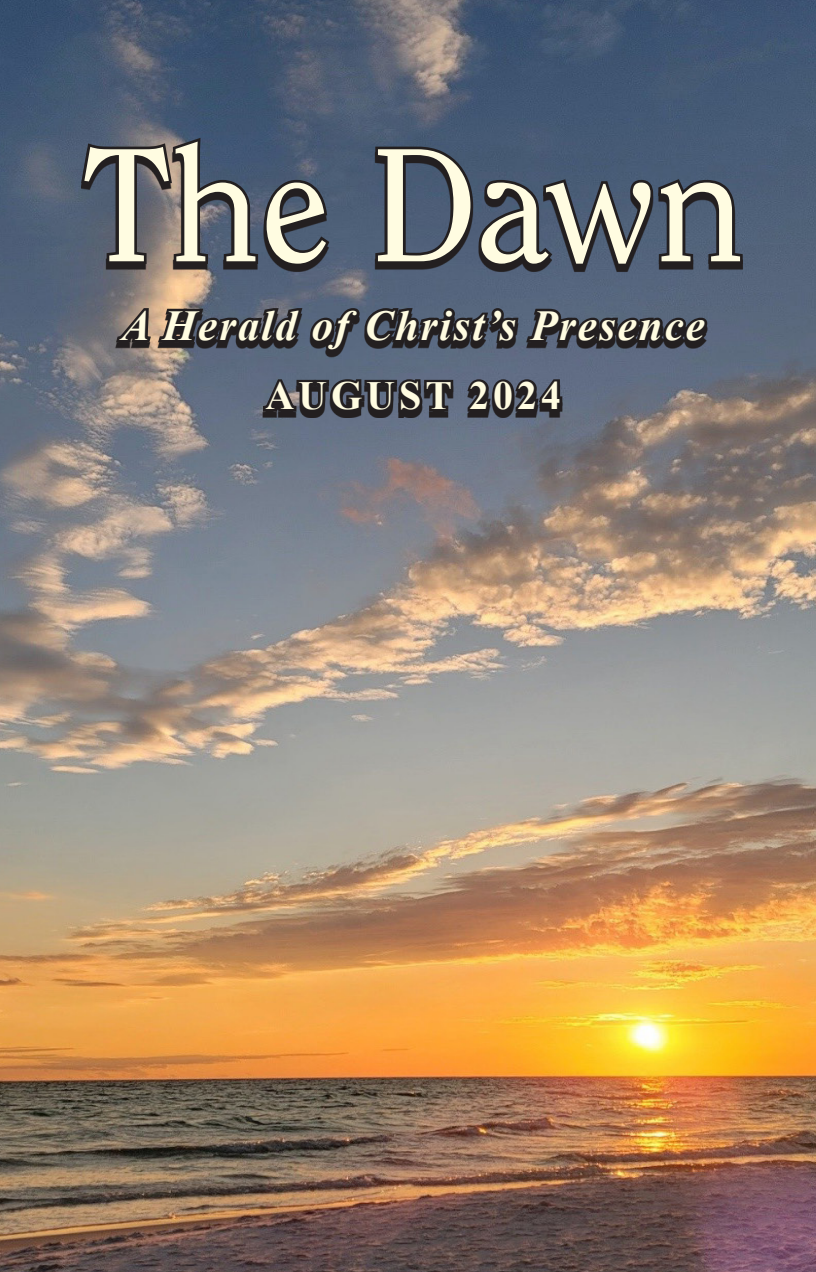
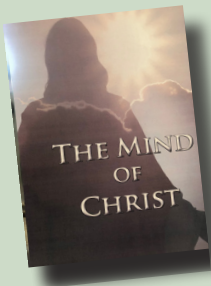


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“Every Eye Shall See Him”

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”
—*Revelation 1:7*

THE SUBJECT OF CHRIST’S

Second Coming is one which has greatly interested professed Christians since Jesus himself spoke prophetically of it nearly two thousand years ago. Many theories have been proposed over the centuries as to the manner and purpose of such a portentous

event. Predictions have come and gone as to when it might take place, with disappointment usually resulting because circumstances did not materialize as expected.

Today, many still believe that the Second Advent of Christ not only will happen, but that it is not far distant in the future. According to recent statistics, 40% of Americans—of all religious affiliations—believe that Jesus’ Second Coming will take place by the year 2050, little more than twenty-five years from now. Even among those Americans claiming no religious affiliation, 20% believe that Christ

will return by 2050. Another interesting statistic: Americans with no college experience (59%) are much more likely than college graduates (only 19%) to expect Jesus' Second Coming by 2050.

Irrespective of how man has viewed this teaching over the centuries, or even of current statistics, the Second Coming of Christ is a most prominent doctrine of the Bible. There are many prophecies, both in the Old Testament and in the New, relating thereto. Many of these prophecies are couched in symbolic language, but some are not. While various symbolisms are used, they are all harmonious when properly understood, and they set forth clearly the essential facts concerning the Lord's return—his Second Presence. During this period of time Christ's long-promised kingdom will be instituted, which will establish the divine will throughout the earth and destroy all enemies of truth and righteousness.

Essential to an understanding of the prophecies pertaining to our Lord's return and Second Presence is the recognition of two important facts. First, in his death Jesus forever gave up his flesh, his humanity, in order to redeem mankind. Second, in his resurrection by the mighty power of God, he was highly exalted to the divine nature, "far above" angels, principalities, and powers. (John 6:51; Eph. 1:19-22; Col. 1:15; I Pet. 3:18) Jesus is now invisible to the human eye, even as God is invisible. Since it is this resurrected, divine Christ who returns, his presence will need to be recognized otherwise than by seeing him with the natural eye. Confirming this, Paul said that we know "Christ after the flesh ... no more."—II Cor. 5:16

While still with his disciples prior to his crucifixion, Jesus said to them, “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye [shall] see me.” (John 14:19) His faithful followers will see Christ in his glorious divine body, because in the resurrection they are made like him. John explained this, saying, “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

JESUS' APPEARANCES

It is true that Jesus miraculously appeared to his disciples several times following his resurrection. However, on none of these occasions did the disciples see Jesus “as he is”—that is, they did not see his new, divine body. Throughout the Old Testament there are a number of references to the appearances of angels in human bodies. By nature, angels are invisible to the natural eye, and to appear to humans for the purpose of conveying messages it was necessary for them to materialize in human form. They were given divine authority and power to do this, but were not seen by men in their angelic, spiritual bodies.

The resurrected divine Christ also had this power, and used it several times when he appeared to his disciples between his resurrection and ascension. Let us examine some of the facts concerning these appearances. First of all, let us remember that the clothing Jesus used as a man was disposed of at the time of his crucifixion, and that his grave clothes were found in the tomb. His first appearance was to Mary, who thought he was the gardener. Indeed, he was dressed as a gardener,

the clothing being a part of the materialization, as on the occasion of his other appearances. Mary did not recognize Jesus by his looks, or his clothes, but by the familiar tone of his voice when he spoke her name.—John 20:13-16

Another notable appearance by Jesus was to two disciples as they journeyed to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-32) On this occasion, Jesus evidently talked with his disciples for several hours, yet they did not recognize him. To them he was a “stranger.” He delivered a wonderfully inspiring message to them concerning the necessity for the suffering and death of the Messiah as foretold in the Old Testament scriptures. Yet, they did not recognize who it was that was imparting this wonderful information to them. It was not until the close of the day, when Jesus asked the blessing upon the evening meal, that they realized who he was. Evidently he purposely gave that blessing in his old familiar manner, and it was this that opened their eyes to his identity.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples on the shore of Galilee, he revealed himself to them by suggesting that they cast their nets on the other side of the boat, and they were immediately filled with fish. The reason this was so convincing is that he had performed a similar miracle when he called them into the ministry. (Luke 5:1-11; John 21:1-14) Each of Jesus’ appearances was different from the others, and while they would serve to convince his disciples that he had been raised from the dead, at the same time they realized that he had changed. He was no longer Jesus in the flesh, but a powerful spirit being who could come and go unobserved by

human eyes except when he chose to manifest himself to them by materializing in the form of a human being.

“DOUBTING THOMAS”

One of Jesus' noteworthy appearances to his disciples after his resurrection was in response to the statement made by Thomas, who declared that he would not believe his Master had been raised from the dead unless he could see the nail prints in his hands and feet, and thrust his hand into the wound in his side, inflicted by the sword of a Roman soldier while Jesus was hanging on the cross. Jesus was not visibly present when Thomas made this statement. However, he knew about it, and to satisfy Thomas' skepticism he appeared to all the disciples in a room while the doors were closed. He then asked Thomas to look at his hands and his feet, and to thrust his hand into his side.—John 20:24-29

This incident has been erroneously taken to mean that Jesus will go throughout eternity as a human, with hands, feet, and side scarred. We could just as well say that Jesus will be a gardener forever, or like the “stranger” who walked with the two to Emmaus. What is the true explanation of these incidents of Jesus' appearance? Immediately following his account of Jesus' special appearance to Thomas, John explains the matter, saying, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.”—vs. 30

As John says, all of Jesus' appearances to his disciples, in whatever sort of body he used at the time, were “signs.” They did not see the divine Christ, but only these materialized bodies. Indeed,

they saw human, fleshly bodies. Thomas saw one with nail prints in its hands and feet. He did not see a spirit being, but a fleshly body in which Jesus miraculously appeared. It was by these appearances, and the things which Jesus said to them that they all, finally, were convinced that he had been raised from the dead. Luke wrote concerning Jesus, “Unto whom [the disciples] he also presented himself alive, after he had suffered, by many sure tokens, throughout forty days making himself visible unto them, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.”—Acts 1:3, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*

SYMBOLIC SIGHT

The question legitimately arises that if Jesus returns at his Second Advent as a divine, invisible being, how is it possible for “every eye” to see him? Will Jesus again materialize and appear as a man in order to convince the world that he has returned? We do not believe so. Rather, a proper understanding of this statement in our opening text is to be found by recognizing that the Bible many times uses the idea of “seeing” or of “sight” to symbolize discernment or understanding.

Referring to the Gospel of the kingdom which he preached, Jesus said that holy men of old had desired to “see” these things, but had been unable to do so. Then, to his disciples the Master said, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” (Matt. 13:16,17) There is no reference to literal eyes and literal sight. The thought is of discernment and understanding that was granted to the disciples by the special favor of the Lord.

When Job was suffering the great affliction which God permitted to come upon him, he said, “Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” (Job 19:26,27) Job was one of God’s prophets, and we may understand this to be a prophecy of the time when the “glory of the LORD” will fill the whole earth, and all flesh shall see, or discern, it together. (Isa. 40:5) This is speaking of symbolic vision, for actually, as God himself declared to Moses, “There shall no man see me, and live.”—Exod. 33:20

In the case of Job, there was also a more immediate fulfillment of his prophecy. When he had learned the important lesson of the severe trial which had come upon him, Job said to God, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.” (Job 42:5) This was not a literal vision which Job had of the Almighty, but a discernment, an understanding of God’s greatness, his wisdom, his love, and his power. Job had learned to understand the great Creator better as a result of his afflictions, and he describes this understanding as seeing God.

Isaiah 52:10 reads, “The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” This is a very revealing symbolic use of the sense of sight. The “holy arm” referred to in this text is Jesus, the Messiah. First, this holy “arm of the LORD” was “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He was “brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep

before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”—Isa. 53:1,3,7; Acts 8:32-35

Jesus, God’s “holy arm,” who became “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” was not revealed, or “made bare ... in the eyes of all the nations,” during his earthly ministry—his First Advent. (John 1:29) The prophetic “report” of his greatness as the Messiah was not believed even by those of his own nation except for a small minority who became his devoted followers. (John 1:11,12) He came as the “light of the world,” but the world rejected the light, and continued on in darkness.—John 8:12; 3:19

The plan of God, centered in Jesus as his “holy arm,” to enlighten and bless all the families of the earth, is yet to be accomplished. Isaiah wrote, “The pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” (Isa. 53:10) The sacrificial work of Jesus at his First Advent provided redemption for mankind from sin and death, and therefore was essential to the outworking of God’s plan of salvation. However, it is not until the period of his Second Advent that this “holy arm” will be made “bare,” or revealed, “in the eyes of all the nations.” Then “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” which Jesus provided at his First Advent when he gave his flesh—his earthly life—for sin-cursed and dying humanity.

We have cited this prophecy as another example of the symbolic use of the sense of sight. No one will contend that the prophecy refers to the literal “arm” of Jehovah. The arm is symbolic, and its being made bare in the eyes of all the nations is also symbolic. It is only because of the false notions

many have had concerning Jesus since his resurrection, and the manner of his return, that they have tried to visualize him literally appearing in clouds as a man, with every literal eye on earth beholding him. If we examine this prophecy in the light of reason, as well as other Scriptures in which the eye and sight are used to denote discernment, it becomes understandable and harmonious with the general testimony of the Word of God.

HE COMES WITH CLOUDS

The first part of our opening text reads, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.” From a literal standpoint, this is a strange statement, because anything, or any being, coming “with clouds” would most likely be concealed by the clouds. However, the language of this prophecy implies that it is these very “clouds” which reveal the invisible presence of Jesus. Clouds are used in the prophecies of the Bible to symbolize distress and trouble, and Jesus explained to his disciples that one of the signs of his Second Presence would be a time of “great tribulation.”—Matt. 24:21,22

We now note Jesus’ further symbolic prophecy, as recorded by Luke: “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”—Luke 21:25-27

Matthew quotes a portion of this same prophecy, which reads, “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matt. 24:30) There is much evidence that the world is even now passing through the foretold time of “great tribulation,” and there is already great mourning on the part of “all the tribes of the earth.”

The world in general does not yet correctly discern the meaning of the present “distress of nations, with perplexity.” To those not acquainted with the “sure word of prophecy,” this “sign of the Son of man” has not yet manifested itself. (II Pet. 1:19) However, in due time it will, and then “every eye” will discern the meaning of the tribulation and understand that Christ has returned to establish his long-promised kingdom. Indeed, we believe there are many evidences found in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy that Christ has already returned, invisibly, and is engaged in the preparatory work necessary for the establishment of his kingdom.

THEY THAT PIERCED HIM

Our text emphasizes that “they also” who pierced Jesus will see him, and, together with “all kindreds of the earth,” will “wail,” or mourn, because of him. The mourning on the part of those who pierced Jesus will be on account of their former rejection of their Messiah. We read, “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom

they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”—Zech. 12:10

Such a sorrowful condition is due to the Jews' belated recognition of Jesus as their Messiah. The prophecies reveal that this mourning will take place near the close of the great tribulation during which all the tribes of the earth likewise mourn because of the distress through which they are passing. This will be the great Armageddon struggle spoken of by John the Revelator. (Rev. 16:16) The climax of this brief period, as indicated in the prophecies, will take place in the ancient land of Israel, into which many Jews are now gathered since its reestablishment as a nation in 1948.

We cannot know in advance all of the details concerning this final climactic phase of the “great tribulation” spoken of by Jesus, since prophecy cannot be fully understood until it is fulfilled. The Prophet Zechariah states that God will “gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken.” Then, however, the prophet continues, “shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle,” after which “living waters shall go out from Jerusalem ... And the LORD shall be king over all the earth.”—Zech. 14:2,3,8,9

These words, as well as other Scriptures, indicate that “every eye” will eventually discern the meaning of what takes place in Israel in the closing days of Armageddon. The faithful remnant of Jews who recognize Christ, their Messiah, as the source of their victory over humanly impossible odds will

be the first to benefit from this experience. Others will then follow, and “see” it is the very one whom they “pierced” that has delivered them. The Prophet Ezekiel adds that all those nations which come against Israel at that time, and against whom God will fight and prevail, will also have revealed to them his “holy name ... and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.”—Ezek. 39:7, *English Standard Version*

When the aforementioned divine intervention does come in the experiences of Israel and all nations, it will be through Christ and his glorified body members. The Christ class will be the spiritual rulers in the Messianic kingdom who will manifest authority and power in the affairs of men. One of the great accomplishments of that kingdom will be the enlightenment of the people concerning the true God and what his will is for them. This will require the entire kingdom period for its accomplishment. First, the generation living at that time will witness the power and great glory with which the kingdom will begin. Then will come the gradual awakening from death of all who have died since Adam. (John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:22) All of these billions will need to be instructed concerning God and his laws of righteousness.

“The law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem,” we read in Micah 4:1-4. “Zion” here is a symbol of the spiritual phase of the kingdom, consisting of Jesus and his glorified church, who are brought forth in the first resurrection to be associated with Christ in his thousand-year reign. (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 14:1; 20:6) “Jerusalem” represents the human, or visible, phase of the

kingdom. (Zech. 14:11,16) This will be made up of the ancient, faithful servants of God, beginning with righteous Abel. John the Baptist was perhaps the last of these. These will be made “princes in all the earth.”—Ps. 45:16

The “word of the LORD,” or the truth concerning God and his will and law, will be made known to the people, Jew and Gentile alike, through these human representatives of the kingdom, who will be its earthly rulers. The obedient subjects of the kingdom, beginning with the remnant of believing Israelites, will, as they gain knowledge, assist in enlightening others. As we have noted, this grand work will not be accomplished all at once. Quoting the words of the prophet: “It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.”—Zech. 14:6,7

Light is a symbol of truth—of understanding. (Ps. 43:3; John 3:21) However, the light of the kingdom will not be wholly clear at the beginning. As our text declares, “every eye” will discern the presence of the Master during the opening period of that day, but there will be much more for mankind to learn. As we have seen also, there will be the further work of enlightening all who are awakened from the sleep of death. Not until the close of the kingdom will the “vail” of misunderstanding that is “spread over all nations” be fully removed from the eyes of all the people. (Isa. 25:7) It will be then that “the knowledge of the LORD” shall fill the earth “as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9

Not only will mankind receive the blessing of enlightenment, but peace, health, and life will flow out to the people. God will then “swallow up death in victory,” and wipe away the “tears from off all faces.” (Isa. 25:8) Truly, the prospect for Israel and for the people of all nations is glorious. While distress and trouble are rampant in the earth today, this situation is soon to give place to the authority of Christ’s kingdom, through the agencies of which there shall be lasting peace, security, happiness, and life to all the willing and obedient of mankind. How the people will then rejoice as they “see” and discern not only Christ, but also their loving Heavenly Father. “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”
—vs. 9

The Unfailing One

*The little sharp vexations,
And the briars that catch and fret
Why not take all to the Helper
Who has never failed us yet.*

*Tell Him about the heartache
And tell Him the longings too;
Tell Him the baffled purpose
When we scarce know what to do.*

*Then leaving all our weakness
With the One Divinely strong,
Forget that we bore the burden,
And carry away the song.*

—selected

The Word of God

Key Verse: *“For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”*

—*I Thessalonians 2:13, New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
I Thessalonians 2:1-20

their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.” (Rom. 3:3,4, *NASB*) Indeed, even if every man proves to be a liar, God shall be found to be true.

OUR KEY VERSE OFFERS

timely encouragement for God’s people. In our age of doubt, fueled by secular bias and generally dismissive attitudes toward religion, the Bible stands as a beacon and refuge for Christ’s devout followers. Those who ridicule it have apparently not considered its message carefully. In an act of “tossing out the baby with the bathwater,” many unwittingly reject God’s Word when rejecting church dogma. We note a principle expressed by Paul in the Book of Romans, where he observes that, just because some Jews did not accept the Gospel, their unbelief did not nullify God’s message. “What then? If some did not believe,

In our lesson, Paul praises Christians in Thessalonica for understanding and accepting what his writings and teachings were—the Word of God, not meager inventions of men. This fact is attested to by another apostle. Peter, in his second epistle notes: “Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.” (II Pet. 3:15,16, *NASB*) Thus Peter equates Paul’s epistles with Scripture.

The Scriptures are life sustaining for Christians. Stark is the imagery of the Prophet Amos. “Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord GOD, When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD.” (Amos 8:11, *NASB*) Today we have a famine for God’s Word. Our Lord Jesus said, “It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” (Matt. 4:4, *NASB*) Perhaps this analogy may inform our deeper understanding of Jesus’ model prayer, saying, “Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matt. 6:11) We do not doubt that Christians, despite saying the Lord’s Prayer, have died of hunger through the centuries. However, neither do we doubt that God’s Word ever failed to sustain their spirit.

A confirmation of the verity of Scripture is offered in our Key Verse. Paul observes that the Word of God, “also performs its work in you who believe.” Committed Christians, serving Christ in sincere heart devotion, are changed by the Word. They put aside the hateful, petty, selfish ways of their past and put on the character of Christ—full of love, generosity, and mercy. By their fruits they shall be known. (Matt. 7:15-20) Our desire for you, dear reader, is that the Word of God will also perform its work in “you” who believe. ■

Sons of God

Key Verse: “*See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*”

—*I John 3:1, New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
I John 3:1-10

dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”
—Eph. 2:1,2, *NASB*

In the darkness of disobedience, a brilliant light shone forth in Jesus—the light of the world. Our eyes were opened to the truth that is in him. “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12,13, *NASB*) Note

BASK IN THE LOVE OF God! Our Key Verse draws attention to the great love that the Heavenly Father has bestowed on us. It is a marvelous privilege, unique to those who are Christ’s, to be called “children of God.” It has oft been claimed that we are all reckoned God’s children from birth. In a sense that may be so. However, the Bible reveals, in the present time only, Christ’s disciples are legitimately called “children of God.” Consider life prior to coming to Jesus. “You were

that it is only those who receive Jesus that obtain the right to become children of God. Jesus affirmed this insight later in John's Gospel, "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light."—John 12:36, *NASB*

Thus it has been throughout the Christian era that Jews and Gentiles have become God's children by faith in Christ. "Through Him we both [Jews and Gentiles] have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household." "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba! Father!" (Eph. 2:18,19, *NASB*; Rom. 8:14,15, *NASB*) Tender love is expressed in the phrase "Abba! Father!" A slave could not call their master Abba, nor would it be appropriate for anyone else to use the expression unless they were bona fide children. What great love the Father has bestowed on us, that we may intimately address him, "Abba."

Our Key Verse incites us to recognize and acknowledge the great love that God has bestowed on us. We discern more clearly, with the passage of time, the extent of his love for us. We also see more distinctly that becoming a child of God is a very special privilege. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:31,32, *NASB*) God invested the life of his Son for our deliverance and he will, therefore, freely give us all things pertaining to life eternal. See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God—and such we are! ■

Godly Living

Key Verses: “*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.*”

—*Titus 2:11,12, New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
Titus 2:11-15

and learned from the
6:44,45, *NASB*

The first step in our schooling is to deny ungodliness, which is irreverence. The sensibilities of our modern world revel in irreverent jesting and behavior. These can only reinforce a base and insensitive mindset. Recall the promise of Scripture that, if we submit to God, when we resist the devil, he will flee from us. (James 4:7) A simple but highly effective tool in fighting temptation is, in the moment, to say to ourselves, “Absolutely not!”

The next step in our schooling is to learn that material

OUR KEY VERSES REVEAL

how the Christian may have rationality in their life, even as the world around them is increasingly going mad. Apostle Paul reminds us that God’s grace has appeared to all, bringing salvation in Christ. For those willing to be taught of God, rich instruction awaits them in the school of Christ. The admission requirements are rigorous. Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; ... It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Everyone who has heard the Father, comes to Me.”—John

things are much less important than that which is spiritual. Jesus wisely taught us, “Do not worry then, saying, What will we eat? or What will we drink? or What will we wear for clothing? For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matt. 6:31-34, *NASB*) Our priority each day is to “seek first” God’s kingdom and his righteousness.

Live sensibly, righteously and godly. Stay in close contact with the Lord throughout the day. “Pray without ceasing.” (I Thess. 5:17) Remember, “If you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” (Col. 3:1,2, *NASB*) Practice daily the “putting offs” and the “putting ons.” Put off the propensities of the fallen flesh to practice sin—immorality, lying, wrath, jealousy, slander, and all unrighteousness.—vss. 5-9, *NASB*

Then, with careful attention, we are to put on the qualities of godly living. We are instructed to “put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a renewal ... as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”—vss. 10-14, *NASB*

Jesus “gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” (Titus 2:14, *NASB*) May we show him all due reverence as we conduct our lives in a sensible, righteous and godly manner. ■

The Washing of Regeneration

Key Verses: “*When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.*”
—*Titus 3:4,5, New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
Titus 3:3-11

saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand

OUR KEY VERSES REMIND

us of a very important fact—we do not save ourselves. Even if we have done very righteous deeds with extreme care, that will not achieve salvation for us. God’s kindness saved us. Reflect on that beloved Scripture, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, *NASB*) Christ is the foundation of our salvation. We embrace the verity expressed in the beloved hymn, *Rock of Ages*:

“Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
These for sin could not atone;
Thou hast saved and thou alone.

In my hand no price I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling.”

“By grace you have been

so that we would walk in them.” (Eph. 2:8-10, *NASB*) Note that we are not created, or regenerated, in Christ Jesus “by” good works, but “for” good works. What good works are we destined for?

Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.” (John 14:12, *NASB*) Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, cast out evil spirits, preached the Gospel, and raised the dead. Reigning with Jesus in his kingdom, his church will also do these things. That work will be greater because it will last for eternity! “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32, *NASB*

This hope incites full devotion to do God’s will. We want to inherit the kingdom. We reject our degenerate past and embrace the regeneration offered through Christ, “who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus.”—II Tim. 1:9, *NASB*

We are being renewed by the transformation of our minds. (Rom. 12:2) “The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”—I Cor. 6:9-11, *NASB*

“Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Heb. 10:21,22, *NASB*) It is our hope and prayer that we all may be spiritually invigorated by the process of regeneration and renewal daily. ■

The Rod of God

“The LORD said unto [Moses], What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.”
—Exodus 4:2

A ROD IS USED IN THE Bible to symbolize power and authority, such as the “rod of iron” and the “rod of correction.” (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:27; Prov. 22:15) It is also used to

denote divine assistance to God’s people, as a rod of “comfort” and of “strength.”—Ps. 23:4; 110:2

A SPECIAL ROD

We note a very special rod that is mentioned in the Scriptures in connection with the exodus of Israel from Egypt. This rod is called the “rod of Moses,” the “rod of Aaron,” the “rod of Levi,” and most significantly it is called the “rod of God.” This rod, which was to play such an important role in the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, had a very humble beginning. It was a simple shepherd’s rod which Moses used in tending the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the land of Midian.

As Moses neared the age of 80, he led the flock of Jethro to the back side of Mount Horeb, and there the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire and spoke to him out of a burning bush. He

said unto Moses, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, ... Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” (Exod. 3:7,10) The Lord told Moses that he intended to bring this people into Canaan, a land “flowing with milk and honey.”—vs. 8

MOSES CLAIMS INADEQUACY

Moses felt inadequate to this great task and questioned Jehovah’s wisdom in choosing him to be the deliverer of Israel. The account reads: “Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand.”—Exod. 4:1-4

In all, there were three signs given to Moses to show that God was with him, but here we will only consider the first one, which had to do with the rod. The rod here represents divine power and authority which was to be exercised through Moses on behalf of the children of Israel.

In this sign, we see two conditions symbolically represented that have to do with the whole human family. We know that “the sting of death is sin,” and all have “come short of the glory of God.”

(I Cor. 15:56; Rom. 3:23) The human race have all come under the effects of original sin, and thus come under the curse of God's judgments. The time is coming, though, when the greater than Moses will catch the serpent "by the tail," bind and eventually destroy Satan and thus release the human family from his beguilement.

This concerns the Lord's people inasmuch as the very purpose of their calling is that they may become part of this greater Moses that will be charged with the responsibility of delivering mankind from the bondage of sin and death during Christ's coming kingdom. These called-out ones have been begotten with God's Holy Spirit, and thus have the great responsibility to properly use this power and authority as ambassadors of the heavenly kingdom.

It is important to remember that while the Lord's people are not expected to deliver mankind or to convert the world at this present time, nevertheless we must be putting forth this message, preaching the "gospel of the kingdom ... in all the world for a witness." (Matt. 24:14) As we cast the rod down, symbolically speaking, telling the people about how that old serpent, Satan, is the god of this world, and telling them about the great time of trouble we are now in, let us be sure to lift the serpent up again "by the tail," and also tell the people about the time when their deliverance will actually take place. Pointing out the "silver lining" behind the dark clouds of trouble is indeed a most wonderful part of our ministry, especially as we know that day of deliverance is near at hand.

WHAT IS THAT IN THINE HAND?

The Lord is asking each one of us the question that he asked Moses, “What is that in thine hand?” If we have certain talents or abilities, if we have material possessions, if we have a knowledge of the Truth, let us remember that all of these things have been sanctified with the rod of God’s authority through the begetting of the Holy Spirit, and we must use all to his praise and honor in faithful service to him. We feel inadequate at times, and so unworthy of this honor, just as Moses did. We know that in our own selves we come far short. The words of the Lord to Moses should also be a comfort to us: “The LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”—Exod. 4:11,12

The Lord chose Aaron, Moses’ brother, to be his mouthpiece before the people, particularly at the time of their deliverance. “He [Aaron] shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.” (vss. 16,17) In these verses, we see Moses representing God and Aaron the Lord Jesus, the “Word” of God. (John 1:14; Rev. 19:1-13) We, too, as the footstep followers of Jesus, have been charged with the responsibility of speaking the words of the Father as faithful “ambassadors” of the heavenly kingdom.—II Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20

In Exodus 4:17, quoted above, the Lord particularly pointed out the fact that this rod had been sanctified for use by Moses and Aaron in giving signs related to the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. So now, this simple shepherd's rod had become the "rod of God," as indicated in verse 20: "Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand." We notice in verse 21 that Moses was to use this rod and perform certain signs before Pharaoh. "And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go."

SIGNS PRIMARILY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

The primary purpose of these signs was to convince the children of Israel that Moses was appointed by God to be their deliverer. This is made plain in Exodus 4:5 where it says that Moses would perform these signs "that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers" had sent Moses unto them. This is further emphasized in the last few verses of the chapter. "The LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in

the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.”—vss. 27-31

Our Lord Jesus, during his three-and-one-half year ministry, performed many signs and, as a result, many people believed and followed him. He always claimed that the words he spoke were not his words, but the words of the Father which sent him, that the power to perform miracles was not his power, but power from on high.—John 14:10

We see in the broad sense how the people of Israel dwelling in the land of Goshen in Egypt picture the church, the spiritual Israelites, dwelling in the world, symbolic Egypt, yet separate from the world, awaiting their glorious deliverance in the “first resurrection.” (Rev. 20:6) As we look about us now, we are beholding the mighty hand of God and the exercising of his rod of supervision in world affairs. We see prophecies being fulfilled. We see many signs and believe that the kingdom is very near.

We read, “The people believed and ... they bowed their heads and worshipped.” (Exod. 4:31) Concerning spiritual Israel of our day, Jesus said, when you see these signs—these things coming to pass—“lift up your heads, for your redemption [deliverance] draweth nigh.” (Luke 21:28) This is indeed a grand and glorious time to be living, and surely the Lord’s people do rejoice as they contemplate the nearness of the time for their deliverance and the establishment of Christ’s kingdom.

GOD'S MIGHTY HAND TODAY

The mighty hand of God that we see exercised in the earth today brings great rejoicing to his true people, realizing that it points to the nearness of their deliverance from "Egypt"—the world. We see, too, that the same signs are being manifested to the pharaohs of our day—the kings, presidents, and dictators—the world leaders of the present time. Their reaction, though, is that of disbelief. Their hearts are hardened, and they refuse to believe that the Lord's hand is being made manifest in the affairs of men.

In Revelation 2:27, the resurrected Lord spoke of the "rod of iron" that would be used to bring about the total destruction of this present evil order of things. This overthrow of Satan was shown in the ten plagues of Egypt which were accomplished by the stretching forth of the hand of Moses with the rod of God. Exodus chapters 7-12 record the details of each of these plagues.

ROD USED AT THE RED SEA

Let us now project our minds a little farther ahead where we see the children of Israel gathered at the Red Sea. The last plague—the death of the firstborn—was too much for Pharaoh to bear and he hastened to send the Israelites out of the land. However, no sooner had he let them go than he had a change of heart again and sent his armies in pursuit. This is the picture we have set before us in the 14th chapter of Exodus: Israel, perhaps two to three million of them, are at the Red Sea, which blocks their escape, and Pharaoh's army is about to overtake them. The Israelites complained against

Moses, to which he responded: “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me: speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.”—Exod. 14:13-16

There will be times in our lives when we will have severe trials and testing along this line. Satan will pursue and try to destroy us, but our guardian angels will intervene. When the world and its distractions, cares, and problems seem to press in about us and we become fearful and discouraged, let us bring to mind the words of Moses to the children of Israel: “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD,” and he “shall fight for you and ye shall hold your peace.” God will never leave nor forsake us, and he will be “a very present help in trouble.”—Heb. 13:5; Ps. 46:1

Moses lifted up the rod and stretched out his hand over the sea and the waters were divided and the people passed over. The rod of God’s Spirit and power overruling in our lives will indeed also bring about our deliverance from every trial. “You have been put to no test but such as is common to man: and God is true, who will not let any test come on you which you are not able to undergo; but he will make with the test a way out of it, so that you may be able to go through it.”—I Cor. 10:13, *Bible in Basic English*

Sometimes, in order to bring us through a trial, perhaps one that we have brought on by our own bad judgment, the Lord has to use his rod of correction and teaching. In Job 9:34, we have this spoken of, and Job asked that this “rod” be taken from him. We, however, should not resist this rod of discipline, as it is for our eternal good and is being administered by the hands of a loving God who is deeply concerned with our welfare. Let us have the faith of Job, when he later said: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”—Job 13:15

ROD USED TO OBTAIN WATER

In Exodus 17, we find that Moses and the children of Israel have crossed over the Red Sea and are approaching unto Mount Horeb, which is Sinai, and near to the place where God first spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. We find that by now the Israelites had grown very rebellious against Moses because of the hardships they were faced with, in particular the shortage of water to drink.

“Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel,

and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?”—Exod. 17:4-7

We do not believe that the Lord’s true people should be equated with these rebellious and unappreciative Israelites, and yet, there may be times in our lives when we murmur and complain, not placing our trust and confidence fully in the Lord. The Israelites seemed to quickly forget how God had blessed them and carried them through in every difficulty. Their faith was very shallow. Let us never forget the manner in which the Lord has kept us and led us in the past, indeed, up to this very moment. He is a faithful God and will never forsake us, even though we may sometimes stray from him. In this picture, we see that the rod of God has smitten the rock of Christ. (I Cor. 10:1-4) As a result of his sacrifice, living waters are pouring forth for our refreshing, for our nourishment and our salvation. Let us drink of the water of Truth daily, always rejoicing and thanking God for this provision of his love.

HOLDING UP THE ROD OF TRUTH

We now see yet another experience of Israel related to the “rod of God.” In subsequent verses of Exodus 17 is an account of one of the heathen kings who sought to make war with Israel as they passed near his land. “Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up

to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."—Exod. 17:8-13

The Christian warfare is indeed difficult, and we know that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. (II Cor. 10:4,5) Our success in battle depends upon our faithful use of the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph. 6:17) Let us hold it high, always having the banner of the word of Truth before us. If we do not hold the Truth high, it may soon drag on the ground and we may even trample it underfoot, and we will surely lose the battle. We all have the individual battleground of our flesh, and daily we must bring it into subjection, using the rod of the Lord as our weapon against the flesh and its weaknesses. Let us, therefore, hold the rod of Truth high and use it properly in our lives.

Additionally, just as Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses, so we all have the privilege of holding up the hands and assisting those more active in the ministry. We do this through prayer, temporal support, and particularly in the many little ways that may be opened to us to assist and encourage others in the Lord's vineyard. A word of encouragement, of thanks, an expression of love and appreciation could be far more important than we may at

first realize. Let us not neglect this important service. Let us also not become “weary in well doing.” (Gal. 6:9) We must continue to hold up the rod of Truth, even as Moses did, unto the “going down of the sun,” until the last member of the body of Christ passes beyond the veil.

THE ROD BUDS AND BLOSSOMS

The next significant use of the rod of Moses and Aaron is recorded in Numbers chapter 17. The children of Israel had begun to complain because they felt Moses and Aaron had usurped too much authority. There was considerable jealousy on the part of the other tribal leaders, so the Lord spoke to Moses and told him to have each tribe of Israel provide a rod, twelve rods in all. Aaron’s rod was among them for the house of Levi, his tribe. Moses laid the rods before the Lord in the Tabernacle. The next day Moses went in and brought the rods out of the Tabernacle, and the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds. This was a sign that God had chosen Aaron to administer the ecclesiastical affairs of the people as their High Priest. Then Aaron’s rod was taken in again to the Tabernacle and placed in the Ark of the Covenant as an everlasting token against the rebels.—vss. 1-10; Heb. 9:1-4

There is a lesson which applies to us and to all the church during this Gospel Age. If we are using the rod of the Lord properly in our Christian lives it will bring forth fruitage unto the glory of God. However, we should not expect to do great things all at once so far as our Christian development is concerned. First, there is only the small beginning

of progress represented in the bud. Sometimes in our life that bud is quenched, pinched off and not permitted to go on to blossom and fruition. However, the Lord patiently works with each one of us, giving us experiences that are best calculated to provide fertile ground for bringing forth these little buds for a long time, and then gradually this new Christ-like character begins to blossom out in great beauty so that it is seen by others. These beautiful blossoms of character exude a sweet odor that is a blessing to all others about them. Finally, these beautiful qualities of character are brought to fruition through "good works." (Eph. 2:10; Tit. 2:13,14) This fruitage in our Christian life is treasure laid up in heaven where "neither moth nor rust doth corrupt."—Matt. 6:20

With Aaron's rod there were buds, blossoms, and fruitage all at the same time. So it is with the Lord's people now in the gradual development of the Christian character in all of its many elements. There will be the buds, the blossoms, and the fruitage all appearing, but as we progress along the Christian way the buds turn into blossoms and fruit, so that by the time we reach the end of our course there will not be so many buds, but an abundance of fruitage unto the praise and glory of our Lord. (John 15:5,8) Let us also remember that the development of these glorious characters will not be because of our own ability, our own might or power, but only because of the rod of God's spirit that dwells with us. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."—Zech. 4:6

THE ROD OF GOD USED IMPROPERLY

There is another mention of the rod of God in the experiences of Israel, where we read, “The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.”—Num. 20:7-13

This smiting of the rock was near the end of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. It seems that the people had not changed much, for they were still complaining against Moses and the Lord. Moses, being provoked to anger by the people, smote the rock twice, rather than speaking to it as God had instructed, and water came out abundantly. Because Moses and Aaron tempted the Lord by striking the rock twice in disobedience, they were not permitted to lead the children of Israel into the land of Canaan.

This would seem to be a rather harsh punishment inflicted upon Moses and Aaron, and yet the Lord was giving a very important lesson to us, and to all those who have been in a relationship with him during this Gospel Age. Jesus, in his temptations in the wilderness, quoted a commandment of the Lord to the Devil, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (Matt. 4:7) Surely there is no real danger of our tempting the Lord in any big or spectacular way, but there are innumerable ways we may tempt God unwittingly, or in little things, because we are not as careful as we should be in the application of the principles of Truth to our lives. Perhaps these are a few of the ways such tempting may be done: by arbitrarily staying away from meetings, assuming the Lord will overlook it; by not studying the Scriptures, expecting God to give us a blessing while not properly preparing ourselves for it; by foolish conduct before the world; by not using the means at hand for properly treating our physical illnesses, and tempting the Lord to help us but not willing to do what we can for ourselves.

To avoid the sin of tempting God it is important that we very diligently apply the principles of Truth to our daily lives, having our conscience properly instructed by his word, and allowing this conscience to judge carefully even in the very smallest matters as to our conduct and attitudes.

ROD AND STAFF IS ALL THAT IS NEEDED

The 9th verse of Numbers 20 indicates that Moses took the rod of God—Aaron’s rod, which was Moses’ own original rod—out of the Ark of the Covenant to smite the rock for water. It was later put back

into the ark and was there when the children of Israel passed through the waters of the Jordan and into Canaan. Little did Moses know when he was shepherding the flocks of Jethro down in Midian that this rod would play such an important and honorable role in the great work of delivering the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and bringing them safely to the land that flowed with milk and honey.

Now we understand what our Lord Jesus meant when he said to his disciples, take “no scrip, no bread, no money,” only your staff—walking stick or rod. (Mark 6:8) We can take nothing of this world into the kingdom, but the proper use of the rod and staff of the Lord can and will get us there. The rod of God must go with us all the way into the kingdom. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

AUGUST 1—“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”—Proverbs 18:21 (Z. '99-75 Hymn 247A)

AUGUST 8—“Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.”—Luke 10:5,6 (Z. '04-108 Hymn 338)

AUGUST 15—“Now we exhort you, brethren, ... be patient toward all.”—I Thessalonians 5:14 (Z. '03-24 Hymn 154)

AUGUST 22—“Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”—Luke 2:49 (Z. '03-53 Hymn 261)

AUGUST 29—“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.”—James 4:3 (Z. '03-204 Hymn 114)

The Seventh Creative Day

“The LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.”

—*Genesis 3:22,23*

THE SEVENTH DAY, OR

“space of time,” referred to in the Genesis account of Creation is usually thought of as the one on which God rested, and properly so, for as we are informed “he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.” (Gen. 2:2) The beginning of this same verse states “on the seventh day God ended his work.” *Young’s Literal Translation* of the next verse explains that God rested from all his work that he “had prepared

for making.” This implies that there was a further making, or finishing, of the creative work that was to be accomplished on the seventh day in which the Creator himself would not be directly active.

Hebrews 4:10 reads, “He that is entered into his [God’s] rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” The “rest” of faithful Christians is in the finished work of Christ, not an entering into a state of inactivity. It is a trust that, through Christ, we can be justified before God without our own works of righteousness. (Titus 3:5) As Paul indicates, this rest from one’s own works that they may be accomplished by another is the sense in which God ceased from his works at the close of the sixth creative day. The literal meaning of the Hebrew word translated “rested” in Genesis 2:2, is repose, or by implication, to desist from exertion. The thought simply is that the carrying out of the great design of the Creator from the close of the sixth day forward was to be entrusted to another, even to his own beloved Son, who had worked so faithfully with his Father up to this point.

The Creator did not “rest” from his work because he was tired. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?” (Isa. 40:28) From this verse it is clear that the Creator did not rest from his work because he was weary. It is equally certain that his originally designed objective in the creation of the earth had not been completed by the close of the sixth creative day. This purpose was that the earth be filled with a perfect and happy human family in harmony with the Creator’s laws, and enjoying the blessings of a worldwide earthly paradise.

It was the Creator’s will that his human creatures, made in his image, should be given freedom of choice

with respect to his laws. God did not want the earth filled with mechanical beings that obey him by compulsion. Furthermore, God knew in advance that, lacking experience, our first parents would disobey his law and bring upon themselves the sentence of death. With his infinite wisdom and ability, the Creator could know this without causing his human creatures to sin. He permitted sin to enter into the world because he knew that the eternal happiness of his human creation would be enhanced by having experienced the result of disobedience, turning therefrom, and with full understanding, dedicating themselves to him and his laws of righteousness.

Certainly mankind could never be secure against the temptation to disobey the Creator without a knowledge of what the result would be. There are four principal ways of obtaining knowledge. One is by intuition. God alone possesses intuitive knowledge. Another way is by being informed, and God did inform our first parents that transgression of his law would result in death. One can also learn by observation. However, if God's human creatures were to observe the result of sin and thereby learn of its terrible results in terms of suffering, it would have to be experienced by others. God knew what many of his human creatures have since learned—that experience is the best teacher—so he permitted man to sin, knowing thereby he would experience for himself the terrible results of disobedience.

In our opening text God says, "Man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." The pronoun in the expression "one of us" refers to God and Jesus. By intuition, God knew both good and evil. Jesus,

his Son, having implicit confidence in his Father, consequently believing his every word, and possessing a superhuman intelligence with powers of perception far beyond anything we can imagine, would also know both good and evil. Besides, Jesus would, by now, have already seen the beginning of human suffering resulting from the sin of our first parents, for fear had already taken hold upon them.

God said that man had now come to “know good and evil.” This does not imply that Adam and Eve had already learned all there was to know about good and evil but, having partaken of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they now were to know and learn both by observation and by experience. Not only they, but all their progeny were also to experience the terrible results of disobeying divine law. For a brief period in Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed God’s blessing, and thus for a limited time experienced good; but this would not be true of their progeny, every one of whom would now be born in sin and “shapen in iniquity.”—Ps. 51:5

RESTORATION

The only way in which the human race as a whole could ever have an experience with good, under conditions favorable to learning the advantages of righteousness in contrast with the baneful results of unrighteousness, would be to awaken them from the sleep of death in an environment suitable for this purpose. We ask, though, how could this be done since the Creator had justly imposed the sentence of death upon Adam, and, through heredity, upon all his children?

Motivated by love, and through the operation of divine wisdom, a way was found by the Creator whereby fallen mankind might enjoy a future experience with good. Thus, having then experienced both good and evil, each member of God's human creation would be able to decide intelligently whether to choose the good, and live forever, or to continue in evil, and be cut off eternally in death. (Acts 3:22,23) The way which God chose to accomplish this was through his "only begotten Son." (John 3:16) God's plan was for his son, "the Word [Greek: *logos*]," to be "made flesh" for the purpose of dying as man's Redeemer, and later return to restore to life those for whom he died. (John 1:14; Matt. 20:28; Acts 3:20,21) Thus the Creator could "be just," and at the same time "the justifier" of all who, when the opportunity is given, return to him through Christ.—Rom. 3:26

Having created man in his own image, and knowing that through lack of experience he would transgress divine law and thereby plunge the whole race into death, God knew that if Adam and his offspring were to survive they would have to be restored to life by another; for in his righteousness he could no longer deal with man. This work of restoration was to be accomplished by his own beloved Son. Thus God "rested" from his work, while his Son has been carrying it forward to completion, the arrangement for this including the permission of evil, and man's instruction in the meaning of this experience. This has involved a long nighttime of sin and death, in which each generation has suffered and died. The divine purpose in the creation of man was that they should

“multiply” and “fill the earth” with his human creation. (Gen. 1:28; 9:1, *International Standard Version*) Thus, God’s plan in connection with the permission of evil embraces enough time for the birth of a sufficient number to properly fill the earth. Meanwhile, during this same long period of time, the divine arrangements for dealing with the people when awakened from the grave have progressed steadily.

WORLDS AND AGES

The Scriptures indicate that this seventh day, during which the creative design of God pertaining to the earth is being completed, is divided into shorter periods of time called worlds and ages. The period prior to the Flood is described by the Apostle Peter as the “world that then was.” (II Pet. 3:6) Paul speaks of the period from the Flood to the establishment of Christ’s kingdom in the earth as “this present evil world.” (Gal. 1:4) In Hebrews 2:5 we read of “the world to come.”

In a broad sense we might speak of these three worlds as the past, present, and future, and to understand God’s plan it is essential to realize that what the Bible may say concerning one of these worlds might not necessarily be true of the others. Failing to recognize this, many have concluded that the Bible contradicts itself. Just as an architect’s specifications for each floor of a three-story building would differ according to the manner in which each floor was to be used, so the scriptural references to each of these three worlds differ, because the arrangements of God, as they progress from period to period, are not always the same.

One basic fact, however, is true throughout both the first and second worlds mentioned in the Bible. It is that in both of them evil predominates. Malachi 3:15 reads, "Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." This was true in the world before the Flood. (Gen. 6:5) It has also been true throughout this "present evil world." There have at all times, of course, been varying degrees of wickedness. The remnants of the image of God with which man was endowed at Creation have, throughout the ages, prompted many gallant efforts of reform. There have been noble individuals who would rather die doing good than in any way injure another. Yet evil has predominated.

On the other hand, the Bible speaks of a time when the "righteous shall flourish." The Prophet David explains that this will be in "his days," that is, the days when Christ is King. (Ps. 92:12; 72:7) Texts of Scripture like these cannot be harmonized with human experience at the present time, nor do they harmonize with texts which describe the reign of sin and death with which mankind has been plagued since the transgression in Eden. Their harmony and beauty are seen only when we realize that they are descriptive of conditions in a future period of the divine arrangement.

That will be a time when the world will have a new ruler, even Christ. Jesus spoke of Satan as the "prince of this world," and Paul described him as the "god of this world." (John 16:11; II Cor. 4:4) This explains why the "present evil world" is so entrenched in sin. It is because the archenemy of God and of righteousness is its ruler. By contrast,

the fact that the “world to come” will be ruled by Christ, of whom it is written that he “loved righteousness, and hated iniquity,” means that then the forces of evil shall be destroyed and that truth and righteousness will prevail.—Heb. 1:8,9

The fact that thus far evil has predominated in the experience of the human race does not mean that God’s plan for the recovery of man from sin and death has not steadily progressed. It has, and through periods outlined in the Bible that we shall call ages. During the “world that was” before the Flood there was little progress in the divine plan aside from the testing of the faithfulness of a few individuals such as Abel, Enoch and Noah, to prove them worthy of being among the “princes in all the earth” during the age to come. (Ps. 45:16) It was after the Flood that the plan of God began more particularly to unfold and progress.

For more than six hundred years after the Flood, God’s favor was shown and promises made to certain individuals whom we may refer to as the patriarchs, or fathers, of what later became the Jewish nation. The promise to Abraham was that through his seed “all families of the earth [would] be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) This promise was reiterated to Isaac and to Jacob. (Gen. 26:1-4; 28:10-14) No effort was made at that time to evangelize the world. While these wonderful promises were made to the patriarchs, they were not instructed to proclaim the message to others. This was an age, in other words, when God’s dealings were exclusively with these faithful individuals. Thus it may be designated the “Patriarchal Age.”

THE JEWISH AGE

With the death of Jacob a change occurred. The twelve sons of Jacob became the nucleus of a nation chosen by God—the nation of Israel. (Gen. 35:10-12) The period that followed of more than eighteen hundred years, during which the divine dealings were with this nation, we call the “Jewish Age.” As a people, under the leadership of Moses, they were delivered from slavery in Egypt. God’s Law was given to them, epitomized in the Ten Commandments. They were, through the priesthood established by God, called upon to offer sacrifices, which pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ.

Throughout the Jewish Age we are presented with a national picture. The whole nation was blessed or cursed together, largely according to the measure of obedience on the part of its leaders. (See Deuteronomy chapter 28) The promised reward for keeping God’s Law was a blessed one, “which if a man do, he shall live in them.” (Lev. 18:5; Neh. 9:29; Ezek. 20:11; Rom. 10:5) In other words, this one little nation was given an opportunity of gaining life by keeping the divine law. However, they failed.

God, in the exercise of his foreknowledge, knew that no member of the fallen and dying race was capable of keeping his perfect law inviolate. The Jewish people, however, did not know this; nor would any of the human race have known it unless it was demonstrated. Paul refers to God’s Law given to Israel as a “schoolmaster” which teaches the necessity of Christ as the Redeemer in God’s plan. (Gal. 3:24,25) We see then that one of the important lessons to be learned by the permission of evil was that there was no way of escaping the

penalty of death except through Christ, the Redeemer from death, and the ultimate Restorer to life.

Had the Jewish people been faithful to God, they, as the natural descendants of Abraham, would have inherited the promise made to him that through his “seed” all the families of the earth would be blessed. The final test came upon them when Jesus presented himself to the nation as the promised Messiah. Sadly, as a nation, they rejected their Savior and Redeemer. In the divine economy, however, their persecution of Jesus unto death resulted in the redemption of the world.—Acts 2:22-36; 3:12-18

Not all of the Jewish nation failed this final test. John informs us that while as a nation “his own received him not,” as many as did receive him he gave power—the right or privilege—to “become the sons of God.” (John 1:11,12) Among those of the Jewish nation who accepted Christ were his apostles. Paul also speaks of “above five hundred brethren” who saw Jesus after his resurrection, and at Pentecost three thousand Jews accepted Christ under the preaching of Peter. (I Cor. 15:6; Acts 2:41) Doubtless these had been somewhat prepared prior to this through their contacts with Jesus and their faith in the Old Testament promises.

THE GOSPEL AGE

The foreordained number to be with Jesus as the promised seed of Abraham was one hundred and forty-four thousand. (Rev. 7:4; 14:1,3) The number of Jewish people who accepted Jesus was far short of this, so the Gentiles were then given an opportunity. This involved the work of another age

in the divine arrangement, which we can properly speak of as the Gospel Age. It is called the Gospel Age because during this period of time the work of the Lord is accomplished through the preaching and drawing power of the Gospel, or “good tidings.” —Luke 2:10,11; Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 15:1

During the Jewish Age, a whole nation was given the opportunity to qualify as the Messianic seed, but this arrangement ceased with the coming of Christ Jesus. With the failure of Israel as a nation to qualify for this high position in God’s plan, the invitation was extended to individuals—first, for a short time, exclusively to individuals of the Jewish nation. Then it was extended to any of the Gentiles who, as individuals, responded to the drawing power of the Gospel of Christ, and dedicated themselves to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to suffer and die with him. Nationalities count for nothing in this arrangement of the Gospel Age. Paul wrote, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or 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

This work of the Gospel Age has continued throughout the past twenty centuries. Although millions have claimed to be followers of Jesus, only a few in each generation have actually qualified through faithfulness to live and reign with Christ. Indeed, the vast majority have been more pleased to passively follow the dictates of church leaders, without striving in a personal way to live a life of sacrifice and service, as Jesus had instructed his followers. —Matt. 16:24; Rom. 12:1; John 13:12-15; Gal. 5:13

WHEAT AND TARES

In his parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus gave a preview of what would happen throughout the Gospel Age. The parable relates that in the beginning of the age good seed was sown in a field. Then an “enemy came and sowed tares”—imitation wheat. However, the householder would not permit the tares to be uprooted, saying that both should be permitted to grow together until the harvest. Then the tares were to be bound in bundles and burned, and the wheat gathered into the barn.—Matt. 13:24-30

In Jesus’ explanation of the parable, in verses 37-43, he said that the “good seed” represented the “children of the kingdom.” These are those begotten of the glorious Gospel of the kingdom, and inspired by it—inspired to suffer and die with Jesus that they might prove worthy to live and reign with him in his kingdom. The “tares,” Jesus continued, are the “children of the wicked one.” These are the offspring, so to speak, of the false teachings that man, by his own efforts, can establish the kingdom of Christ and bring everlasting peace and righteousness upon the earth. These church systems, together styled Christendom, were Satan’s attempt to counterfeit Christ’s true kingdom. Those systems, as such, will soon pass out of existence, but the viewpoint of a kingdom of righteousness without Christ still prevails. Few indeed today are looking to Christ to establish his long-promised kingdom. The majority of his professed followers still believe that whatever the Lord does for the world will be done through man’s imposing systems and leaders.

Jesus explained that in the “harvest” at the “end of the age” there would be a separation of the wheat from the tares. (Matt. 13:39, *ISV*) The tares would be destroyed, and the wheat would “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” (vs. 43) Bible prophecy reveals that the Gospel Age comes to an end in a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21) The “furnace of fire” in the parable of the wheat and tares is symbolic of this same destructive trouble. In it are destroyed the great systems and institutions which have constituted imitations of Christ’s kingdom, while the frustration and disappointment of their adherents is symbolized in the parable by the “wailing and gnashing of teeth.”—Matt. 13:42

Developments in the world today clearly indicate that we are in that period of trouble and dissolution. The age-old systems that constituted the bulwarks of Christendom are crumbling. Churchianity is on the defensive everywhere, and much confusion and disagreement exists as to religious, moral, and ethical principles. In a few cases, fear of what is coming upon the earth is producing a fervor of religious excitement, leading in some instances to increased church attendance. However, the newcomers, as well as the old, have little or no conception of the true teachings of the Bible, and the people are not being taught to expect the establishment of Christ’s kingdom.

EXPERIENCE ENLARGED

Thus the preparatory features of God’s plan for human salvation from sin and death have continued

to progress throughout the various ages. Meanwhile, as mankind in general have come into contact with the Lord's people whom he has been preparing to be the personnel in Christ's kingdom, they have profited. Some have been encouraged to live better lives. Others, however, unwittingly, have lent themselves to join in the persecution of the righteous, thus having an opportunity to learn even more clearly the terrible results of disobedience to God's Law.

In the divine economy, the permission of evil has accomplished much. It has served to test the fidelity of those whom the Lord will use in high positions in the Messianic kingdom. It offered an opportunity for the *Logos*, the beloved Son of God who participated in all the works of Creation, to prove his obedience and zeal for his Father's plan for him to redeem fallen man from death by his own death, and later restore to life those for whom he died.—
Heb. 5:8

Satan said, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. ... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." (Isa. 14:13,14) By Satan's attempt to accomplish this ambitious scheme, the world has been filled with sorrow and death; but Satan himself will eventually be destroyed. (Heb. 2:14) Jesus, on the contrary, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. God has highly exalted him, and through him the suffering and dying world will be restored to life.—
Phil. 2:7-11

Christ must reign, Paul tells us, until all enemies are put under his feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death. (I Cor. 15:25,26) It will be during

the thousand years of Christ's reign that mankind will have their first real experience with good. The earth will then be filled with a knowledge of God and of his glory. (Isa. 11:9; 40:5) Of that time Isaiah wrote, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isa. 33:24) They will then learn that the love of the Creator provided redemption and forgiveness for them through Christ Jesus, and because of this, there will then be no need for them to suffer any longer.—John 3:16,17

God's original plan for the earth to be subdued and made like the Garden of Eden will be accomplished under the righteous administration of the Messianic kingdom laws. Then the people will "build houses and inhabit them," and "plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them." It will be then that all mankind will "long enjoy the work of their hands." None shall "hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD."—Isa. 65:20-25

EVENING AND MORNING

Man thinks of the day as beginning in the morning, but those long periods of time referred to by the Bible as the days of Creation, began in the evening. The "eve" of any special event is its beginning. How appropriate this is when considering the creative days. While the evening is properly, and scripturally, the beginning of the day, it is also a time of darkness and obscurity, and so was the beginning of each of the seven days of Creation. Each began in obscurity, and not until the morning of the closing of the day, was its full purpose recognized.—See Genesis 1:5,8,13,19,23,31

This is particularly true of the seventh day. With the fall of man into sin and death a cloud of darkness settled down over God's human creation. Man was to learn both good and evil by experience, but how could he now thus learn good? The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head, but what did this mean, and how was it to be brought about? (Gen. 3:15) God's design for the seventh day is to be carried forward to completion by Christ, and the earth filled with a perfect and happy human family, rejoicing in their knowledge of good through actual experience, as they also will have known evil through their contact with it throughout the time when darkness covered the earth.

Then God's purpose in the creation of man will be fully realized by all. The obedient and restored world, freed from sin, sickness, pain and death, will stand at the threshold of an eternity of joy and life, in a global paradise in which there is every tree pleasant to the eye and good for food. (Rev. 21:4; Gen. 2:9) A postscript to the Genesis account of Creation can then be written, reading, "The evening and the morning were the seventh day." ■

*"O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness,
That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.*

Make us glad according to the days

You have afflicted us,

And the years we have seen evil.

Let Your work appear to Your servants

And Your majesty to their children.

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us;

And confirm for us the work of our hands;

Yes, confirm the work of our hands."

—Psalm 90:14-17 New American Standard Bible

“Who Shall Ascend?”

*“Who shall ascend
the hill of the
LORD? And who
shall stand in his
holy place?”
—Psalm 24:3,
English Standard
Version*

WHEN THE PSALMIST asked the questions found in our opening text, he went on to answer them in the verses that follow. “He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and

does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”—vss. 4,5, *ESV*

The “hill of the LORD” referred to by the psalmist is where one receives the blessing of salvation during this present Gospel Age. It is the holy place of which Isaiah spoke concerning the dwelling place of God. “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Isa. 57:15) “Place” often means a condition in the Scriptures and does not refer to a

literal location, but to a state of being. The wonderful blessing of understanding God's secrets will be conferred only upon those who have figuratively ascended unto him in the condition of full consecration and faith in the precious blood of Christ, wherein they have received justification. (Rom. 12:1; 5:8,9) They demonstrate contrition and humility by evidence of having "clean hands and a pure heart," which express the conditions under which God will confer eternal life upon those whom he calls and chooses at the present time.

MANKIND TO BE BLESSED

The world does not have faith in God, but has placed its faith in the promises of governmental leaders, superior military power, and religious dogmas. However, the people are becoming increasingly aware that they have been betrayed by those very devices, and thus they ponder the consequences. Luke wrote, "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." (Luke 21:26) Mankind has growing distress and fear concerning the events that are taking place throughout the world today, and looks to the future with great alarm regarding the things that are coming upon society.

The process of liberation from mankind's condemnation to sin and death will only be completed under the administration of Christ's kingdom of truth and righteousness. Then the world will be methodically instructed of God's righteous ways. The instruction to which they must give heed may be characterized as being of the same nature as that to which the nation of Israel had historically failed

to attend, and of which the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."—Isa. 28:10

THE GOSPEL AGE CALL

Having received the highest order of life—the divine nature—after giving his perfect human life in sacrifice, the Lord Jesus, since Pentecost, has offered that same grand prospect to those who are willing to follow him into the likeness of his death. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23) The world in general is not presently interested in following Jesus' steps since such a course will certainly lead to suffering and sacrifice. Thus, only a relative few choose to accept the invitation during this age.

Christ's spirit of sacrifice is the example to which the called and chosen of God aspire to follow. "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (I Pet. 2:21) "If we [the called and chosen] have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."—Rom. 6:5

SACRIFICIAL DEATH

As the nature of Christ's death was sacrificial, so the deaths of his footstep followers are also to be of the same kind, as the Apostle Paul emphasizes: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but

not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”—II Cor. 4:8-10

Christ’s resurrection was to the divine nature. His faithful followers in this age are also promised a resurrection to that same spiritual condition. “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.”—II Pet. 1:3,4

THE DIVINE NATURE

Christ’s faithful disciples go into death as fleshly beings. At their resurrection, they receive a heavenly spirit body. “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. ... As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” (I Cor. 15:44,49) These “sons of God” are promised that they will see Jesus in his resurrected heavenly body, and that they will have bodies of the same nature. “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

This wonderful prospect is summarized by the revelator who wrote, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) The promise of life from the dead on any plane of

existence is indeed wonderful, but the prospect of being raised from the tomb and fashioned in the likeness of Christ Jesus, who is now the “express image” of God, is nearly beyond the capacity of our human minds to grasp. (Heb. 1:3) It is this calling that Jesus alluded to, saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”—John 5:24

HEARING AND BELIEVING

The attainment of divine immortality for any is dependent upon their hearing, understanding, and believing God’s promises of life from the dead through Christ. From the divine perspective, one who believes and who is fully committed to follow in Christ’s footsteps has, as the foregoing verse states, “passed from death unto life.” They are no longer considered dead in the flesh, condemned in Adam, but are seen as alive through the Holy Spirit of God. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”—II Cor. 5:17

We read further, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”—Rom. 8:8-10

STAGGER NOT

The Apostle Paul characterizes the true disciple of Christ as one who, from the first moment

of consecration until the moment of death, remains convinced and determined that the promises of God in Christ are true. “We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.” (Heb. 3:14) The Lord’s people are to have faith that is similar to that of Abraham, who was not confounded at the promise of an heir in his old age. Paul explained, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”—Rom. 4:20,21

Those who have such faith during this present age will not stagger at the marvelous prospect of resurrection to the divine nature, which is neither beyond the ability or everlasting will of God to confer upon his faithful people. True disciples must hold their confidence to the very end of their Christian course. This is stated emphatically by Jesus in the Gospel of John: “Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”—John 6:28,29

Let us therefore continue to rejoice in the age-long promise of our loving Heavenly Father concerning those whom he has called and chosen to “ascend the hill of the LORD” to a position alongside our dear Lord and Savior, for the blessing of all the families of the earth to be testified in due time. (Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10 ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M. Balko

Folwark Zalesie, Poland
August 6-11

F. Binns

Hoddesdon, U.K. August 14-18

R. Charlton

Hoddesdon, U.K. August 14-18

M. Costelli

New York, NY
August 31-September 1

W. Dutka

Hoddesdon, U.K. August 14-18

O.B. Elbert

Seattle, WA
August 31-September 2

L. Griehs

New York, NY
August 31-September 1

E. Kuenzli

Folwark Zalesie, Poland
August 6-11

H. Montague

New York, NY
August 31-September 1

D. Rice

Folwark Zalesie, Poland
August 6-11

T. Ruggirello

Seattle, WA
August 31-September 2

S. Stalder

Folwark Zalesie, Poland
August 6-11

J. Trzeciak

New York, NY
August 31-September 1

OBITUARIES

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

Brother Celestine Mbaoma Oledibe, Lagos, Nigeria
—July 4. Age, 64

Brother Rodney Hugelman, Port Orange, FL—July
10. Age, 89

Sister Maria Kocoń, Betania, Poland—July 23. Age,
73

Brother Bogdan Lisze, Oleszycy, Poland—July 27.
Age, 57

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

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 6-11—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Folwark Zalesie, Poland. Contact T. Lecko. Email: theresa.kuehmichel@gmail.com

HODDESDON, U. K. CONVENTION, August 14-18—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—High Leigh Conference Centre, Lord Street, Hoddesdon, EN11 8SH U.K.. Contact N. Charcharos. Email: n.a.charcharos@gmail.com

EAST & CENTRAL AFRICA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 31, September 1—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Jjuuko. Email: eliezer1874@yahoo.com

NEW YORK CONVENTION, August 31, September 1—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact K. Weber. Email: kfweber@optonline.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, August 31-September 2—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Scottish Rite Center, 1207 N 152nd St., Shoreline, WA 98133. Contact C Becker. Email: christie@christiebeckerviolin.com

TENNESSEE VALLEY CONVENTION, September 6-8—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Comfort Inn, 4725 University Drive (HWY 72), Huntsville, AL 35806, phone (256) 562-2525. Contact R. Satheesan. Email: rosaliesatheesan@gmail.com

COLUMBUS, IN HARVEST CONVENTION—September 21,22—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Harvest Hall, 2620 Valley Branch Road, Nashville, IN 47448. Contact R. Mee. Phone: (812) 603-6205 or Email: columbusinecclesia@gmail.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 28,29
—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Little
Pine Island Camp, 6889 Pine Island Drive NE, Comstock
Park, MI 49321. Contact K. Osterman. Email: kenosterman
@gmail.com

AGAWAM CONVENTION, October 13—IN PER-
SON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Agawam Senior
Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001. For hotel
accomodations, contact M. Wardak. Phone: (413) 789-
6198 or Email: mtwardak@verizon.net. For all other
information, contact F. Sansom. Phone: (860) 861-6881
or Email: elshaddai144k@sbcglobal.net

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 26,27—IN
PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—South Semi-
nole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry,
FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli. Phone: (321) 442-1862 or
Email: jkuenzli@cfl.rr.com

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, November 2,3—IN
PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Lake Lodge,
1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207.
Contact D. Farchione. Phone: (414) 324-9667 or Email:
debffarchione@aol.com

The Beauty of Holiness

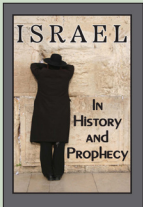
*So let our daily lives express
the beauties of true holiness;
So let the Christian graces shine,
That all may know the power divine.
Let love and faith and hope and joy
Be pure, and free from sin's alloy;
Let Christ's sweet spirit reign within,
And grace subdue the power of sin.*

—Hymns of Dawn

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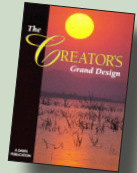


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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD

—peculiarly “his workmanship”; that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age—ever since Christ became the world’s Redeemer and the chief “corner stone” of this temple, through which, when finished, God’s blessings shall come “to all people”, and they find access to him.—I Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

of consecrated believers in Christ’s atonement for sin progresses, and when the last of these “living stones,” “elect and precious,” shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

lies in the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” “in due time.”—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5,6

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

is that she may be like her Lord, “see him as he is,” be a “partaker of the divine nature,” and share his glory as his joint-heir.—I John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; II Pet.1:4

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God’s witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests in the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6, 20:6

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35

