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Announcing Good News

“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

—*Romans 10:15*

THE PHRASES IN OUR

opening verse, “preach the gospel” and “bring glad tidings,” are both translated from a Greek word which means to “announce good news.” Our text further identifies two items of this good news to be announced—“peace” and “good things.” Peace, as all can no doubt appreciate, brings to mind such thoughts as harmony, quietness and rest, whether these be of an inward nature or outwardly expressed. “Good things,” a very general term, is described by *Thayer’s Greek Definitions* as denoting that which is pleasant, agreeable, joyful, upright and honorable.

Of all the good news that has ever been reported in this troubled world, the most outstanding is that which was heralded by the angels at the birth of Jesus. To the shepherds who were tending their flocks that memorable night, there came the joyous proclamation, “Fear not, for behold, I bring

you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10, *English Standard Version*) This message of the angel has been heralded far and wide throughout the earth for nearly twenty centuries. Although many have been comforted by it, yet from the standpoint of practical reality there are many in the world today who likely question whether it was a true report.

In general, the questioning of good news seems to happen all too frequently. First, it is rare to see headlines which are positive. Indeed, there are many events taking place in the world that point out the myriad troubles, problems and struggles that mankind faces. These make the headlines, whether via television, newspaper, or the seemingly endless electronic sources for news, including social media. Second, when the rare item of good news does make the headlines, it is most often tainted with a “spin” of negativity in one form or another.

One recent example of this is the “good news” of the vaccine for the COVID-19 virus which has recently started to be administered. By all accounts, this is perhaps the best news any among mankind has seen or heard in the past year. Yet, the headlines often raise questions, whether justified or not, concerning such things as: the effectiveness of the vaccine; its potential side effects; and various perceived inequities in its distribution and administration. Thus, the people in general, as so often happens in today’s world, are confused and divided in their thinking on what might otherwise be considered truly good news.

TRUSTWORTHY NEWS

For those who put their faith and trust in the inspired Scriptures, there need not be any negativity, nor questioning, attached to the good news in its pages. God is the author of his Holy Word, and he tells us himself: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."—Isa. 55:11

The good news of the birth of Jesus states that he was to be a Savior, who would save the people from their sins and the result of their sins. The Scriptures also explain that sin entered the world through "one man," Adam. Death for Adam, as well as for all his progeny, followed in its wake. (Rom. 5:12) When we are told, therefore, that the object of Jesus' coming was to save the people from their sins, we must understand the matter in harmony with the record of the origin of sin and the havoc of suffering and death it has wrought in the earth all down through the ages.

Furthermore, to get a clear picture of what salvation from sin and death implies, we must accept the fact of death. The term death as used in the Scriptures describes what we see taking place all around us day by day; that is, the breaking down of health and final demise of the human organism to the point where life no longer exists in it. Accompanying this experience of death there is mental and physical suffering, the disruption of families and all the other distressing circumstances that have plagued the human race throughout the ages.

To save the people from this would mean the destruction of all disease and its related suffering. It would also mean continued health and life for those who accepted the terms of salvation. Actual death, as well as the dying process, would be destroyed. With disease and death removed from the earth, there would no longer be a need for doctors, nurses, hospitals, druggists, nursing and rehabilitation facilities, and undertakers. Everything that is associated directly or remotely with sickness and death will be discarded.

The destruction of sin, sickness and death is the divine intent on behalf of mankind, and it is referred to in God's promises as the salvation which he has provided through Jesus, the Savior. One of the many passages of Scripture which clearly shows this is found in these words of the Prophet Isaiah: "The LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us. ... And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."—Isa. 33:22,24

PARADISE LOST

The historical accounts of the Bible lay a foundation for a proper understanding of what is implied in salvation for the human race. These records tell us of the preparation of the Garden of Eden, and of the perfect pair, Adam and Eve, being put in that Garden with the understanding that it was to be their home, to enjoy as long as they continued to obey their Creator's law. Additionally, they were commanded to multiply until the earth was filled, and have dominion over it. In other words, as their

family increased, and their needs required it, they were to extend the borders of the garden until it embraced the entire earth. What a loving and glorious provision was thus made for these human creatures!—Gen. 1:26-30; 2:8,9,15

However, to attain all these blessings, they were expected to obey the Creator's law. They chose to disobey; and, as had been clearly stated to them in advance, they came under condemnation to death and were driven out of the garden into the unfinished earth to die. Thus they lost their home, and being deprived of the life-sustaining provisions of Eden, the seeds of death began to work. In due course, they went down into the tomb. (Gen. 3:1-24) Their children, born of imperfect parents, also shared the condemnation, and thus the entire race of mankind has been a dying world. Paradise was truly lost, but not forever.

PARADISE TO BE RESTORED

The term salvation becomes easier to understand when we keep in mind that it is descriptive of the restoration of the human family to that which was lost through the disobedience of our first parents in Eden. (Luke 19:10) They did not lose a home in heaven, because they had never had a home in heaven, and were not promised one. They were created human beings, adapted to live on the earth. They were provided with a beautiful earthly home, "eastward in Eden." It was only when sin entered that sickness and death became a part of human experience, and it has become such a deep-rooted, and long-lasting part that it is now often accepted as necessary and inescapable.

However, here is where the Scriptures bid us pause to seek guidance and comfort from its pages. In those pages we learn that in sending Jesus into the world to save the people from their sins it was for the very purpose of undoing the results of that tragedy in Eden. Furthermore, it was to restore humanity to the status they would have enjoyed as ever-living, perfect human beings, had sin not temporarily interfered.

If, therefore, we can visualize the earth filled with restored humanity worshiping God in the beauty of holiness; if we can picture mankind enjoying vibrant, youthful health, with not an ache nor a pain, not even the fear of such things; and if we can be assured that this condition of earth's society and people will continue forever—then we are beginning to grasp the significance of the good news of “peace” and “good things” of which our opening text speaks.

JESUS—A CORRESPONDING PRICE

Jesus saves the people from their sins by redeeming them, and the Heavenly Father sent him into the world for this purpose. Centuries earlier, God had promised he would do this, saying, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.”—Hos. 13:14

The word “ransom” in the New Testament Greek means “corresponding price.” When Jesus was made flesh he was the exact counterpart of Adam before he sinned, and could give himself in death as a corresponding price. (John 1:14; Gal. 4:4) Jesus paid the penalty for sin, which was death, by pouring out his perfect humanity unto death. (Isa. 53:12) The

Apostle Paul explains that as sin and death entered into the world through one man, Adam, so justification, freedom from sin, and life come also through one man, Jesus.—Rom. 5:12,18,19

HEAVENLY PROMISES

Jesus died as man's Redeemer nearly twenty centuries ago, and still people are infected by disease, undergoing suffering and eventually death. Those who accept Christ, and endeavor to please him, likewise die. Because believers in Christ become sick and die, even as the rest of mankind, to many it seems reasonable to believe that it was not the divine purpose to destroy what we call death, but merely to provide a state of bliss for believers after death. This alleged state of happiness is called heaven, and the general idea is that those who accept Jesus in this life go to heaven when they die, death being merely a momentary change from one state to the other.

It is true that the Scriptures do speak of a heavenly reward for those who accept Christ during this age, and who faithfully walk in his footsteps of self-sacrifice. However, the promises of this special reward apply only to the limited few who are willing to fully dedicate their lives in the divine service. This "little flock" class is promised joint-heirship with Jesus in the future kingdom which is to bless all the families of the earth upon the earth.—Luke 12:32; Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11,12

Jesus said to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2,3) This special place is not being

prepared for the whole world of mankind, nor is such a high reward offered to the people in general. It is only for those of the “little flock” who are willing to suffer and die with Jesus—their death being a sacrificial one.

It is this class that is referred to in the Scriptures as the church of Christ. Those who constitute the church class are, in the resurrection, to be made like Christ, their Head. Like him, they will be raised as divine beings, in the “express image” of the Father. (Heb. 1:3) Christ returns to receive them unto himself, and their union with the Master is likened in Revelation 19:7 to a marriage, Jesus being referred to as the slain “Lamb,” and the church as his “wife.”

LIFE ON THE EARTH

When the marriage of the Lamb and his heavenly bride takes place, then will go forth the message of good news prophesied in Revelation 22:17. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. ... And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” When the proclamation goes out to come and “take the water of life,” it will not be an invitation to join the heavenly hosts, but rather a call to life upon the earth. Earlier in this chapter, the symbolism given is that of a garden through which there flows a mighty river, and we are told that on either side of this river there are trees of life. (vss. 1,2) It is a reminder of the Garden of Eden, hearkening back to its blessings that were forfeited because of sin.

The church of Christ, then united with him as his bride, will share in the dispensing of these

blessings of life. Although Jesus went away to prepare a place for the church, humanity in general had a place prepared for them from the foundation of the world. This home was lost, but it is to be restored during God's coming kingdom, when Christ and the church will reign over the earth.—Matt. 6:10; Rev. 5:10; 20:6

RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS

This earthly kingdom is described by the Apostle Peter as the “times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:20,21) The word “restitution” signifies restoration, and it is the restoration of all that was lost in Eden on account of sin that is to be accomplished in this kingdom arrangement. Thus, the fulfillment of God's promises given through his holy prophets of the Old Testament is what will also make good the announcement of the angels on the night Jesus was born.

Now we can see why the blessings of life did not become immediately available when Jesus died as man's Redeemer. It was because of the time set aside in God's plan for the selection and development of those who would share with Jesus in the work of restoring the world. Meanwhile the world has had to wait. However, the waiting has not been to the detriment of any, for, as the angels said that the good news was to be unto “all people,” so all are yet to have the blessings of salvation and life made available for them.

“All people” includes all who have died, who are to be awakened from the sleep of death to receive the promised blessings. The Apostle Paul spoke of

the time when “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” (Acts 24:15) How utterly futile would be any plan for the blessing of the world of mankind that did not provide for the raising of the dead! Sin, sickness and death have been the agencies that have marred the happiness of mankind, and those who have lost loved ones could never be fully happy unless they were restored to life.

JESUS, THE SAVIOR

God, through the Prophet Isaiah, said, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” (Isa. 45:22) In the New Testament we are shown that all such promises are to be fulfilled through Jesus, whom the angels announced as the Savior. Paul declares that when Jesus was raised from the dead he was highly exalted and given a “name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ... And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:9-11

The apostle also connects God’s oath-bound promise made to Abraham to bless all nations with the coming and work of Jesus as the Christ and Savior. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” (Gal. 3:16) Here, Christ is clearly identified as the “seed,” promised so long before to Abraham, who would bring to pass the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:18

Later, in the same third chapter of Galatians, Paul reveals that the church of Christ will share with

him in the work of blessing mankind, being counted as part of the “seed” class. He states to the footstep followers of the Master, “Ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s”—that is, if you belong to him—“then are ye Abrahams’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:28,29) How wonderfully all the promises of both the Old and New Testament thus complement each other and combine in their testimony to assure us of the verity of the good news heralded by the angel!

EARTH FORMED TO BE INHABITED

In Isaiah 45, where we noted earlier God’s oath to save the people, we also are assured that his purpose in creating the earth had not changed. We read: “Thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.”—Isa. 45:18

God first revealed his purpose to have the earth inhabited by man when he commanded Adam and Eve to “multiply and fill the earth.” (Gen. 1:28, *ESV*) The fact that death temporarily blighted the human family does not mean that it will be permitted to permanently interfere with the divine purpose. Through God’s program of redemption centered in Christ, all kindreds of the earth will be able to look unto him and be saved; that is, have the opportunity to be restored to all that was lost in Eden.

CONSIDERING THE POOR

In a prophecy concerning God’s coming kingdom under Christ, David writes, “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time

of trouble. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth.” (Ps. 41:1,2) In another psalm, Christ, the new king of earth, is declared to be one who will consider the poor, and who will then bless the needy and the helpless ones of earth. (Ps. 72:2,4,12,13) As true belief in Jesus even now implies the acceptance of his standard and practice, even so will it be in the next age when his kingdom is in operation.

We can see why it is said by the psalmist that those who consider the poor are the ones whom the Lord will then “keep ... alive” upon the earth. It means that such have truly accepted Jesus, and are endeavoring to conform their lives to his righteous laws, which are centered in love. The coming kingdom will establish laws which will help the poor and needy, and bring blessings to all. All those who come into line with these arrangements will, from the heart, find themselves delighting in the spirit of love, sympathy and helpfulness which will then be prevailing. All such will continue to live, not by being taken to heaven, but by being restored to health and eternal life here upon the earth.

DELIVERED IN THE TIME OF TROUBLE

It is noteworthy that the promise of Psalm 41:1,2, associates the kingdom blessings of life upon the earth with the “time of trouble.” This time of trouble may be the same as mentioned by the Prophet Daniel and quoted by Jesus—that great time of trouble with which this present age is now ending. There is a similar promise to this which reads, “Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger.”—Zeph. 2:3

We are surely now living in a great time of trouble, “such as never was since there was a nation,” “nor ever shall be.” (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21) It is the time described in many of the prophecies as the day of God’s vengeance upon the unrighteous governments and institutions of earth. (Isa. 34:8; Jer. 46:10) Its purpose is the overthrow of Satan’s empire of selfishness, sin and death, in order that, in its place, there may be established the Messianic kingdom of righteousness. It is a time of distress now, with little “good news” in the earth, but the future will be glorious, for it means that the time of salvation and blessing for the world is near. The Prophet Isaiah refers to this day of God’s vengeance, and its outcome saying, “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.”—Isa. 35:3,4

God’s salvation for the people will come following the day of vengeance with which this present age comes to an end. Hence, when God caused the angel to announce the birth of Jesus with the proclamation that he was to be a Savior, it was with the knowledge that the salvation thus provided would not be available for the world in general until after the overthrow of Satan’s empire at this end of the age. Thus seen, God’s plan has not been a failure, but, is working out exactly as he designed that it should.

It is truly “good news” to realize that God has full control of earth’s present situation, and is soon to display his mighty power through the authority of Christ and his bride, the church. Thus will be brought

in a joyous tomorrow, when gladness will come to stay, because the causes of sadness will be destroyed. To this the prophet agrees, saying: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. ... And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:5,6,10 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

FEBRUARY 4—“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”—Revelation 18:4 (Z. '00-3 Hymn 177)

FEBRUARY 11—“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”—Matthew 5:11,12 (Z. '94-368 Hymn 261)

FEBRUARY 18—“The LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”—Deuteronomy 13:3 (Z. '98-40 Hymn 114)

FEBRUARY 25—“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”—Matthew 4:4 (Z. '02-246, 248 Hymn 186)

The Samaritans Believe

Key Verse: “*Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that I ever did.*”
—John 4:39

Selected Scripture:
John 4:25-42

heritage who believed Mount Gerizim was the appropriate location to worship God.—Deut. 27:11,12; Ezra 4:4-24; John 4:1-7,19,20

During his earthly ministry, after returning from the Passover in Jerusalem, Jesus departed for Galilee. Traveling through Samaria, he tarried at Jacob’s well to rest from his journey. (John 2:23; 4:1-6) The subsequent account reads: “There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knewest the

WHEN THE CAPTIVITY OF

the inhabitants of Judah who were exiled to Babylon for seventy years had ended, Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a decree releasing them from bondage in order to participate in the rebuilding of their Temple in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:1-4) After a number of Jews returned to their homeland for this purpose, they encountered opposition from the Samaritans, a group of people of mixed

gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”—vss. 7-10

Following a lengthy exchange, Jesus explained to the woman that he could provide the water of life, and those who partook would never thirst again. Additionally, our Lord disclosed to her certain details about her personal life which could only be possible if he were sent from God. Upon perceiving that he was a prophet, the woman asked where the proper worship of God should take place. Jesus answered that the time would soon come that the true worship of God would not be in a physical place, such as either Mount Gerizim or even Jerusalem.—vss. 11-21

The Lord further disclosed to the Samaritan woman this important truth: “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” Thus was manifest the fact that the Heavenly Father would no longer reveal himself through the formality of Judaism, nor through the Samaritan’s religion. Rather, he would come through the power of God’s Holy Spirit to those with sincere hearts who diligently seek him. When the woman was moved to acknowledge her belief that when the Messiah came, he would teach all these things, the Master revealed himself, saying, “I that speak unto thee am he.”—vss. 23-26

Our Key Verse reveals that many of the Samaritans in that area believed on Jesus as a result of his encounter with the woman and his teachings to the people as he passed through. Although our Lord’s earthly ministry ended nearly two thousand years ago, he left as a commission for his true followers to proclaim the good news of God’s coming kingdom to all who may have a hearing ear. If we are faithful in exercising this privilege, we may entertain the hope of becoming a part of the spiritual seed of Abraham that will help to bless all mankind when earth’s weary night of sin is ended.—Ps. 30:5; Gal. 3:27-29■

Mary Magdalene

Key Verses: *“It came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils.”*
—*Luke 8:1,2*

Selected Scriptures:
Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40; John 20:11-18

out seven devils from within her.

Two other women, Joanna and Susanna, who are mentioned in Luke 8:3, and “many others,” specially ministered unto our Lord’s temporal support. Although women are not mentioned in the New Testament nearly as

THE MAJOR PURPOSE OF

Christ’s First Advent was fulfilled when Jesus gave his life as a ransom or corresponding price for Adam, whose disobedience in Eden resulted in his being condemned to death along with his entire human family. (Rom. 5:12) In view of his faithful sacrifice culminating at Calvary, Jesus was resurrected and highly exalted to the divine nature. Subsequently, devoted footstep followers of the Master have been invited to reign with him during the coming thousand-year day of judgment.—Acts 17:31; Rev. 20:4,6

Our Key Verses remind us that the focus of Christ’s earthly ministry was to proclaim the glad tidings of God’s coming kingdom. We are also introduced to Mary Magdalene, who became a loyal follower of the Lord after he cast

frequently or prominently as men, male and female distinctions do not hinder any from becoming a consecrated follower of Christ and being a part of his body. “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:27-29

After Jesus’ crucifixion, Mary Magdalene arrived at his tomb before daybreak following the Sabbath. She came with spices to embalm the Lord’s body, but discovered that the tomb had been opened. She ran to tell Peter and another disciple with him that Jesus’ body was not there. When Mary returned and stood at the door of the tomb weeping, she saw a man she thought was the gardener. She did not recognize the resurrected spirit being who had materialized until he spoke and called her by name. When she heard the voice of her Master, Mary realized she was seeing Jesus. She wanted to cling him, but he told her instead to inform his brethren of having seen him. He would be with them for a while yet before he ascended to his Father.—John 20:1-18

The stirring narrative of Mary Magdalene reminds us of the great privilege she had in being the first person to speak to Jesus after his resurrection. As consecrated followers of the Master we not only can echo Paul’s assertion that Christ is risen, and became the first fruits of them that slept, but we can also look forward with anticipation to our own resurrection from the tomb as a result of his Second Advent. (I Cor. 15:20; I Thess. 4:16,17; I Pet. 5:4) Jesus’ resurrection is the precursor of the righteous government to be established on earth as a result of his glorious reign, in which we shall share if we are faithful unto death. (Rev. 2:10; 3:21; 20:6) What a marvelous prospect this is for us and all the families of the earth! ■

Aquila and Priscilla

Key Verses: *“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.”*
—Romans 16:3,4

Selected Scriptures:
Acts 18:1-3,18-21, 24-26; Romans 16:3,4

depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.”
—Acts 18:1-3

Later, Aquila and Priscilla traveled to Ephesus and abode there for a time. We can gain insights as to their spiritual knowledge and devotion by reading about Apollos of Alexandria, Egypt, who had a sound understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures. On one occasion when Aquila and Priscilla visited the synagogue in Ephesus seeking opportunities to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, they came into contact with Apollos, who

DURING HIS SECOND MISSIONARY journey, following his presentation at Mars Hill in the city of Athens, Paul departed for Corinth. There he became associated with Aquila and Priscilla who, as fellow tentmakers, subsequently became supportive of his ministry.

The account states: “After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to

testified concerning the Master.—vss. 18,19,24

When they discovered that Apollos knew only of the “baptism of John,” they invited him to their home and instructed him concerning Christian baptism, and that water immersion was only a symbol of the burial of one’s will into Christ. Aquila and Priscilla’s devotion towards extending the ministry in the Early Church should be inspiring to us, because when Apollos wanted to travel and further share the message of salvation in another location, they informed him regarding the brethren in Corinth and also wrote to the church in that city to welcome him upon his arrival.—vss. 25-28

Our Key Verses describe Paul’s appreciation of the brethren who labored faithfully with him in the promulgation of the Gospel. We especially note that from the divine standpoint, all followers of Christ are encouraged to utilize their talents in serving God whether male or female, since both Priscilla and Aquila received Paul’s written commendation in his epistles.

It continues to be just a “little flock” that will be receptive to the message regarding God’s kingdom as being the only solution to the myriad problems affecting the entire human family. Nevertheless, each of us should be energized in witnessing to the Truth to anyone who may have a hearing ear, despite the fact that the promises of a righteous government and the establishment of lasting peace on earth may seem fanciful to the majority of those we encounter.

A final reference to the devoted service of Aquila and Priscilla was penned by Paul when he sent them greetings shortly before he was scheduled to be executed. (II Tim. 4:19) May we emulate this same spirit which his example prompted in all who would heed his counsel. “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward.”—I Cor. 9:16,17 ■

The Service of Lydia

Key Verses:
“A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us.”
—Acts 16:14,15

Selected Scripture:
Acts 16:11-15,40

THE AMAZING TRANSFORMATION of the Apostle Paul following his conversion on the road to Damascus attested to his courage and zeal in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. Evident also was his patient endurance of persecution, deep insight into God’s plans for all, concern for the spiritual growth of the brethren, and an unflagging determination to be faithful to the Master’s cause. It is for these reasons and more that he could rightfully, but with humility, commend himself when he exhorted, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”—I Cor. 11:1

Ever alert to indications of God’s will for his life, Paul was desirous of responding promptly. Recalling one such notable occasion, we quote: “A vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into

Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.”—Acts 16:9,10

After arriving in Philippi—one of the chief cities of Macedonia—with Silas and other brethren, Paul was introduced to Lydia, a seller of purple dye and evidently a proselyte to the Jewish faith. She, along with other devout women, had gathered for prayer at a riverside on the Sabbath day. (vss. 12,13) As noted in our Key Verses, Lydia’s heart was opened to Paul’s message concerning Christ. She and her family received water baptism and invited the apostle and his companions to lodge at her home.

Subsequently, Paul witnessed to others in Philippi despite facing fierce opposition from those who opposed his ministry, resulting in his being imprisoned and beaten along with Silas. Nevertheless, at midnight, they rejoiced with prayers and praises to the Heavenly Father, after which a great earthquake occurred, and they along with the other prisoners were set free from their bonds. The prison keeper, upon waking, assumed everyone had fled and was prepared to kill himself. However, Paul called out to assure him that he should not harm himself because none of them had escaped. Ultimately, after ministering unto Paul and Silas’ needs, the jailor and his family were baptized.—vss. 16-34

Following this, Paul and Silas returned to Lydia’s home to greet the brethren before continuing their missionary journey. Their visit to Philippi was surely a great source of encouragement to these devoted servants of God in that both Lydia and the prison guard, as well as their families, had fully accepted Christ and commenced their sojourn along the narrow way.—vs. 40

Although Lydia originally was a Gentile who converted to the Jewish faith, and eventually became a devoted Christian, her experience confirms that God is “no respecter of persons,” but he will accept as prospective members of Christ’s bride all those who reverence him.—Acts 10:34,35■

Heirs and Joint-heirs

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”
—Romans 8:16,17

ONE OF THE IMPORTANT features of the Creator’s plan for restoring the fallen race to life, and to reconciliation with himself, is that a limited number of mankind are invited to participate with Jesus, the Redeemer and Savior, on a partnership basis, sharing his glory and participating in the great work of extending blessings of life to all mankind. In our text these are referred to as “children of

God,” who with Christ receive a special heavenly inheritance. In verse 22 we read that “all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” (*New Living Translation*) We are also told in the same context that the creation “waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” (vs. 19) It will be through the manifestation of these children of God that the promised blessings

of life and happiness will reach the remainder of the “groaning” creation.

Although many of the Old Testament promises of God pertaining to the future deliverance of the human race from sin and death do not make mention that the great Deliverer and Messiah would have others associated with him in this work, some do reveal this fact. The prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 53, is one of these instances. It is in this prophecy that the suffering and death of Jesus are foretold, with the explanation that his soul would be made an “offering for sin.” (vs. 10) Then Jesus’ high reward is described by God through the prophet. He says, “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great.” (vs. 12) Here the Creator is referring to himself as the “great,” and saying that Jesus would be exalted to share his greatness.

The New Testament confirms that this promise was fulfilled. Paul speaks of the “exceeding greatness” of God’s power, “which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 1:19,20) In Hebrews 12:2 we read that Jesus is now “set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Peter also writes concerning Christ, saying that he is “gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”—I Pet. 3:22

Truly, Jesus was given a portion with the “great” God of the universe. In his Father’s promise of this we find this further statement, “He shall divide the spoil with the strong.” (Isa. 53:12) The word “spoil” suggests the reward of a victorious struggle or battle. The Apostle Paul in writing to Timothy

urges him to “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (II Tim. 2:3) Using a similar figure of speech, Paul again writes, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”—Eph. 6:10,11

In his letter to the church at Corinth, the apostle explains that the “weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God,” enabling the Christian to bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (II Cor. 10:4,5) It is these who are “strong in the Lord,” and who successfully battle against the selfish spirit of the world, against their own fallen flesh, and against the efforts of the devil to lure them away from obedience to the Lord, with whom the highly exalted Jesus will “divide the spoil.”

Jesus said to his disciples, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) Because he was an overcomer, he received the reward of an overcomer, and in Revelation 3:21, the resurrected Lord says, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” In making this promise to his followers, Jesus perhaps had in mind his Father’s promise to give him a “portion with the great,” and “divide the spoil” with the strong. The Father had fulfilled his promise to him, and he was now highly exalted to his right hand. Now the glorified Jesus would share his reward with other overcomers, those who are “strong” because of trusting in the power of God to help them overcome.

ON MOUNT ZION

As the Redeemer of the world, Jesus was led as a “lamb to the slaughter.” (Isa. 53:7) He is the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) This title remained with Jesus after his exaltation to heavenly glory, and is used with respect to him in Revelation 14:1, which reads, “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.” Mount Zion in Jerusalem was the seat of governmental authority in ancient Israel and is used in the prophecies of the Bible to symbolize the kingdom of Christ, that promised “government” which will be “upon his shoulder.” (Isa. 9:6) Thus we learn that in this kingdom government, symbolically pictured by mount Zion, there will be a hundred and forty-four thousand associated with the “Lamb.”

These are the strong with whom Christ Jesus divides the spoil of victory. They are said to have “his Father’s name written in their foreheads.” This identifies them as members of the divine family, the children of God of our opening text, who are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” They are shown with the Lamb because they will be associated with him in the kingdom work of extending salvation to the world. In the last verse of the prophecy of Obadiah we read, “Saviours shall come up on mount Zion, ... and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.” Jesus is, of course, the Savior of the world, but in this prophecy those with whom he shares his reward of exaltation and glory are also said to be “saviors,” because they participate in the kingdom work of restoring the dead world to life.

JEWES AND GENTILES

In the Bible, a city is sometimes used to symbolize a government. We are told that Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” (Heb. 11:10) So far as the record shows, God did not use the word “city” in his promises to Abraham. All he promised him was that he would make of him a great nation, and that his seed would bless all the families of the earth. (Gen. 12:2,3; 22:18) Evidently Abraham took these promises to mean that one of his descendants, a seed, would become the head of a government under the jurisdiction of which all the nations of the earth would receive a blessing.

When God first spoke to Abraham he lived in Ur of the Chaldees. (Gen. 11:28-31) There he said to him, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.” (Gen. 12:1,2) Here God told Abraham that he and his seed were to become the heads of a new nation. Abraham believed this, and left his home in Ur, went to the land God had promised to him, and dwelt in tents the rest of his life, waiting for the building of that “city” which he visualized in the promise God made to him.

Abraham died in faith without receiving the fulfillment of these promises, but they became the basis of a hope that continued with his descendants from generation to generation. When the Hebrew people left Egypt under the leadership of Moses, God entered into a covenant with them, and promised that if they were faithful to its terms, he would make of them

a “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” (Exod. 19:5,6) Here, the thought of a kingdom, or government, is associated with the natural descendants of Abraham, his seed according to the flesh.

To actually inherit this kingdom, it was required of the Israelites that they be faithful to the covenant into which they had entered with the Lord. However, they were not faithful except for short periods of time. Nevertheless, God continued to send his prophets to them as reminders of their covenant obligations, and to reiterate the promises of a coming Messiah, in association with whom their nation would rule the world. The final test of their worthiness of this exalted position was their opportunity to accept the Messiah when he did come.

As we know, however, almost all in the nation of Israel did not accept their Messiah. Under the leadership of their religious rulers, they cried out against him and demanded that he be put to death. Near the close of his ministry, when it became apparent that the nation would reject him, Jesus said, “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof,” that is, the fruits of loving devotion and obedience to God. (Matt. 21:43) Here again the “kingdom” is associated with a “nation.” Israel could have been that kingdom nation, but now, as Jesus said, that high honor was to be taken from them and given to another nation.

The Apostle Peter tells us what “nation” it is to which the kingdom is given. Writing to the footstep followers of the Master, the children of God, he says, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, ... Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God.” (I Pet. 2:9,10)

Those who in "time past" were not the people of God were evidently Gentile converts. Now they were his people, and part of that "holy nation" to which the kingdom would be given.

Actually, this new nation is made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Although Israel as a nation rejected the Messiah, there were individual Israelites who enthusiastically accepted him and became his disciples. In John 1:11,12 we read concerning these, that Jesus came especially to his own fellow Israelites, but as a whole they "received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." These, then, are the first of the new nation to whom the kingdom would be given, and the first also of the "children" who are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

There were not enough believing Israelites, however, to make up the foreordained number of these children of God who were to reign with Christ, so the kingdom invitation was extended to the Gentiles. Thus, Gentiles who accepted the invitation became the people of God together with the believing Israelites. Together, these become "one" in Christ Jesus, and together with him constitute the faith "seed" of Abraham through which all the families of the earth are to be blessed. The Apostle Paul explains the arrangement of how God looks upon these children whom he has made his heirs. He says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. 3:28,29

THE HOPE OF GLORY

God's arrangement that members of the fallen and dying race would be given an opportunity of being associated with the Messiah as rulers in his kingdom, and sharing his glory, was kept secret until it was brought to light by Jesus and the apostles. Paul refers to it as the "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."—Col. 1:26,27

To Christians in Rome, Paul wrote that by Christ Jesus "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:2) The meaning of the expression, "glory of God," is beyond the ability of our finite minds to comprehend. However, various promises of the Bible give us a glimpse of what it implies. As we have seen, when Jesus was raised from the dead, he was highly exalted to the divine nature, and to the right hand of God. The Apostle John wrote, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (I John 3:2) John realized the limitations of the human mind in understanding matters pertaining to the spirit world. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," he concedes, but we know that "we shall be like him," our glorified Lord and Master.

Indeed, the faithful sons of God will be like Christ, to whom was given "all power ... in heaven and in earth;" who was made a "quickening spirit" that he might give life to the dead world of mankind;

and who is now the “express image” of his Father, having partaken of his glory. (Matt. 28:18; I Cor. 15:45; Heb. 1:3) These are some of the aspects of the “glory of God” to which his children are heirs. They have to do with the glory of the divine nature, and Peter writes that unto us have been given “exceeding great and precious promises” that by these we might become “partakers of the divine nature.”—II Pet. 1:4

There is also the glory of office to which the Gospel Age sons of God are heirs. As Jesus was exalted to share his Father’s throne, so we are promised, if faithful, that we shall sit with Jesus in his throne. (Rev. 3:21) Jesus is the great “King of kings,” and his joint-heirs are to be made kings, to reign with him over the earth. (Rev. 17:14; 5:10) When the disciples asked Jesus what they would receive in return for taking up their cross and following him, he said that they would sit on “thrones,” and that this would be during the time of “regeneration” when the human race will be restored to life and harmony with the Creator.—Matt. 19:28

GOD’S RULING HOUSE

Many have failed to appreciate the great truths pertaining to the kingdom of Christ because they think of it as having been established at the time of his First Advent. However, as the Scriptures point out, before his kingdom rule could begin, all who are to reign with him must be first “called, and chosen, and faithful.” (Rev. 17:14) It is this feature of God’s plan that has been in progress during the present age. If Jesus alone was the King in this kingdom it could have begun to operate immediately following

his resurrection and exaltation to God's right hand. As we have seen, however, his faithful followers are to reign with him, and these, as sons of God, together with Jesus, his beloved Son, will be the divine ruling house.

God's kingdom, with Christ and his "joint-heirs" as its appointed rulers, is symbolized in Old Testament prophecies by a mountain. In Isaiah 2:2 it is referred to as "the mountain of the LORD'S house." This simply means the kingdom of God will be in the hands of his ruling "house" of sons. This kingdom, the prophet further states, would not be set up until the "last days." This refers to the last days of the reign of sin and death, of which Satan is the author. In his prophecy, Isaiah says that this "mountain of the LORD'S house" will be above all other kingdoms and nations. It will be "established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."—Isa. 2:2

Another prophecy pertaining to the "last days" is found in the second psalm. Here God proclaims, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," and then says to his Son, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen [Hebrew: nations] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Ps. 2:6,8,9) In Revelation 2:26,27 Jesus, quoting from the same psalm, makes a promise to the children of God who are joint-heirs with him, saying, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule [Greek: tend as a shepherd] them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall

they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.” Thus we have further confirmation that the honor and authority of the kingdom which God promised to Jesus will be shared by the entire ruling house of sons.

PROMISES CONDITIONAL

The kingdom promises God made to the natural descendants of Abraham were dependent upon being faithful to him and to the terms of the covenant into which they had entered. So throughout the present Gospel Age, God’s kingdom promises to members of the prospective new nation of “sons” who will make up his ruling house are also conditional upon faithfulness to him and to the doing of his will. The Apostle Peter admonishes these to add to their faith “virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity,” or love. “If ye do these things,” Peter continues, “ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:5-11

Another condition attached to God’s promises of joint-heirship with Christ as ruling kings in his kingdom is stated by Paul in II Timothy 2:12: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” This same condition is set forth in our opening text, which declares that we are “joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him.” In Revelation 20:4 a similar thought is expressed. “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were

beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

The “beheading” referred to in this text is figurative, indicating that one has surrendered his own will and accepted the headship of Christ. It is a beheading for the “witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God.” It implies, in other words, full devotion to the cause of Christ, laying down one’s life in his service and in proclaiming the truths of the Bible, the “Word of God.” To his disciples Jesus said, “Ye are the light of the world.” However, he added, “Men loved darkness rather than light.” (Matt. 5:14; John 3:19) Consequently, those who have borne witness to the truth have generally been rejected, ridiculed, and even persecuted. Thus they have borne witness of Christ, encouraged by the hope of living and reigning with him.

SETTING UP THE KINGDOM

Authority and great power are required in the setting up of any governmental administration, especially when other kings have to be conquered, and Christ’s kingdom is to be exalted above all others. When the enemies of Jesus put him to death, one of the charges against him was that he claimed to be a king. They probably thought that they had permanently disposed of this pretender, but they were mistaken. It was God who had decreed that Jesus should be a reigning king, so he raised him from the dead. Never before in the annals of history had such power been utilized to make sure of the establishment of a kingdom. In view of this miracle, it would be folly to suppose that any set of circumstances could

prevent, or even delay, the fulfillment of God's kingdom promises as they centered in Jesus.

That mighty miracle was at the beginning of the Gospel Age. It was the introduction to that period in God's plan during which the joint-heirs of Christ are selected and prepared to live and reign with him. As each of these has proven faithful unto death, it has been with the hope and assurance expressed by Paul concerning himself, when he wrote, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only; but unto all them also that love his appearing." —II Tim. 4:7,8

At this end of the present Gospel Age, according to God's arrangement, comes another mighty miracle in the setting up of the kingdom. It is the resurrection from the dead of the faithful children of God, that they might be joined with Christ, share his glory, and live and reign with him. This is described as the "first resurrection," and we read in Revelation 20:6, "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."

Can God's plan to set his kingdom in the hands of Christ Jesus and his "joint-heirs" fail when such power is utilized to raise them from the dead? Surely not! Likewise, the glorious work of that kingdom will not fail. It will bring peace to the people. In that day, "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick," and death and hell—the grave—will deliver up the dead which are in them.—Mic. 4:1-4; Isa. 33:24; Rev. 20:13 ■

Not Yet Unto Blood

“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”
—*Hebrews 12:4*

IN THE ELEVENTH CHAP-

ter of Hebrews, Paul mentions many heroes of faith of Old Testament times. There was Abel who offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than did Cain. The apostle speaks of Noah who obeyed God and built an ark in which he and his family escaped the waters of the Flood. Abraham is mentioned, whose faith was greatly demonstrated as he cooperated with God in connection with the birth of Isaac, and later showed his willingness to offer him in sacrifice.

Paul recalls Moses, who through faith was willing to suffer affliction with the Israelites, his brethren, rather than enjoy the pleasures and position he had in the Egyptian court. There were the three young Hebrews who defied the Babylonian king, refusing to bow down before the great image which he had set up, and as a result were cast into a fiery furnace, from which the Lord delivered them. Daniel is also mentioned, who refused to give up his life of prayer in order to conform to the edict of the Median king

and was cast into a den of lions; on whose behalf the Lord sent an angel to close the lions' mouths.

These and the many others mentioned by Paul constitute what he refers to in the opening verse of the next chapter as a "cloud of witnesses." We quote the first four verses of this twelfth chapter: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

In this wonderful summary of the faith life of the Christian, Paul reminds us that it is like running in a race. Athletes in ancient days sometimes weighted their feet when training, and then as they entered the scheduled race would remove the weights. This made their feet seem lighter, and they could attain greater speeds and had better endurance. So it is with the Christian. Before he enters the race, he is frequently loaded down with many "weights," the cares of this world, perhaps, or the deceitfulness of riches. He realizes that he cannot run the Christian race and carry these encumbrances along with him, and Paul admonishes him to lay them aside.

The apostle also mentions "the sin which doth so easily beset us." Every follower of the Master has besetting sins of one sort or another, perhaps some more bothersome than others. Here, however, it

would seem that Paul is referring to the sin of faithlessness. All through the Book of Hebrews Paul calls attention to the failures of God's covenant people, the nation of Israel, which were due to their lack of faith. This epistle seems designed to strengthen the lagging faith of the group of Hebrew Christians to which it is addressed.—Heb. 3:8-12; 4:1,2

If we lack faith, we will fall short along all lines. A deficiency of faith means a lack of courage, zeal, and the spirit of sacrifice. It denotes a lack of love for the Lord, the truth, and the brethren. So important is faith to the Christian that Paul writes, “without faith it is impossible to please” our Heavenly Father. (Heb. 11:6) Through a lack of faith the ancient Israelites failed to enter into the rest which God provided for them. We also will come short of entering into the rest provided for us in Christ if we lack the faith to fully believe the promises of God and zealously act upon them. (Heb. 4:1-11) It is only by removing our earthly weights, and laying hold firmly upon the promises of God, all of which are made sure through Christ, that we will be able to “run with patience the race that is set before us.”

THE GREATEST WITNESS

Having reminded us of the vast “cloud of witnesses” we have in the Old Testament as incentives to faithfulness, Paul then refers to the greatest witness of all, and encourages us to “look unto” him. It is in Jesus that we have the perfect example of faith, and what it means in the life of one who is wholly dedicated to God and to the doing of his will. Jesus was tempted and tested in all points as we are, yet without sin—either the sin of faithlessness, or

any other deviation from the full doing of the will of God.—Heb. 4:15

Our Lord was faithful under the most trying conditions, even to the agonizing pain of dying on the cross. He was given strength to do this by his faith in the promises of God. He endured the cross and even despised the shame, Paul says, because of the “joy that was set before him.” This joy was set before Jesus’ mind and heart by the many promises of God, but it required faith to lay hold on these promises and secure from them the needed strength to endure. Only by faith was he able to endure to the end, and subsequently be exalted to the “right hand of the throne of God.”

One of these promises Jesus claimed as his own reads, “I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Hebrew: *sheol*, the grave]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”—Ps. 16:8-11

By the promises of God, Jesus was assured that he would be raised from the dead; that his soul, his being, would not be left in *sheol*. He was shown by these promises that although his path to life involved suffering which would end in death, his resurrection by the power of his Father would bring fullness of joy. He would be exalted to the right hand of his Heavenly Father where there would be blessings and gladness forever. What joy indeed was thus set before the Master!

BLESSINGS TO MANKIND

In Isaiah 53 we have a prophecy of the sufferings of Jesus, and another aspect of the great reward set before him which enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame that was heaped upon him. Isaiah states, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”—vss. 3,4

Continuing, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” (vss. 10,11) In verse 8 the question is raised, “Who shall declare his generation?” From the natural standpoint none could point out the “generation,” or offspring, of Jesus, for he died without children. However, because of his unique position in God’s plan for man’s salvation and restoration he becomes the life-giver of the whole world of mankind. The entire human race restored to perfection on the human plane will become his “seed,” and because of this he “shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”

Here, then, was another great joy set before the Master which enabled him to endure his suffering—the joy of participating in his Father’s loving plan to restore the human race to life, a “pleasure” of God which is yet to “prosper in his hand.” Thus, we see the two great joys which, through the Scriptures,

were set before Jesus—the joy of being exalted forever to his Father’s presence, where there are eternal blessings, and the joy of carrying out God’s purpose of blessing all mankind.

These, and other joys as well, enabled Jesus to endure the cross and despise the shame. The same joys are set before us, his footstep followers, the “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,” who have Jesus as “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.” He is our “merciful and faithful high priest, ... For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” —Heb. 3:1; 2:17,18

CONSIDER JESUS

Hebrews 12:3 reads, “Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” How great indeed was the contradiction of sinners against Jesus! He was opposed by the scribes and the Pharisees by the many arguments which they stirred up against him in their endeavors to find something with which they could charge him to bring about his arrest.

Beyond these, however, and of greater importance, were their contradictions of the main aspects of the Master’s life. He was the Son of God, and from the very beginning of his ministry this great fact was challenged. The devil, the chief of sinners, tempted Jesus along this very line, saying, “If thou be the Son of God,” command the stones be turned into bread so that you can eat; or cast yourself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, so that God can save you. In other words, prove your sonship.—Matt. 4:4-7

It was not long prior to this that Jesus had heard the voice of his Heavenly Father saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17) Jesus did not need further proof of his sonship, and especially not by such an unwise performance as casting himself from the pinnacle of the temple. He knew that this would be unlawfully tempting God to “prove” his sonship, which he did not need to do anyway.

Satan, however, did not give up on this point. He spoke through his cohorts, who shouted to Jesus while he was hanging on the cross, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” (Matt. 27:40) The Master ignored this challenge for the same reason that he ignored the devil’s temptation at the beginning of his ministry. Jesus knew that it was the Father’s will that he should be crucified, and any move on his part which would interfere with the carrying out of that purpose would be disloyalty to God. He would thus fail to participate in the good pleasure of his Father for the blessing of all the families of the earth through providing a ransom for all mankind.

Jesus was also destined to be a great king, who ultimately was to rule over the earth until all enemies of God and righteousness would be destroyed, including death. (I Cor. 15:24-26) His enemies in Israel, however, would not accept this, and endeavored to contradict it whenever they could. A crown of thorns was placed upon his head in derision. The inscription placed above him on the cross read, “JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.” The religious leaders tried to persuade Pilate to change the wording to read that it was merely the claim of Jesus that he was the King of the Jews.

Pilate refused to make this change, but through it all the attempt was again made to cast doubt on the true position of Jesus in God's plan.—John 19:19-22

WE ALSO SHOULD ENDURE

These important truths concerning the trials endured by Jesus are not in the Bible merely as stories. Paul cites the “contradiction of sinners” against our Lord so that the manner in which he endured them may be an example to us. There is little likelihood that any of Jesus' followers today will be called upon to hang upon a cross or suffer the jeering of an angry mob and their casting of doubt upon what we believe and what we endeavor to be.

Our “contradictions” are, for the most part, of a more refined type. In them, however, we see a similar principle in operation. Jesus knew that he was the Son of God and the future King of kings, yet he did nothing as he hung there upon the cross to substantiate these realities of his position. He was willing to die under a cloud of mockery and scorn. What about ourselves? The great fundamentals of God's plan are realities to us, and while we are to do all we can to proclaim and defend them, let us not undertake any rash action in order to prove to an unfriendly world that we are right. It is better that we die with the world saying, as it were, “As a person he was all right, but we completely disagreed with his impossible beliefs, and felt that his way of life made no sense at all.” Can we thus endure the contradiction of sinners?

This principle may also be called upon from time to time in our fellowship with the brethren. As we have noted, the great fundamentals of the Truth are

held by all of us in the same light, but in the case of associated details there are often differences of opinion and interpretation. Can we endure departing a study meeting with the knowledge that our viewpoint on a certain matter was not agreed upon by all, or do we continually feel an impelling urge to justify our views before the brethren? If we do, a good remedy might be to think of Jesus' attitude while hanging on the cross, and in fact throughout his entire ministry of suffering. If we are correct the Lord will vindicate us in his due time—perhaps only on the other side of the veil. This was Jesus' consolation, and we should be satisfied in having the same attitude.

Failing to properly consider Jesus, and to note the way in which he conducted himself in his times of great trial, might lead to our becoming “wearied and faint” in our minds, even discouraged. We live in a world full of ridicule and derision. Because of human frailty, even our brethren may temporarily seem unfriendly at times, especially if they do not agree with our viewpoints. This may be a trial to us, or perhaps bring a measure of suffering, unless we can learn, in humility, that it is not important to justify ourselves before men. Let us leave this in God's hands, as Jesus did, while we continue zealously in the divine service of proclaiming the Gospel and laying down our lives in service to the Lord and the brethren.

FOLLOWING JESUS

The reason it is important as Christians to look unto Jesus that we might be encouraged by his example of faithfulness is that our covenant with the Heavenly Father calls for following in the Master's

footsteps. (I Pet. 2:21) He is our exemplar and our forerunner. Those who will live and reign with Jesus in his kingdom are those who have been faithful in laying down their lives as he was faithful in laying down his. They are shown with him on Mount Zion, and the explanation is given that these “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”—Rev. 14:1,4

Jesus was led into death by the Holy Spirit, and if we follow him faithfully, we also will be led into death. (Rev. 2:10) We will not prove worthy to live and reign with Christ by following human leadership, whether represented in family ties or by prominent ones in the church. Only by following Jesus all the way into death can we hope to be with him in the kingdom, and reign with him for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

In the beginning of their Christian experience, the Hebrew brethren had been faithful in following Jesus. To these brethren Paul wrote, “Remember the days gone by, when, newly enlightened, you met the challenge of great sufferings and held firm. Some of you were abused and tormented to make a public show, while others stood loyally by those who were so treated. For indeed you shared the sufferings of the prisoners, and you cheerfully accepted the seizure of your possessions, knowing that you possessed something better and more lasting. Do not then throw away your confidence, for it carries a great reward. You need endurance, if you are to do God’s will and win what he has promised. For soon, very soon (in the words of Scripture), he who is to come will come; he will not delay; and by faith my righteous servant shall find life; but if a man shrinks back, I take no pleasure in him. But we are

not among those who shrink back and are lost; we have the faith to make life our own.”—Heb. 10:32-39, *New English Bible*

From this it is clear that the Hebrew brethren had been very faithful for a time and rejoiced in the privilege of suffering with and for Christ. It also seems clear that for some reason their zeal had begun to cool, and Paul encourages them to remember the time when they were first enlightened and had that first love and zeal, with the implication that they should endeavor to return to that attitude and continue on the way of sacrifice.

The reason for their waning zeal was apparently a partial weakness of faith and confidence that God would indeed fulfill his promises to them, and that fulfillment would be realized in due time. It was important for the Hebrew brethren, and important for us also, to realize that it is not sufficient to run well for a time. We have consecrated to do God’s will, and to serve him, faithfully even unto death. Only those who fulfill this covenant will receive the crown of life, which is “glory and honour and immortality.”—Rom. 2:7

The Hebrew brethren had also been faithful in serving the Lord’s people. Paul wrote to them, “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” (Heb. 6:10,11) Paul’s desire that these brethren should show “the same diligence” to the very end seems to imply that in the area of serving the brethren these Hebrews were also showing signs

of a cooling zeal. Here again we are reminded of the importance of continued faithfulness in the narrow way, and of keeping in mind the promises of God as they apply to supplying our present needs of grace and strength. Likewise, we are to remember those promises of the joy to follow our cross-bearing, which will be the glorious privilege of sharing in the work of blessing all mankind, and in partaking of those pleasures which belong to those who will be exalted to the presence of our Heavenly Father.

UNTO BLOOD

Our Scripture lesson closes with Paul's reminder to the Hebrew brethren, as noted in our opening text, that they had "not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." (Heb. 12:4) They had run well for a time and had endured much suffering. They had taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, but they had not walked fully with Jesus. If they had properly considered the Master, they would realize that following in his steps meant sacrifice and suffering even unto death, for he did not complete his sacrificial service until on the cross he cried, "It is finished." (John 19:30) His was a sacrifice "unto blood" because he actually laid down his life.

This was not yet true of the Hebrew brethren, however, nor is it true of us as long as we are in the flesh. Being faithful in one trial, or a series of trials, is not enough. We must be faithful "unto blood"—that is, unto death—if we are to win the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus. We must be, symbolically speaking, "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God," if we are to live and reign with him as priests and as kings.—Rev. 20:4

Let us, then, lay aside all weights, and any sins which might easily beset us, and run with patience and perseverance the race that is set before us. Let us keep looking to Jesus, who kept before his mind the joy that was set before him, and who endured the cross, and was rewarded to sit at the right hand of the throne of God. Let us consider him, and his faithfulness under all circumstances, that we may be encouraged to endure, and not become weary and faint in our minds. Finally, let us always remember that we can win the crown of life only by being faithful “unto blood,” and so continue on the narrow way until our sacrifice is completely consumed. ■

2021 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Friday, March 26, 2021.

Memorial Services in MP3 format are available for download at:

dawnbible.com/memorial

DVD versions can be purchased for \$6.00. Please send your request to:

Dawn Recorded Lecture Service
199 Railroad Avenue
East Rutherford, NJ 07073

Please place your order by March 12, if possible.

In the Night Watches

“My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.”
—*Psalm 63:5,6*

PSALM 92:1 DECLARES that “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD,” and to “sing praises” unto the “most High.” The more we learn about our God through an increasing understanding of his Word, the greater will be our desire to sing his praises. As our knowledge of him deepens into a personal acquaintance and fellowship with him, through the out-working of his providence in our lives and the fulfillment of his promises of grace to help in every time of need, it should make our lives flow in endless melodies of praise to the God of our salvation.

David is referred to in the Scriptures as a man after God’s own heart. (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) In many of his psalms the sweet singer of Israel declares his love for the Lord and his delight in the law of his God. In one of them he writes: “The law

of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”—Ps. 19:7-10

In our opening text, David speaks of meditating upon the Lord in the “night watches.” As he observed the peace and beauty of the night sky, it was these meditations that enabled him to write: “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.”—Ps. 8:3,4; 19:1,2

The hours from sundown to sunrise in David’s time presented a somewhat different situation than they do today. Now the lights of cities and towns, and other means of artificial illumination, very nearly turn night into day, with the result that the majority of people keep active, either in work or in pleasure, for such long hours that there is scarcely time left for quiet meditation.

This was not the case in David’s time. The flicker of a dim flame from the burning of olive oil was often the only means of securing light after the sun went down. With such limited light, the day’s activities came mostly to an end. As a result, there

was a much greater opportunity for thoughtful meditation upon the Lord in the evening hours, and for those who took advantage of this, many blessings were surely theirs.

In the case of David, while he was a shepherd boy, and later as leader of Israel's army, he no doubt spent many of his nights under the canopy of heaven. It was under these conditions that he rejoiced as he meditated upon the goodness of the Lord, and marveled at the wonders of creation. It would not be unreasonable to suppose that the subject matter of many of David's beautiful psalms took shape in his mind as he thus meditated during the night watches. How wonderfully such surroundings would prepare him for the influence of the Holy Spirit which guided him in his inspired writings.

FOR OUR LEARNING

David was truly a man of God, and the spirit of devotion and praise found in his writings is a sincere expression of a heart that had been given to the Lord. When he recorded the familiar words, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want," he was expressing his own feelings in the matter, giving utterance to his confidence in the keeping power of God.—Ps. 23:1

Beyond the expression of his own delight in the Lord, David was inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen messages peculiarly fitting to the needs of the people of God during the present age. Indeed, by divine providence, this is the chief purpose of his writings, even as it is of the writings of all the Old Testament prophets. As the apostles declare, these

faithful ones of the past wrote “for our learning” and “for our admonition.” “Not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister.”—Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:11; I Pet. 1:12

This being true, we might think of David’s experience of meditating upon the goodness of the Lord upon his bed during the night watches as having a counterpart even more blessed in our own experiences. As we contemplate this, we are reminded of something greater in the divine arrangement than literally lying upon a bed meditating upon the goodness of the Heavenly Father during the dark hours of a night, though such a practice is surely commendable and beneficial.

In God’s creative design there are seven “days,” or time periods. Each of these days began with an “evening” and closed with a “morning.” (Gen. 1:5,31) In each case the evening of the creative days symbolically marked an obscure beginning, with darkness settling down into a night, until the shining light of morning marked the closing portion of each period. Thus it was also when sin and death came upon the scene at the beginning of the seventh creative day. From then until now, the world has been passing through the long hours of a night of darkness. “Weeping” has continued throughout this symbolic night, David tells us, “but joy cometh in the morning.”—Ps. 30:5

RESTING BY FAITH

During this long night of weeping the world has been greatly distraught and unsettled. However, those who have had faith in the promises of God have enjoyed rest of mind and heart. This has been

particularly true of Jesus' footstep followers during the present Gospel Age. Paul wrote concerning these, saying, "We which have believed do enter into rest." (Heb. 4:3) We are keenly aware of the evil with which we are surrounded, and of the motions of sin in our flesh, but we place our faith in the finished work of Christ on our behalf. Furthermore, we know that through him and his kingdom all evil will eventually come to an end, and that even death itself will be destroyed.—I Cor. 15:22-26

Thus we are at rest. It is both a rest "by" faith, and also a rest, as the Scriptures declare, in the "most holy faith." (Jude 1:20) The foundation of both aspects of our rest is the meritorious sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Based upon the value of his shed blood are all the various features of God's plan of salvation—the heavenly calling of the church, the hope of restitution for the world, and the assurance that evil will not rise up the second time.

All this, and more, is contained in our "most holy faith," that wonderful outline of the divine plan and purpose in which we find peace of mind and rest of heart. No matter how dark the night, nor how far distant the morning hours at times may seem, we can continue to rest in the spiritual comfort of the Bible's promises, and while we rest, continue to sing the praises of our God.

This wonderful knowledge we have is not because we are wiser than others, nor more worthy. Rather, it is because of God's abounding grace in permitting us to know something of "the mystery of the kingdom of God." (Mark 4:11) Surely this is great cause for rejoicing, and for praising our Heavenly Father. Now, while the darkness brings fear and perplexity

to most in the world, we are privileged to rest upon the soul-satisfying understanding of God's Word which he has provided for us!

RESTING BUT AWAKE

Our rest of faith in Christ, and in the great plan of God of which he is the center, is not designed to induce sleep. While we are resting in our appreciation of the Word of Truth during the world's dark night of sin, sorrow and death, we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Concerning this Paul wrote, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."—I Thess. 5:5,6

The phrase "let us watch and be sober" is a reminder of our text, in which David speaks of the night watches. In order to watch during the nighttime hours one has to be awake and alert. Literal night watching is a very old institution, unfortunately made necessary because of the sin and selfishness of fallen man. Darkness serves as a kind of natural protection for prowlers, thieves, opposing armies, or whoever would rob another or inflict damage upon him or his property. As an offset to this, and prior to the advent of modern security cameras and electronic alarm systems, watchmen would often be stationed to detect the approach or presence of enemies, and to sound an alarm.

A watchman would fail in his duty if he fell asleep. It is not his privilege, during the night, to "sleep, as do others." Rather, he is to watch and be sober. As Christians, this is our position during the nighttime of sin and death. We are "watchers"

in Zion, and we should keep alert and be on guard against the approach of enemies of whatever nature they might be which would rob us, or others of the Lord's people, of their heritage in Christ Jesus.

Paul continues, "They that sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." (I Thess. 5:7,8) This is symbolic language. To "sleep" suggests spiritual lethargy, and to be "drunken" indicates an intoxication by false theories, doctrines, and worldly interests.

We can avoid these conditions, the apostle reveals, by "putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul admonishes us to "put on the whole armour of God," that we may be able "to stand against the wiles of the devil."—Eph. 6:11

God's word of Truth, in its many aspects, and in its various applications in our lives, is the Christian's armor. The very teachings of the Scriptures in which we find peace and joy and rest are also our protection against the insidious attacks of the Adversary during these dark hours of the night. Indeed, this is one of the purposes for which the Lord has given us an understanding of his Word.

NOT IN DARKNESS

Among the important truths which guard the Christian's heart and life today is a knowledge of the times in which we are living. It is this that Paul speaks of particularly when reminding us of our

privileges as watchmen. He states: “Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 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. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” —I Thess. 5:1-4

The reason the “day of the Lord” does not overtake the “brethren” as a “thief in the night” is because they are awake and faithfully watching. In this lesson Paul is closely following the thoughts presented by Jesus concerning the time of his return and resulting “presence,” and of the “end of the age.” (Matt. 24:3, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) Jesus said, referring to a possible advance knowledge of his coming, “Of that day and hour knoweth no man.” (vs. 36) For this reason he admonished his disciples to watch.

Although Jesus said that no one would know in advance the specific time of his coming, he alluded to the fact that his return and subsequent presence would be like that of a “thief.” (vs. 43) Emphasizing this, Paul spoke of the day of the Lord coming as a “thief in the night.” Thus he could say to the Thessalonian brethren there was “no need” to write to them anything further at that time about “the times and the seasons,” for he knew they had confidence in what Jesus had said on the subject, a small portion of which the apostle had just repeated for emphasis.

The thief-like coming of the day of the Lord was to be true only so far as the outside world was

concerned. Jesus' footstep followers would not be "in darkness," Paul insisted, and that day would not overtake them "as a thief." When Jesus gave his great lesson pertaining to the time of his return and second presence, admonishing his disciples to watch because they did not know the day nor the hour, he did not say that their faithful watching would be rewarded by a discernment of his return and the beginning of the day of the Lord during their present lifetime. The same was true of Paul's words. It was the brethren's responsibility to be awake, alert, and to watch. If they did so, "that day," when it came, would not overtake them as a thief, but various prophetic "signs" would have their fulfillment and give evidence that the Lord had returned.

Such recognition could be true only of those who are awake. The world, still asleep in darkness, would be unaware of the signs indicating that the day of the Lord had come. Concerning the watchers who would be living at this time, and to whom, because of their faithfulness, the Lord would reveal his presence, Daniel wrote, "Blessed is he that waiteth." —Dan. 12:12

Earlier in this same chapter the prophet tells us that this "waiting" is for "Michael"—one of many names which refers to Jesus—to "stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." Three signs are then given which point to the time at which Michael would stand up, that is, the time of our Lord's return and resulting presence. "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation;" "Many shall run to and fro;" and "knowledge shall be increased."

(vss. 1,4) The fulfillment of these and other signs mentioned in the Scriptures, as indicated by world events, we believe signify that we are living at the time of Christ's second presence.

Blessed indeed is the David class in this most climactic time! From the human outlook it is a very dark period. In this darkness there is fear and apprehension. So frustrated is human wisdom at the present hour that social and political conflict and upheavals are feared even more than war. It is the time referred to in Psalm 46:1-3, when the symbolic "earth" is being "removed," and when the "mountains" are being "carried into the midst of the sea." However, we will not fear, David assures. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," during this time of great turmoil in the world. When on every hand there is unrest, nervous apprehension, chaos, and distress, we have the blessed assurance of peace and rest, but only in the Lord.

If we keep properly awake during these dark hours, watching the progressive events in the great plan of God, the very things which increase the world's fears should make our rest more complete. For among the things we see as watchers in Zion is the near approach of morning. Indeed, the "morning star" has already appeared, and through the din and confusion incident to the removal of Satan's world, we discern the gray streaks of dawn!—Rev. 22:16; II Pet. 1:19

SINGING ALOUD

Surely, as David wrote, our souls are "satisfied as with marrow and fatness." The rich feast of spiritual food, which Jesus called "meat in due season," and

indicated would be another sign of his presence, has been abundantly served to the household of faith during the end of the age. (Matt. 24:45) It satisfies our longings as nothing else could do. It is as manna from heaven—sweet, nourishing, and soul-satisfying.

When we think of the many blessings which the Lord has so abundantly bestowed upon us, we cannot help, while resting upon our beds during the night watches, to sing aloud the praises of our God. We are resting but not sleeping, and we sing the “song of Moses” and “the Lamb.”—Rev. 15:3

In Psalm 92:1, where David says, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD,” he also speaks of showing forth his “lovingkindness.” (vs. 2) We give thanks to God in our personal and collective prayers to him, but we show forth his praises when we speak of his loving-kindness to others. To sing the high praises of God calls for activity in making known the glorious Gospel of the kingdom.

This is the great privilege of all who have been called out of darkness into the marvelous light of God’s plan. We rejoice in the fatness, the richness of the “meat in due season” upon which it is our privilege to feed. Resting in the night watches we delight to meditate upon the goodness of the Lord, and to give thanks to him for his boundless grace.

However, this should not be all. The result of our meditations should be a bursting forth in song which the Lord has given us to sing. When we take into consideration all that God is doing for us, how can we keep from singing? Surely we will want to praise the Lord with joyful lips, and sing forth the Gospel refrain!

In Psalm 92:3 David speaks of praising the Lord “upon an instrument of ten strings.” We might think of these strings as representing the various fundamental doctrines of God’s plan. It is the beautiful harmony of these doctrines, when these strings are played upon by those who have learned the new song, that really brings praise to our God.

These teachings reveal the wisdom, justice, love and power of our God, which, blended in perfect harmony and unison, make up his glory. It is our privilege now to show forth this glory, while, resting in faith, we joyfully contemplate the time now nearing when a knowledge of the Heavenly Father’s glory will fill the whole earth “as the waters cover the sea.” “Praise ye the LORD!”—Hab. 2:14; Ps. 150:6 ■

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Jozefa Szpak, Toronto, Canada—January 1.

Age, 99

Brother Art Jezuit, Chicago, IL—January 9. Age,

93

Sister Lyn York, Detroit, MI—January 10. Age, 66

Brother Zbyszek Grudzien, Chrzanow, Poland—

January 13. Age, 62

Brother Sydney Allen, New York, NY—January 16.

Age, 92

Sister Eleanor Baum, San Diego, CA—January 17.

Age, 93

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

N. Austin

Online Broadcast of Convention
Sacramento, CA February 13,14

W. Dutka

Online Broadcast of Convention
Sacramento, CA February 13,14

O. B. Elbert

Online Broadcast of Convention
Sacramento, CA February 13,14

L. Griehs

Online Broadcast of Convention
Hartford, CT February 7

J. Parkinson

Online Broadcast of Convention
Sacramento, CA February 13,14

T. Ruggirello

Online Broadcast of Convention
Sacramento, CA February 13,14

B. Siwak

Online Broadcast of Convention
Sacramento, CA February 13,14

J. Wesol

Online Broadcast of Convention
Fort Worth, TX February 5,6

This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.—Isaiah 28:12

We are resting in the Lord's promises. We are resting in his strength and in his ability to make good his promises; for we know that he who has called us is able to fulfil all his good Word. This peace, or rest, is the special blessing of the Holy Spirit. Only in proportion as we receive the Holy Spirit, the holy mind of God, the holy disposition, can we have this peace fulfilled in us. It is a matter of simple ratio. As we grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, in the knowledge of the Truth, we shall have this to comfort and strengthen us; and we shall thus have more of the peace of God every day, and be able to abide in his love.

—Songs in the Night, February 16

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, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

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.

HARTFORD CONVENTION, February 7—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Slivinsky. Phone: (860) 289-0116 or Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 13,14—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact K. Freer. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 6-8—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Wesol. Phone: (407) 921-9248 or Email: jerrywesol@hotmail.com

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 20,21—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact P. Nemesh. Email: NemeshFP@aol.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 2-4—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact S. Thomassen. Email: srbt@juno.com

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, April 10—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact S. Koterba. Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

God's Grace and Love

*I've failed to be what I should be,
God's Word to me reveals,
I've failed to be what I might be,
What a pure, kind heart feels.
I'm far from what I hope to be
When gazing on his face.
What 'er I am is 'cause of him
and only by his grace.*

*If any good is found in me,
'Tis true, not of my own
If any grace around me glows,
It is of God alone.*

*All faults are mine, I blame them not
On others who may chide,
Yea, they're mine alone, and pardon
Is his, the Crucified.*

*I know God loves me very much,
More than I've ever dreamed,
And though I'm counted least amongst
The host of the redeemed;
What matter much or little if
That blessedness be mine,
The merit never mine, I know,
'Tis all of grace divine.*

*My confidence is in his love,
His mercy all my stay;
I cling to all his promises,
He'll ne'er to me say, nay.
No arm of flesh can ever save,
The ransom, all Christ's own;
My faith is anchored in God's love,
His love and grace alone.*

—While Marching to Zion, C. Hindle