and in due course Joseph correctly revealed their meanings to each of them. As foretold, the baker was executed but the butler was ultimately restored to Pharaoh’s favor.—vss. 5-23

Two years later, Pharaoh had two dreams which troubled his spirit. None of his wise men could interpret them. In the first one, seven fat cows devoured seven ugly and thin cows. Next, he dreamed that seven plump grains came up on one stalk only to be subsequently consumed by seven thin heads of grain. His chief butler recalled that Joseph had interpreted his dream while in prison, so Pharaoh summoned him from the dungeon to appear before him. Joseph then explained the meaning of the dreams. Egypt would experience seven years of abundant harvest followed by seven years of famine, and someone should oversee the collection and storage of grain during the bountiful years so that there would be food available during the time of famine.—Gen. 41:1-38

Our Key Verses reveal that Pharaoh accepted this counsel and authorized Joseph to administer the program to ensure the Egyptians would survive the predicted famine. In many respects Joseph’s life is illustrative of how our Lord will provide for mankind’s needs in God’s kingdom. (Ps. 72:16) As devoted believers through obedience and faithfulness in our consecration vows, we may entertain the hope of assisting Christ in the wonderful work of restitution for the entire human family. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6 ■

Joseph's Brethren Tested

Key Verse: *“They said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.”*
—Genesis 42:21

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 42:5-25

not die. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.”—Gen. 42:1-3

Since Jacob assumed Joseph was dead, and being very protective of Benjamin, the other son of his favorite wife, Rachel, he was not allowed to travel to Egypt with his brothers. Upon their arrival they were required to appear before Joseph to explain their mission, bowing before him, since he alone had the authority to grant their petition. Although Joseph recognized his brethren, they did not realize he was their brother. As a test, he

SEVERAL YEARS HAD elapsed since the events of our last lesson, and the famine which Joseph predicted had extended not only throughout the borders of Egypt but also embraced all lands, including Canaan, where Jacob and his family dwelt. “Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and

accused them of being spies and had them imprisoned. After three days, he released all of them except Simeon and indicated he would be detained until they returned to Egypt with their youngest brother, Benjamin.—vss. 4-20

Our Key Verse describes the guilt and remorse the brothers experienced as they recalled Joseph's anguish years ago when they removed his coat, cast him into a pit and ultimately sold him into slavery. They now believed this was the cause of their present distressing situation.

Joseph then allowed his brothers to return to Canaan with their sacks filled with corn, but without their knowledge he had authorized that each of them should have the money they paid placed into their bundles of grain. Upon their arrival home, they had difficulty explaining to their father why Simeon was not with them, as well as how they secured the grain and still had money. Furthermore, Jacob was informed they would be unable to return to Egypt and obtain food in the future, if Benjamin did not accompany them.—vss. 25-38

Many Old Testament personalities are cited for their faith in God even before the Savior came to earth. As members of the Gospel Age church, we entertain the hope of a heavenly reward for following in the Master's footsteps. We can be inspired towards faithfulness in our present endeavors by considering the examples found in the lives of many ancient stalwarts of faith, including Jacob and Joseph.—Luke 12:32; Heb. 11:38,39

May we be especially encouraged to trust God for strength to endure all of life's difficulties as we strive to make our calling and election sure and help to bless the entire human family during the soon to be established kingdom of righteousness. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." —Rom. 8:28 ■

Joseph Reveals Himself

Key Verse: *“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.”*
—Genesis 45:5

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 45:1-15

—Gen. 43:1-13

After their arrival, Joseph arranged for all of his brothers to feast with him, although because of his exalted position in Egypt, they still did not recognize him. He was interested in determining whether they had shown any remorse for having sold him into slavery many years ago which had resulted in excruciating sorrow for their father, Jacob. Accordingly, Joseph devised a test whereby a silver cup was planted in Benjamin's sack of grain as they headed back to Canaan. Then they were overtaken and Benjamin was accused of theft and required to remain in Egypt. At this point, Judah pleaded for Benjamin's safe return home because of the effect it would have upon Jacob if he did not accompany

AS THE FAMINE CONTINUED, it was necessary for Joseph's brethren to visit Egypt once again to obtain food. Since they were advised no more grain could be purchased unless Joseph's younger brother accompanied them, after Judah promised he would be responsible for Benjamin's safe return to Canaan, Jacob relented and allowed him to journey to Egypt.

his brethren.—Gen. 44:1-34

“Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.”—Gen. 45:1-4

Our Key Verse underscores God’s providential overruling in the affairs of those who love him according to his perfect will and pleasure despite whatever may have been intended otherwise by those having nefarious motives.

An important lesson from Joseph’s experience is that of repentance and subsequent forgiveness. After he was treated so harshly in his youth, once he became vested with great authority in Egypt, if he had a retaliatory spirit it would have been very easy for Joseph to have punished his brethren for casting him into a pit and selling him as a slave.

As consecrated followers of Christ, we should recall that our past sins have been forgiven if we have repented and devoted our lives to God’s service. In our dealings with others who may have transgressed against us, if they have acknowledged their misdeeds, we should fully accept their contrition rather than to harbor resentment towards them in our hearts. In our present state of imperfection let us always remember this important principle. “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”—Matt. 6:14,15 ■

The Book of Esther

“In those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him.”
—*Esther 1:2,3*

THE BOOK OF ESTHER IS classed with the historical books of the Bible, yet it is not merely a bygone chronicle. Besides providing a valuable segment in the history of the Jewish people during their captivity in Babylon under the Persian Empire, it also gives needed lessons for the foot-step followers of Christ at the present time. This absorbing historical account begins during the third year of the reign of Xerxes—called Ahasuerus in the Biblical narrative. Bible historians have

placed the date of the great feast mentioned in our opening verses somewhere between 485 B.C. and 460 B.C.

In chapter 1, verses 3-9, we are told of the tremendous wealth of King Ahasuerus. He made a great

feast, lasting six months, for the princes, servants and nobles of the city and provinces, to celebrate the power and glory of Media and Persia. Following this was another feast for seven more days for all the people present around the palace.

Verse 6 notes the beautiful, rich curtains with their silver rings hung on marble pillars. There were gold and silver beds and couches for reclining. The floors were of colored marble tile of blue, white, black and red. The drinking vessels were gold, each one of a different pattern, and the wine was of the king's appointment in great abundance. Each could drink as he desired, neither being compelled nor restrained. The queen, Vashti, also made a feast for the women in the royal palace.—vss. 7-9

In verses 10-22, we are told of the natural result of such unrestrained merriment, for on the final day, when the king and nobles were partially beclouded in judgment, they acted foolishly. The king sent for the queen to come before the nobles and exhibit her beauty, with the royal crown upon her head. She seems to have had the only level head among them, and refused to demean herself. This inflamed the king, and his wise men debated what should be done about it. They finally decided that Queen Vashti should be deposed, and another chosen in her place. Thus, the great feast ended in folly and trouble for the king's household. As we will see, however, these events led up to and prepared the way for Esther to be chosen queen.

ESTHER CHOSEN QUEEN

The second scene of this account begins in chapter 2, with the advice of the king's counselors and

servants that a proclamation be made to gather the fairest maidens of the kingdom, and bring them to Hegai [also called Hege], one of the king's ministers, and prepare them for his selection. The one which pleased the king most was to be made queen in the place of Vashti. (Esther 2:1-4) Verses 8 and 9 state that many maidens were brought to Hegai to be prepared for presentation to the king, each seeking to be his choice as queen. Esther, a young Hebrew maiden, but with a Persian name, was also brought to Hegai, who was so pleased that he gave her seven maidens to assist her in her preparations to appear before the king.

Esther had been brought to Hegai by her cousin, Mordecai, who had raised her following the death of her father and mother. Mordecai was an Israelite, of the tribe of Benjamin, who had been carried away from Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian captivity. (vss. 5-7) Mordecai evidently occupied a humble position at the palace court, and he instructed Esther not to make known to Hegai that she was a Jew. Esther, being preferred by Hegai, and afterward obtaining the favor of the king, was then returned to a new minister, or chamberlain, called Shaashgaz.—vss. 10-14

Much time, even a whole year, was spent for purification and preparation with perfumes and oils, and every known aid to accentuate beauty. (vs. 12) Verses 15 and 16 tell us that Esther's beauty was such that she needed nothing else but what the king's ministers had provided. Finally, she was brought before Ahasuerus the king in the seventh year of his reign, the tenth month, which is Tebeth, and the king was greatly pleased with her.

Here begins the evidence of God's foreknowledge, and of his preparation to eventually deliver the Jews from Haman, one of the king's princes and a hater of the Israelites. Ours is a covenant-keeping God. He always looks after his divinely chosen people. He is continually preparing, even before the events happen, for our deliverance and the destruction of the evil forces which rise up against us.—Isa. 54:17

King Ahasuerus "loved Esther" above all the other women, "so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti." (Esther 2:17) The king's satisfaction and delight in finding a maiden so pleasing was such that he made "a great feast" in her honor for his princes and servants. He also granted a holiday to all the provinces of the kingdom and gave gifts out of his bounty.—vs. 18

During the period encompassing the foregoing events, Mordecai became aware of a plot against the life of Ahasuerus. Two of the king's ministers, Bigthan and Teresh, keepers of the door of the palace, became wroth with Ahasuerus, the reason for which is not recorded. Nevertheless, they desired to kill him. Mordecai sent word through Esther to Ahasuerus of this plot, thus adding to her influence with the king. Esther reported it to the king in Mordecai's name, thus securing favor for him also. The plot against Ahasuerus failed, and the two ministers were slain for their sedition. Throughout this experience, Esther and Mordecai worked together, and were loyal to each other, as well as to the king. Esther still did not make known her nationality, however, as there was no need to do so. All of this was of the Lord's providence.—vss. 19-23

HAMAN—A WICKED PRINCE

In chapter 3 we are told of the rise to power of Haman. This account shows the spirit of pride developing unchecked in one who is a stranger to God. Haman's exaltation apparently was the preparation by Satan to destroy the people of Israel. The attempts of others, instigated by Satan, to destroy the polity of Israel has been a recurrent theme throughout their history as a people. Many of these took place in Europe by so-called Christian nations during the present Gospel Age, and were evidently repeated efforts by Satan to destroy the Jews as the covenant people of God. However, there has always been an overruling which stopped the carnage before it destroyed the whole nation.

The Jews in Persia at this time had not availed themselves of the earlier decree of Cyrus to return to Jerusalem and help in the rebuilding of the Temple. However, their current experiences, and in particular the hatred of the cruel prince, Haman, evidently led many to later return to Jerusalem with Nehemiah. (Neh. 1:1-3) Thus God often uses adversity to bring his people back to him. The Israelites in Persia were still the covenant people of God, and he loved them and looked after them in mercy.

King Ahasuerus gave Haman very high honors and privileges, even commanding his servants to reverence Haman. Mordecai disregarded the order, however, giving as a reason that he was a Jew. According to the account, Haman seems not to have noticed this until it was called to his attention. Then Haman was "full of wrath," and planned to punish not only Mordecai but to destroy the whole Jewish population throughout the kingdom.—Esther 3:1-6

The lies told by Haman to the king were such as to make the Jews seem an utterly worthless and pernicious people, and also dangerous. So deceptive was Haman that he did not even identify them as Israelites, but told the king of “a certain people” living in the kingdom which should be destroyed. Haman even promised to pay into the king’s treasury ten thousand talents of silver, probably from the booty expected from the slaughter.—vss. 8,9

Ahasuerus gave his signet ring to Haman. This gave him full authority, as the king’s representative, to carry out his suggestions, and he graciously told Haman that the silver would be Haman’s to do with as he wished. Thus the king showed great trust in and esteem for Haman. This ring had the royal seal attached to it, which carried the full power of the empire behind it. Additionally, he granted Haman all the property of the Jewish families executed. As incredible as it may seem, the lives of the whole Jewish people were given to the hand of Haman. He ascertained that the destruction of the Jews would occur on the thirteenth of Adar, the twelfth month. Note the cruel, heartless and mad design to destroy, kill, and cause to perish even the women and children—all in one predetermined day.—vss. 10-14

Haman’s plan gradually became known among the people. The Jews throughout the empire thus had about eleven months’ warning of the peril which threatened them. Why did they not flee? To flee would be seen as giving public acknowledgment of their guilt, and would likely provoke an immediate massacre. Possibly Haman thought of this, and some may have fled during the intervening months, but as a whole the Jews stood

their ground, evidently believing some deliverance would come.

Why did Haman give such long notice? Perhaps it was partly to allow time for the decree to reach the utmost limits of the empire. It was possibly also to strike terror in the hearts of the Jews. His main wish, however, was that in the process of eliminating the Jews, he would also get rid of Mordecai, who was well respected by the king, and who Haman hated with extreme jealousy.

The people of the capital city, Shushan, were perplexed by this turn of events and the plan to exterminate the Jews. (Esther 3:15) Many Persians viewed the Israelites favorably, for they had records of how God had delivered Daniel from the den of lions, and the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace. They also knew of the benevolence that Cyrus, one of their previous kings, had manifested toward the Jews. Even apart from this, however, the decree was sufficiently sudden and ominous to perplex thoughtful citizens.

At this point of the narrative the situation looked as though Satan had triumphed and the Jews would certainly be destroyed, for the laws of the Medes and Persians could not be altered. No human eye could see any way of escape. However, the covenant-keeping God of Israel was not asleep. The unusual chain of circumstances by which the deliverance of the Jews and the destruction of their enemies was accomplished is one of the most interesting and astonishing accounts in human history.

ESTHER INTERVENES

When the news of the king's commandment reached Mordecai he rent his clothes, put on sackcloth

and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city streets with a great and bitter cry. Likewise, in every province, when the decree arrived there was great mourning, weeping and fasting. Mordecai came even before the king's gateway, though none were allowed to enter the palace clothed in sackcloth. Nothing of an evil omen was ever allowed to obtrude itself into the king's presence. This was the general practice in the East, so that it would show the absolute and sacred authority of the kings.—Esther 4:1-3

The mourning and wailing of Mordecai was reported to Queen Esther. She sent him raiment and asked him to put away the sackcloth, but he would not. Taking another approach, she sent Hatach, one of her trusted attendants, to meet up with the distraught Mordecai, and to find out the reason for his behavior. Hatach went out into the city streets and met Mordecai, who laid the whole matter before him, showing him a copy of the decree, and even telling of the money Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasury for the destruction of the Jews.—vss. 4-7

Mordecai asked Hatach to show the decree to Esther and urge her to make supplication to the king to release them from such a doom. Here arose a difficulty, however, which seemingly made it impossible for her to do so. The national law, known to all people, was that none could enter the king's presence, into the inner courts of the palace, without his invitation, on penalty of death, except to such as the king would hold out the golden scepter to signify that the caller could come in and make his petition. The reason for this precaution may have been the danger of some disaffected person assassinating

the king. Esther stated these rules to Mordecai and said she had not been called by the king for thirty days.—Esther 4:8-11

When Esther's answer reached Mordecai he realized the desperateness of the situation, but felt sure that God would not allow his people to be destroyed. He sent word to Esther that if she was not willing to risk her life for her people, then deliverance would come from some other quarter, and she would not only lose the blessing, but could not hope to escape the decree just because she was queen. Thus she, too, would be punished for her failure to act. He suggested that it might be she was raised up to her high position for this specific occasion.—vss. 12-14

Mordecai's confidence and his encouraging words to Esther should teach us a lesson. Our covenant with God is not merely that we will obey him, but that he will take care of us as his own, and in accord with his promises. Thus, from such records as this we may have full confidence and assurance in God's promises for our spiritual interests, and that he is ever watchful over his people. He will never leave us nor forsake us; he will never forget, nor be taken off his guard.—Ps. 34:19; 91:1-11; Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5,6

Esther sent her answer to Mordecai that she would take the risk and trust in the Lord, but that she and all the Jews in Shushan should first fast and neither eat nor drink for three days. Then she would go in unto the king without the required invitation. In faith, Esther said, "If I perish, I perish." Mordecai then was content that all would be done that was possible, and trusted that God would intervene in his own time and way.—Esther 4:15-17

ESTHER MEETS WITH THE KING

On the third day from the beginning of the fast, the time had finally come to act. Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the “inner court of the king’s house,” opposite the entry of the throne room “in the royal house.” The usual location of the throne was evidently such that from its raised position the king could look out beyond the door into the court.—Esther 5:1

Seeing Esther, King Ahasuerus extended his golden scepter, indicating that she was granted an audience. Her touching the top of the scepter was an acknowledgment of the king’s authority, and a gesture of obedience and submission by Esther. The king offered her anything up to half of his kingdom, showing his appreciation of her. Note the gracious expression of the king, “What wilt thou, queen Esther? And what is thy request?”—vss. 2,3

Esther’s wisdom is shown in that she did not ask her petition immediately, but wished to impress the king favorably. She judged that the king would understand that she indeed had a petition in the background, and that he would persist in requesting it, which he did. At present, however, Esther asked for the presence of both the king and Haman at a banquet which she would prepare. The king agreed and instructed Haman to attend. After the meats were removed, it was customary to continue the banquet with fruits and wine. The king repeated his request for Esther’s petition, but Esther again postponed, and asked both the king and Haman to a second banquet, promising to present her petition then.—vss. 4-8

(Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31) This wise delay gave an opportunity for this great honor toward Haman to work on his mind and his pride. He had risen greatly in his own estimation, thinking that he must truly be on the road to greatness to be thus honored by the queen. Pride is thus pictured in effective colors. It blinds the discernment, and often throws caution to the wind. Vanity and pride blind one to any possible warning to take care. Instead of wondering what could be behind such an unusual honor, he gloated in great delight on these favors bestowed on him. In Haman's distorted view of matters, we see a clear example of the stark warning pronounced in these words: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."—Prov. 16:18

Although gloating inwardly about the honors being bestowed upon him, Haman deeply begrudged the neglect of Mordecai to notice him. (Esther 5:9) Pride brings resentment because of the failure of another to gratify it. How different is the effect of humility, which leads one to be glad to remain unnoticed, and even to appreciate being admonished from time to time, lest too great an honor should awaken pride. Recalling an incident considered earlier, Mordecai did not complain when his saving of the king's life seemed to pass unnoticed. (Esther 2:19-23) Two strong characters are thus clearly contrasted—one humble and the other proud above measure.

Haman called for the advice of his friends and his wife Zeresh. He enumerated to them his honors, wealth and social position. He dwelt on how the king promoted him and advanced him above the

servants and even the princes, and how the queen had honored him so conspicuously. Yet, in spite of all this, the thing that continued to anger him was that this one man, a Jew named Mordecai, would not bow the knee. (Esther 5:10-13) We would think that surely any sensible person would be satisfied with such honors as had been bestowed upon him, and not be upset because one man refused to honor him—but not so with Haman. He was an example of unrestrained pride working out the destruction of its victim.

Haman's friends and his wife urged him to build a gallows seventy-five feet high, and ask the king that Mordecai be killed for failing to obey the king's command, for he refused to acknowledge and bow the knee when the king had commanded all men to honor Haman. Notice the heartlessness of his wife and friends in the advice: "Go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet." (vs. 14) Thus ends the first five chapters of the Book of Esther. In next month's issue, we will examine the remainder of this interesting and thought-provoking account, and consider more of its noteworthy lessons of benefit to the child of God. ■

OBITUARIES

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

**Brother Leon Millin, Miami Valley, OH—August 11.
Age, 91**

A Contrite and Humble Spirit

“Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

—Isaiah 57:15

footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been.” While impressed with the fact that our Lord is so incomprehensibly glorious, we become enraptured with the thought of his condescending grace, for we are then told, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”—Isa. 66:1,2

THE FULLNESS OF THE

majesty and greatness of God is incomprehensible to the human mind. At the dedication of Israel’s Temple, Solomon queried, “Will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”—I Kings 8:27

As though to answer, the Lord said, “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my

In the verse following our opening text, the Lord tells us, “I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.” (Isa. 57:16) Indeed, if God were to contend with humanity, the end of the strife would be that mankind would be blotted out of existence. The Scriptures tell us why our God will not “be always wroth.” We read, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”—Ps. 103:8-14

Our God is particularly sympathetic toward those who are of a broken and contrite heart, whose spirit is humble, who realize that they are imperfect, and who desire to be in accord with him. He does not trample them to the dust nor does he turn away from their tears and supplications. He is, as he proclaimed himself to be, “The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” (Exod. 34:6) However, in order to obtain his blessings and mercies, the recipient must have the proper attitude of heart and mind.

A BROKEN SPIRIT—NOT A BROKEN WILL

There is a difference between a broken heart and one which is contrite. A heart is broken when it is

bowed down with grief and sorrow. A heart is contrite when it has a quiet, deep, continual sorrow for acts not in harmony with righteousness. A broken spirit is one that realizes its undone condition and is emptied of self-confidence and self-esteem. In humility of heart it can appreciate its own littleness and imperfection. A broken will is not necessarily the same. There may be some whose wills are broken, and who, giving way to despondency, abandon the battle for righteousness and against sin.

The Scriptures state: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Ps. 51:17) In this utterance David reveals the depth of his understanding. He could see that temporal sacrifices and offerings were meaningless to the Lord except they be prompted by a "broken spirit" and expressive of a "broken and a contrite heart." The Lord is not interested in mechanical ceremonies. Rather, he is seeking humble and contrite hearts that will respond to his loving-kindness.

It is the crushed olive that yields oil, the pressed grape that gives forth wine, and it was the smitten rock that gave the people water. Similarly it is the broken, contrite heart that is most rich in holiness and most fragrant in grace. The "high and lofty One" is pleased to dwell with such, not actually, but by his Spirit and his overshadowing providences. Hence, as the psalmist says, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."—Ps. 91:1

It is those with humble and contrite hearts whom the Lord leads to full and unreserved consecration. Only such as are in this condition of heart

are invited to present themselves as a “living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,” which is their “reasonable service.” (Rom. 12:1) However, contrition and humility are not character traits which we leave behind after we have dedicated our lives to the Lord. They are qualities that all the consecrated must continue to possess in an abounding measure. How befitting, then, are the apostle’s further words to the brethren, when he exhorts each one “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”—vs. 3

As quoted earlier, God has promised to look “to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit,” and who “trembleth” at his Word. Herein is pointed out the fact that those of a humble spirit must also take earnest heed to the Word of the Lord. The Israelites were instructed: “Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD.” (Deut. 8:3) God’s anger was kindled against them, however, when they “cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.” (Isa. 5:24) Thus, while God shows favor to the poor and contrite, he only does so to the extent that they take heed and obey his words.

REVIVING THE HUMBLE AND CONTRITE

The Scriptures inform us that Adam’s posterity “are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Ps. 14:3) From God’s righteous and holy standards the whole human race comes short of acceptability to him. However, there is a manner of life toward righteousness which God can and does approve. Those who

are seeking to be in harmony with him to the best of their ability, who are walking in the ways of righteousness, and who are trusting in the precious blood of the Redeemer, are spoken of as “being justified freely by his grace ... in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 3:24-26) Of these Jesus said, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matt. 5:6) Their desire to be forgiven from all their sins is satisfied and fulfilled because the blood of “Jesus Christ the righteous” cleanses them “from all unrighteousness.”—I John 1:9; 2:1

This class of dedicated and cleansed ones will have afflictions. The Scriptures declare that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (II Tim. 3:12) Some will inquire, how much persecution and trial must the godly suffer? While the degree of affliction that each member of the body of Christ must endure will vary considerably, yet generally speaking, the Apostle Paul showed that these “must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22) The proper attitude of these toward the suffering which they must endure is expressed by the apostle, saying, “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”—Rom. 5:3-5

As the Lord’s people go through the fiery trials which so often come upon them, they may at times become faint and weary in the struggle. The hosts of their enemies become dreadful, and their frail nature shrinks from the overwhelming opposition. There are both “conflicts on the outside” and “fears

within,” which the Christian must engage. (II Cor. 7:5, *New International Version*) No wonder, then, that these humble and contrite ones need to be revived and strengthened in order to maintain the “good fight of faith.”—I Tim. 6:12

God does not often deliver nor revive the humble or contrite by changing the circumstances of life for them. He does not necessarily deliver them from their financial troubles, their physical ailments, their social maladies, or other difficulties that are common to mankind. What then does the Lord do? The Apostle Paul answers by stating: “No trial has assailed you except what belongs to man; and God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tried beyond your ability; but with the trial, will also direct the issue, that you may be able to bear it.” (I Cor. 10:13, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) The Lord provides the needed grace in each trial, and this prevents his people from falling. He also promises, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”—Deut. 33:25

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

To the humble and contrite ones of the past who trembled at the Word of the Lord, needful grace was provided. Consider how Abraham had his faith tested, even to the point of offering up Isaac, his son of promise. He was willing to do this because he was fortified with the numerous promises of God that he should have a “seed” who would bless “all the kindreds of the earth.” (Acts 3:25) Hence when he was tried, he believed that God was able to raise up Isaac, “even from the dead.” It was the immutable Word of God that sustained Abraham in every trial so that he “died in faith,” still believing.—Heb. 11:13,18,19

Reflect also upon the great lawgiver, Moses, whom the Scriptures declare to have been “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” Yet, even those of his household spoke against him, saying, “Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?” (Num. 12:2,3) Not only did Moses endure the sedition of his family, but shortly afterward the children of Israel murmured against their faithful leader and said, “Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! ... Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” (Num. 14:2-5) While this humble servant fell on his face when he heard the murmuring of the people, yet he had no resentment in his heart, for he besought the Lord to forgive their iniquity.—vs. 19

What enabled Moses to suffer so unjustly, to endure such unmerited criticism and murmurings against himself by that rebellious group of the Lord’s people? The secret of his faithful perseverance is attributable to his great respect and reverence for the Word of God. He was willing to suffer affliction with and forbear with that wayward people because, as Paul says, he esteemed “the reproach of Christ [for Christ, marginal translation] greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” (Heb. 11:26) Again we see, in the life of this humble servant, how God revived and fortified his spirit with precious promises.

We also take note of that beloved servant of the Lord, David. While the record of his life is outstanding in his devotion and loyalty to God, yet there are some sinful deeds that he committed, which, according to the Law, would have called for his death. No

doubt, if it were not for the fact that he was the Lord's anointed king over Israel, he would have been put to death. However, being spared, though not unpunished, David lived to demonstrate an outstanding degree of heart penitence. By his sins, as Nathan declared, he gave "great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme." (II Sam. 12:14) Yet, in the face of his transgressions, we are given to understand that David's heart was counted as righteous before the Lord.—I Kings 15:5

Such a humble and contrite heart as David had, the Lord would not despise. Rather, he revived David's spirit by his loving-kindness, his tender mercy, and his sure word of promise. What wonder then that we find David offering a song of thanksgiving for God's deliverance and his manifold blessings saying, "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour."—II Sam. 22:2,3

THE CONTRITE OF THE PRESENT AGE

The sons of God are, during this present Gospel Age, especially beset by trials and difficulties. If they should fall, however, the fact that they have stumbled will not make them feel like going back into sin if their hearts are of the right imprint. On the contrary, they will feel like Peter, who, when others were stumbling, said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:68) The true people of God have no desire to go to anyone but him. If they stumble, they recover themselves with the Lord's help, availing themselves of his arrangements for forgiveness and then pressing

forward. By these stumblings they learn of their own weaknesses and then fortify themselves so that they may be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” in future experiences.—Eph. 6:10

A just man may fall “seven times,” but “riseth up again.” There are various causes for these stumblings. However, if the heart is good and honest, humble and contrite, that man will rise again. The Lord will show him that he has made a mistake and will point out the way to him by which he may recover himself. If he is truly a lover of righteousness, he will desire to press on toward that which is right, just, and approved of the Lord, even if he should stumble many times.—Ps. 37:23,24; Prov. 24:16

God’s grace abounds to his children in this age beyond the measure of human comprehension, and far more than those men and women of old could have asked or hoped for. Isaiah, prophetically writing of our day, says, “Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.” (Isa. 64:4) Paul, commenting on this very Scripture, tells us, “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—I Cor. 2:9,10

If the humble and contrite ones of the past were refreshed by the Word of God, even though they understood but vaguely what it meant, how much more should our spirits be uplifted. Unto us are given “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these,” Peter says, “ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”—II Pet. 1:4

If any of the Lord's people should become faint or weary of spirit, the "high and lofty One" will surely not be unmindful of their need nor fail to fulfill his promises to them. We have the assurance: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." (Isa. 40:29; 59:1) Realizing that we have a High Priest who has been "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," let us "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," knowing that Christ Jesus "ever liveth to make intercession" for us.—Heb. 4:15,16; 7:25

For our encouragement we can also look back to those of old who have the testimony that they pleased God. We should consider what great faith was instilled in their hearts: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ... That they might obtain a better resurrection." (Heb. 11:33-35) However, our consideration does not stop here, but should be elevated to an even higher degree by "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. ... For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."—Heb. 12:2,3

Indeed, how our spirits are revived and how our hearts are refreshed as we consider our forerunner, Jesus! When we do so, we are reminded of the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," who, "though he was rich,"

yet for our sakes “became poor,” so poor that he could say, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”—II Cor. 8:9; Matt. 8:20

Have our friends proved unfaithful or disloyal? Consider the Master’s “familiar friend,” in whom he trusted, who “lifted up his heel” against him. (Ps. 41:9) Think of Peter also, who denied the Lord three times, even with cursing. Do we have trials and soul-vexing griefs? Think of Jesus who, according to the Scriptures, was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” (Isa. 53:3) Are we disfellowshipped by the world and persecuted? Let us remember how they hated our Lord and Master, how they smote him, spat upon him, and mocked him, crying, “Crucify him, crucify him.” (Matt. 27:30,31; John 19:6) Have we humbling experiences? Consider him, who “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:8) As we thus consider Jesus, we learn of him who was “meek and lowly in heart” and we find rest for our fainting souls. Then we come to realize that his “yoke is easy,” and our “burden is light.”—Matt. 11:29,30

HUMILITY AND CONTRITION ESSENTIAL IN THE NEXT AGE

All among mankind, who, in the coming Messianic kingdom, would be in harmony with God must also be repentant of their shortcomings. Moreover, they must be appreciative of God’s grand and holy standards. Under the reign of Christ and his glorified church, sympathy and favor will be extended to the humble, contrite hearts, even as now with the footstep followers of Christ.

The Apostle Peter tells us that “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” (I Pet. 5:5) This text applies not only in the present time, but will also have an application in the next age. Among the several things that the Lord hates, the first one the wise man mentions is a “proud look.” (Prov. 6:16-19) Hence there is no provision for the proud, haughty or self-centered, but every provision of God is available for the humble-minded. The Prophet Isaiah, in outlining the preparations to be made for the coming kingdom, said, “Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.” (Isa. 62:10) We can be sure that the standard held up before the people in the incoming age will be that of complete holiness of heart and, by the end of the kingdom, also of conduct.

Realizing that the favor and blessing of God is promised only to the humble and contrite ones, and that there are few in number that are humble at the present time, the question naturally arises: Are there only a few who will bask in the eternal sunshine of God’s love and favor? Ah no! God is now allowing a humiliating influence to work with people which, in the age to come, will have taught them to put away selfishness and pride, and lead them to be contrite of heart.

Now the humble and contrite are trodden down. As the prophet has truly said, “Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.” What is to become of the spirit of pride and wickedness? The prophet further declares that

the day is coming when all the works associated with pride and wickedness “shall be stubble,” and these practices will be destroyed from among the people: “The day that cometh shall burn them up.” Hence we see that the pride and wickedness of men shall be thoroughly purged, and to such an extent that it will leave “neither root nor branch” for further development in man’s heart.—Mal. 3:15; 4:1

God through the prophet has said, “I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.” Then, after these humiliating and purging experiences, when men learn to esteem the beauty of holiness, and denounce unrighteousness and sin, he “will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.”—Isa. 13:11,12

God has said, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. ... That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel [representative of all mankind] be justified, and shall glory.” (Isa. 45:22-25) As we thus are now privileged to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of God’s wonderful plan of salvation, surely we can say with the psalmist, “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.”—Ps. 48:1

■

Contending Earnestly for the Faith

“Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

—*Jude 1:3*

THE OBLIGATION TO CON-
tend earnestly for the faith is one which the follower of Christ cannot avoid without spiritual loss to himself. The world’s general spirit of self-

ishness is no friend to the Christian, and Satan, the prince of this world, is ever seeking to becloud the Truth in the hearts and minds of the children of light.

Satan, our great Adversary, is an arch deceiver. Appearing as an angel of light, he often suggests to the Christian that to take a firm stand for the faith and to contend for it would mean to have a contentious spirit, and, therefore, be wrong for the follower of Christ. (II Cor. 11:14) There is a vast difference, however, between contending for the faith and being contentious. The contending which the Scriptures condemn is that of selfishly striving for position or power among the brotherhood, or for promoting our

own ideas while deriding those of others. (Rom. 2:8) All such selfish contending is wrong, and leads away from the Lord instead of closer to him.

Among the Lord's people, even in the days of the apostles, there was a tendency at times to fight among each other, rather than to fight the good fight of faith and to strive against Satan's deceptive practices, the selfish spirit of the world, and the weaknesses within ourselves. The means of destructiveness and combativeness which should serve the Christian soldier in good stead are those directed only against his own weaknesses and blemishes. Such striving, however, is out of place when misdirected against the brethren, and especially so regarding matters whose importance is exaggerated. Those who are contentious along this line should remember the scriptural statement that "he that ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city."—Prov. 16:32

The Apostle Paul gives a stern warning regarding improper contention: "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed of another." (Gal. 5:15) Such strife in the church is destructive of that which is truly spiritual and edifying among the Lord's people. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we should be slack as respects the important principles of divine revelation. The apostle further declares: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." "Continue to stand firm and keep a tight grip on the teachings you have received from us, whether by word of mouth or by letter."—I Thess. 5:21; II Thess. 2:15, *Williams New Testament*

The Lord's consecrated people, having enlisted as soldiers of Jesus Christ, should continually keep

watch that they are walking in line with the spirit of the Truth—that is, the spirit of holiness. It is to this that our text refers, namely, a contention which is not only proper, but necessary, for all who are walking in the light. These are to “earnestly contend for the faith,” for the Word of God, for the promises which God has made, and for the good things which God has outlined both for the church and for all mankind in his wondrous plan.

Today, the Truth of God’s Word, even as in the apostle’s day, is still in disesteem, and subject to ridicule and attack. To resist these in the spirit of meekness and humility, yet without compromise, is the duty and privilege of the Christian. This is one of the ways in which God, in his wisdom, tests the sincerity and devotion of his people. He desires that all who shall reign with Christ in his Messianic kingdom be a tested people, a people of decision and character.

Character implies fixity of purpose and intention, and a determination to fight a “good fight of faith” against every influence tending to lead away from the Lord’s Word. (I Tim. 6:12) The theories and beliefs of today’s religious world are largely in opposition to the Word of Truth and to the Lord’s people who are striving to be led by its spirit. This means that our fight is not against one another, nor even with the people of the world, but against the selfish and God-dishonoring teachings and philosophies which prevail at the present time.

Even in this it is necessary to be on guard, for it is possible for one to be contentious in religious matters, even to “earnestly contend,” and yet not be contending “for the faith which was once delivered

unto the saints.” One might, for example, be contentious over some pet theory of his own, rather than for those principles of righteousness which the Bible inculcates.

For one person to argue with another on scriptural subjects is not necessarily contending for the faith. In the first place, neither individual may be arguing on behalf of the real faith once delivered to the saints. In addition, although one individual in such an argument might seem to be holding technically to the doctrine of the Truth, his motive in so doing might not be that of love. He may have a measure of pride, and a desire to reveal his profound knowledge of the Bible and his ability to dispute convincingly. All such motivations are fully out of harmony with our text.

The contention which God would approve is an earnest effort to uphold whatever God’s Word teaches, and a sincere desire to be in character harmony with it. Such a contending for the faith should never include a misuse of the tongue to speak slanderously of others. In all of our contentions we should manifest the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit—gentleness, brotherly kindness and love. Our spirit and demeanor should never partake of anger, hatred, malice or strife.

THE FAITH

The essence of the faith once delivered to the saints is that wonderful statement of Truth which says that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) Confirming this, the Apostle Paul writes, “God

commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”—Rom. 5:8

The faith, or Gospel of Christ, as presented in the foregoing verses, is seen as a revelation of God’s boundless love toward his earthly creatures, in that through his Son he has made provision for their recovery from sin and its penalty, death. Any high-sounding philosophy, no matter how eloquently set forth, which offers some other means of life and happiness than that provided through the redemptive work of Christ, must be resisted by the Christian.

The Scripture declares that the benefits of Christ’s atoning work are available to the sinner only upon the basis of belief: “Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This means that all theories which presume that salvation is obtainable upon the basis of ignorance concerning the only “name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” are contrary to the faith once delivered to the saints, and hence cannot be permitted to have a place in true Christian belief.—Acts 4:12

This emphasizes the importance of knowledge, and of the fundamental part that it plays in the life of the follower of Christ. It means that we cannot say it does not make any difference what we believe, that the only important matter is how we live. A proper understanding of the place which knowledge occupies in the Christian faith should make us realize that from God’s standpoint it is impossible to live right unless we believe right. Thus, we cannot properly separate sound doctrine from righteous living.

FAITH BASED ON KNOWLEDGE

The Apostle Paul appropriately raises the question, “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14) This poses the further inquiry as to how the Gospel affects the millions who still are dying without knowledge of Christ and his atoning work for them. We do not need to search long for the answer, because the same inspired writer declares concerning God’s plan for the enlightenment of the world, and the offering of salvation thereby, that he “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the Truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”—I Tim. 2:4-6

Paul’s explanation that the knowledge of Christ’s atoning work is to be testified to all “in due time” is an important key for the unlocking of God’s great treasure-house of truth. It means that if the due time for many is not before death, there is a guarantee that it shall be in the resurrection—another key component of the faith once delivered to the saints.

With this fundamental Scriptural fact before us, there is meaning to the words of Jesus to the effect that it will be more favorable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for those who opposed him amidst greater light. (Mark 6:11) There is also meaning given to Paul’s words in Romans 11:25-32, by which he shows that there is hope beyond the grave even for the unbelieving Jews who crucified the Master. Thus, contending for the faith once delivered to the saints calls for upholding the grand teachings of the Bible which

outline a hope of future life and blessing for both Jews and Gentiles of all nations—“in due time.”

THE PROMISED SEED

While God intends to bless the entire human race, the Bible indicates that he purposed this blessing to come to them through the “seed” of Abraham. (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:15-18) In the New Testament, Paul shows clearly that the seed through which the promised blessings are to come is in reality Christ and his church. (Gal. 3:8,17,27-29) While the natural descendants of Abraham, the Jewish nation, were given the first opportunity to qualify as the spiritual seed of promise, yet this opportunity, in due time, was extended also to the Gentiles.

It may seem a commendable attitude to believe and teach that God loves one group of religionists as much as he does the other, and that all roads lead to heaven. However, loyalty to the fundamental teachings of the Scriptures demands that in contending earnestly for the faith, followers of Christ should assert that only in this way, namely, through the seed of Abraham, will God display his favor and shower his blessings upon a sin-cursed and dying world. God does love all groups of sincerely religious people, and there is no doubt but that he appreciates their devoted efforts to worship him. Yet, he has his own plan for man’s salvation, in harmony with which he is working out his kind designs, and he will not change his all-wise plan to accommodate the many conflicting religious opinions of a fallen race.

TWO SALVATIONS

Long and heated have been the arguments as to whether the redeemed of God are to live on the earth

or be transferred to a heavenly abode. In reality, both a heavenly and an earthly reward for believers are promised in the Word of God. To the rich young nobleman whom Jesus invited to become his follower, the Master said, "Thou shalt have treasure in heaven." (Mark 10:21) In Hebrews 3:1 the apostle writes to the church: "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." To members of the body of Christ, the seed of Abraham, Paul writes, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."—Col. 3:1

To the redeemed and fully tested world of mankind at the close of the thousand-year judgment day, the invitation will be extended, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25:34) We need only to recall the opening chapters of Genesis to know that the kingdom prepared for man "from the foundation of the world" was an earthly kingdom, including a home upon the earth under perfect conditions of Edenic happiness. There was nothing heavenly about that provision, and when those conditions are restored to mankind, they will be blessings to be enjoyed here in an earthly paradise restored worldwide.

In Acts 3:20-23, Peter sets forth the divine purpose pertaining to the blessing of the world following the second coming of Christ, describing it as "times of restitution of all things." Restitution denotes restoration, not exaltation or change to a higher nature. In Revelation 21:3, where earthly kingdom blessings for mankind are described, we are told

that “the tabernacle of God is with men,” that is, with human beings.

It seems clear, therefore, that a heavenly reward and joint heirship with Christ as kings in his kingdom, is God’s provision for Jesus’ footstep followers during the present age. It is equally clear that the blessings to come to the remainder of mankind through the administration of Christ’s kingdom will be on earth. It will be a restoration of that which was lost because of sin, this being possible because Jesus, by his own death, provided a cancellation for the original penalty placed upon Father Adam.—Rom. 5:12,18,19; I Cor. 15:21-23,45-48

Surely this wondrous harmony of God’s plan, revealing such a glorious hope for the church, and a blessed opportunity of earthly salvation for the entire human family, is something for which it is truly worthwhile to contend. By contending for such a faith, we exalt the glory of God in our own hearts, and sound forth his praises upon the ears of others. No wonder the apostle said “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.”—Rom. 1:16

THE WORK OF THIS AGE

The general conception of many is that the present age marks the end of divine mercy toward the human family, but this is a great error. This age is distinctively one of suffering and sacrifice for others—the selection of only a “little flock.” (Luke 12:32) It began with the ransom price provided by the death of Jesus. It has continued with the experiences of sacrifice, suffering and service of his footstep followers, who are “planted together in the likeness of his death,” and who share the “fellowship of his

sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”
—Rom. 6:5; Phil. 3:10

The purpose of the present Gospel Age is not to convert all of mankind, but to gather out “a people for his name.” The coming Messianic Age, now nigh at hand, we believe, will be the time when earthly salvation is offered to all mankind, “the residue of men.” (Acts 15:14-18) It will be then that the entire human race will have the opportunity to reap the benefits of Christ’s redemptive sacrifice. Together, Christ and his church will constitute a sympathetic “royal priesthood” in assisting mankind back to perfection in their “day of visitation.”—I Pet. 2:9,12

An understanding of God’s covenants in operation during these two ages is another important part of the faith once delivered to the saints. The Apostle Paul, in his allegorical treatment of this subject recorded in Galatians 4:21-31, reminds us that as part of Abraham’s “seed,” as noted earlier, the church during the present Gospel Age is developed under the Sarah feature of the Abrahamic Covenant, and identifies these as “children of promise,” just as Isaac was. The apostle further links this covenant to a heavenly hope, “that which is above,” which is “the mother of us all.”

Regarding the Messianic Age, the church, then glorified, will share with Christ in his role as “mediator of the new covenant.” (Heb. 12:24) This “New Covenant” will be made first with the “house of Israel” and with the “house of Judah.” Gradually, it will extend to all people, as mankind sees the manifold blessings and favors which come to those who bring themselves under the righteous influences and the just and loving terms of that covenant.

(Jer. 31:27-34; 32:36-42; Rom. 11:26,27,32,33) The wonderful promises pertaining to the New Covenant are of an earthly nature. As a result of its work in the hearts and minds of mankind during the Messianic Age, the fulfillment of the promise will come—that all the families of the earth will be blessed.—Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Acts 3:25

There are important time features also in the plan of God to which we should give heed. Christ came at his First Advent at the divinely appointed time. His Second Advent is also at the “due time” set by the Heavenly Father. Though we will not detail them here, the Scriptures include many prophetic statements which outline the manner, purpose, and signs to look for with regard to our Lord’s return and invisible presence. We believe that the fulfillment of many of these prophecies indicates that we are indeed now living during the time of Christ’s second presence, during the end, or Harvest, of the Gospel Age. We rejoice at this aspect of the faith which has been delivered to the Lord’s saints. Here again, however, we must be sure that our joy is not of a selfish or contentious kind, but founded only upon humility, kindness and love.

As Christians, we can be resolute in our belief without being unkind. We can contend earnestly for our faith without sitting in judgment of others. Above all, it is important that we be firm in our beliefs, not because we may be able to convince others, but because a full assurance of faith adds to our own strength of character. If we maintain our standing before the Lord, by faithfully obeying the instructions of his Word, our life’s work as Christians will be crowned with glory.—Rom. 2:7; Rev. 2:10 ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

G. Balko

Online Broadcast of Convention
New York, NY September 5,6

M. Balko

Online Broadcast of Convention
Seattle, WA September 5-7

O. B. Elbert

Online Broadcast of Convention
Seattle, WA September 5-7

L. Griehs

Online Broadcast of Convention
Seattle, WA September 5-7
Online Broadcast of Convention
Columbus, IN 19,20

M. Kerry

Online Broadcast of Convention
Columbus, IN September
19,20

E. Kuenzli

Huntsville, AL
September 11-13
Online Broadcast of Convention
Grand Rapids, MI
September 25-27

B. Montague

Online Broadcast of Convention
West Suburban, IL
September 5,6

H. Montague

Online Broadcast of Convention
Seattle, WA September 5-7

D. Rice

Huntsville, AL
September 11-13

T. Ruggirello

Online Broadcast of Convention
New York, NY September 5,6

M. Shilling

Online Broadcast of Convention
New York, NY September 5,6

J. Trzeciak

Online Broadcast of Convention
Seattle, WA September 5-7

J. Wesol

Online Broadcast of Convention
Seattle, WA September 5-7

You must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

—I Peter 3:15,16, New Living Translation

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 coming months will not be held in-person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these, however, will have an online broadcast alternative. Listed below are the details which the Dawn has been made aware of concerning upcoming conventions. Please contact the brethren shown in the listings to find out the status of a convention, and also how you can attend an online broadcast if one is planned.

NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 5,6—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact G. Passios. Email: gpassios11@verizon.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 5-7—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—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

COLUMBUS, INDIANA HARVEST CONVENTION, September 19,20—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Ledwinka. Phone: (812) 546-5311 or Email: eledwinka@outlook.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 25-27—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY Contact T. Malinowski. Phone: (616) 304-7691 or Email: Malinowski.TJM@gmail.com

COLORADO CONVENTION, October 2-4—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact M. Homolka.
Phone: (307) 267-5853

AGAWAM CONVENTION, October 11—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact F. Sansom.
Phone: (860) 861-6881 or Email: elshaddai144k@icloud.com

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 24,25—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact C. Goodman.
Phone: (407) 695-6815 or Email: clmgoodman@gmail.com

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

*Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel to pray
My prayer shall be for others.*

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

SEPTEMBER 3—“I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”—Hosea 6:6 (Z. '03-220 Hymn 177)

SEPTEMBER 10—“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”—Ephesians 4:29 (Z. '99-70 Hymn 136)

SEPTEMBER 17—“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”—Colossians 1:27 (Z. '03-375 Hymn 238)

SEPTEMBER 24—“I keep by body under, and bring it into subjection, lest ... I myself should be a castaway.”—I Corinthians 9:27 (Z. '03-425 Hymn 200)