

“What Seek Ye?”

*“Then Jesus
turned, and saw
them following,
and saith unto
them, What seek
ye?”*

John 1:38

THE WORDS OF OUR TEXT

were spoken by Jesus shortly after he was baptized by John at the river Jordan, and as he began the selection of his twelve disciples. John had declared, when he saw Jesus

coming toward him to be baptized, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) The day after Jesus was baptized, John stood with two of his disciples, and upon seeing Jesus he repeated the words, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (vs. 36) The two disciples, after hearing John’s words, made the decision to follow Jesus. He then spoke to these two the words of our theme text. The account continues, “They said unto him, Rabbi (. . . Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see.” (vss. 38,39) By these words to his first disciples, Jesus illustrated the sense in which his footstep followers would be drawn of the Father to him. He would later reiterate this through the words: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”—chap. 6:37

Before looking further at this question asked by Jesus—"What seek ye?"—we should first realize that those of the household of faith even now should be able to answer as these disciples did. We should be able to say, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45) Those who believe on him should additionally understand and confess that he is "the Son of God," his true Father from heaven.—vs. 49

THE PROMISED MESSIAH

This is the season of the year when those in the Christian world celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. So it is proper to consider the importance of, and focus our minds on, the fulfillment of the words that the angel of God spoke to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem. The angel came to them as they were watching over their flocks, and announced to them the birth of the promised Messiah, saying, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—Luke 2:10,11

As we read the scriptural account concerning the birth of Jesus, we realize that this was not the beginning of God's interest in mankind. We have recorded throughout the Old Testament writings the Heavenly Father's dealings with his chosen people, the nation of Israel. These were types and shadows of greater blessings to come, beginning with the birth of the one who was to be Israel's Messiah. Even before this, however, the Old Testament provided God's wonderful promise made to

Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:3, 28:14) The announcement by the angel of the birth of Jesus, who came to fulfill the promises made to the faithful ones of old, was one of the first outward manifestations to the entire world of mankind of God's great love and sympathy for his fallen human creation. The salvation to be provided by Jesus would be extended to all, eventually being dependent upon their passing the test of heart obedience.

Mankind, however, has needed first to learn the lessons of divine justice and power as they have been exercised through the permission of evil. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "Sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." (Rom. 7:13) Man will also come to know another aspect of the character of God, centered in love. Of divine love, we read, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—I John 4:9,10

GOD'S WONDERFUL GIFT

This is also the season of the year in which many people throughout the world bestow gifts on those they hold dear. As we think upon this, our thoughts should be centered on the greatest gift of all, our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 3:16,17, we read, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not

his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

We have been given knowledge and insight into the Heavenly Father’s plan concerning the meaning of this great gift through his Holy Word. To be able to understand these things, which have been revealed to us by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, is a wonderful privilege. For example, God has provided us with the understanding, through his character of love, that the world of mankind is not being punished by God, and that the world in general is not on trial for life at this time. We further know the promise made by God, as recorded in the words, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (I Cor. 15:22) We understand the Scriptures to teach that there will one day be a restored, perfect earth; that there will not be any more sickness, sorrow, hatred, or fear. These things and all other influences of sin will be done away with. “The former things [related to sin] are passed away.” (Rev. 21:4) This will be the wonderful end result of God’s great gift, and is part of the answer to the question, “What seek ye?”

TAUGHT OF GOD

The world of mankind, under the kingdom arrangement described above, will be given the opportunity to be taught of God, to progress up a “highway . . . of holiness,” and to live on earth forever in peace. “An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness: . . . And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and

sighing shall flee away.” (Isa. 35:8,10) These arrangements will bring about a fulfillment of the words, “Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”—Luke 2:13,14

The kingdom arrangement will also bring fulfillment of these prophetic words, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

The death of Jesus and his subsequent resurrection is the basis upon which the millennial kingdom will be established. His death constitutes the ransom price provided to redeem Adam and his posterity, the whole world of mankind. Based upon this ransom provision, Jesus’ resurrection to divine glory, honor, and power will result in a thousand-year kingdom reign for the uplift and restitution, or restoration to perfection, of Adam and his race. This is the purpose for which Jesus was born and died twenty centuries ago. (I John 2:2; Acts 3:20,21) The accomplishing of this purpose will bring to pass the promise, “All shall know me [the Father], from the least to the greatest.” (Heb. 8:11; Jer. 31:34) Thus, Christ’s coming kingdom is an important feature of what the sincere child of God is seeking.

BLINDNESS CONTINUES

Not all have learned the relationship between the birth of Jesus, his earthly life, his crucifixion, and the future glorious outworking of God's love for the human race. Many resist the truth and believe the creeds and false doctrines of men. Many deny the true Son of the living God, and some even reject God himself. Those who reject the truths concerning God and his only begotten Son also fail to understand and consider many other truths found in the Bible.

In reality it is the great adversary, Satan, who has blinded the hearts and minds of many in the world, causing them to deny the hope, of which the Scriptures clearly teach, for a future opportunity of life for the entire world of mankind. Paul speaks of those in blindness as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." (Eph. 4:18) The lifting of this blindness is also part of what we seek.

KNOW THE TRUTH

We recall the words of Jesus, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) Knowing the truth makes us free from lies, superstitions, doubts, and fears. God has hidden the truth concerning his plan of the ages, and concerning his character, from most of the wise and powerful of this present world. Jesus spoke of this saying, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Matt. 11:25) These "babes"—teachable

children of God—should be thankful each day for the understanding they have been given. “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” (chap. 13:16) God has revealed these things to those who have a heart attitude of humility. An important evidence of this humility is a sincere sorrow for sin. “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”—Ps. 34:18

Those who “know the truth” have been given God’s Holy Spirit of understanding in order that they may know and do his will, and be developed as his “peculiar people.” Peter says concerning this, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Pet. 2:9) It is the Heavenly Father who does this calling, and, through the example of his Son, we are given assistance to walk faithfully to the end of this narrow way. We are assured that God, through Christ, will finish the good work that has been started in us. “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.”—Heb. 12:2

What Jesus did at his First Advent was a preliminary work in the carrying out of God’s plan, but one that was all-important. Only by the cancellation of the death penalty upon Adam could he and his sinful posterity be recovered. It was a perfect man, Adam, who sinned, and came under the just penalty of death. Therefore, it was necessary that the redeemer also be a perfect man, and one willing to die, “the just for the unjust.”—I Pet. 3:18

Some may ask as to the reason for such a long delay between the providing of the ransom price and the restoration of the purchased possession. In this intervening period of time, God has called out a people for his name, his “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” (Heb. 12:23) God has been calling this “little flock” out of this world to be footstep followers of Jesus throughout the present Gospel Age. Jesus spoke to these, saying, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

These called ones will, if faithful, have a share in the first resurrection, as Christ’s bride, and share in his inheritance. (Eph. 1:11-14) They will attain glory, honor, and immortality. (Rom. 2:7) This faithful company has God’s promise that “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” (II Tim. 2:12) These, along with their head, the glorified Jesus, will be the righteous rulers of the coming kingdom, during which the remainder of mankind will be restored to the perfection lost by our first parents. This great inheritance is another glorious portion of that which we seek.

THANKFUL TO GOD

As we approach the end of the year, it is a proper time for reflection, for remembering God’s leadings and dealings with us. We should be thankful for his providential care over all of our affairs of life, both great and small. Such thankfulness to God must be part of our answer to the question, “What seek ye?” We should remember that our blessings come from his rich storehouse, and be thankful that he has blessed and guided us through

another year. We do not know what the Lord's providence may permit in the year ahead, but we do know that "Faith can firmly trust Him, Come what may."

Each step in our "narrow way" walk should reflect a renewed effort to put God first in our lives, as we remember Paul's words in Philippians 1:21: "For to me to live is [to live for] Christ." Living for Christ means keeping the "new commandment" he gave to his disciples, saying, "Love one another; as I have loved you." (John 13:34; 15:12) Apostle John commented on this new commandment, saying to his fellow brethren, and to us, "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John 3:16) Our Heavenly Father desires that we meditate seriously upon this matter of brotherly love, because it is one of the chief tests of our character likeness to his Son. Our love for the brethren should be based on these sentiments: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."—Ps. 19:14

To truly show our thankfulness to God, we should desire to speak words of comfort to the world, telling them of Christ's kingdom of peace which will surely be established and will show the many wonders of God's love and blessings to all people. We are commissioned by God to plant seeds of hope and encouragement in those who most need them—first in the household of faith, but also in those of the world who mourn, in desperate need of hope. Sharing the beautiful prophecies and promises of the Scriptures may provide a message of comfort to those around us. As followers of Christ,

we do not all have the same opportunities for witnessing, but we can all provide an example to others, reflecting the character of our Lord. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. 5:16

SEEKING GOD THROUGH HIS SON

We must consider soberly this question, “What seek ye?” Are we seeking things of earthly advantage, earthly honor, or social and political influence and preferment? The world seeks these, along with wealth, fame, ease, and pleasure. The worldly mind, in many cases, even equates these with being right in the sight of God, and knowing him. If we are truly seeking to know God, we realize that he never promised his Son, nor did he promise the apostles or us, worldly wealth and glory among men. To the consecrated child of God, such honors are but the pastimes of an hour that will soon fade away. Rather, we should seek the things that moth, rust, and corruption cannot destroy—heavenly treasures which no man can give to us, or take away.—Matt. 6:19,20

Seeking after God means to also seek after righteousness. This is a requirement in order for us to have fellowship with him and his Son. This means the forsaking of sin so far as our heart is concerned, and the abstaining from evil in thought, word, and action—even from those things which have the appearance of evil. We are weak according to the flesh, however, and need the covering “robe” of Christ’s righteousness. This robe covers our fleshly imperfections, and makes it possible for us, through Jesus, to have a standing before God.

As footstep followers of Jesus, we must come to understand that there is great glory, honor, and dignity associated with seeking after, and receiving, the things of God. Jesus told us that we should seek chiefly “the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” (Matt. 6:33) To do so means we must take much care in our every thought, word, and deed, for the kingdom of God cannot be reached by an unrighteous path. All iniquity, selfishness, and indulgence in sin are paths that lead in directions that are opposite from God.

Seeking after the Lord should also take this form, as expressed by the psalmist, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?” (Ps. 116:12) Having consecrated ourselves to “render” our all to God, and by his acceptance of that consecration, we dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. (Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 91:1) We are assured of his protection and care over all of the consecrated footstep followers of Jesus, those who are daily striving to live as close as possible to the standard of the Master that is set before us.

The Scriptures tell us that “the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Matt 10:30) This shows the extent of the Heavenly Father’s watchful eye over every affair of our lives. The providential care of God should be more and more evident to us as we go onward in our life’s journey, and as we resist the inclinations of our fallen flesh, its weaknesses and resistance to sacrifice. Surely God’s providence in all these things is something we should seek continuously.

OUR TRIALS

Jesus told us, both by word and by his own example, that to live Godly at this present time will bring us trials and persecution, as it did him. Part of what we “seek” is to be properly exercised by these experiences. Our Lord’s encouragement to us in this regard is: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.”—Matt. 5:11,12

We are assured that in every experience, whether it be joyous or sorrowful, whether it is a heavy burden or light, the hand of our Heavenly Father will be there. The Scriptures state that he will not permit us to be tested above that which we are able to bear. (I Cor. 10:13) Thus, it is possible for us to say, even as David expressed in Psalm 91:2,3, “I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.”

We are to pray to the Father to keep us from the weaknesses of the fallen nature, and to help us resist the things that would harm our spiritual growth. We know that the tools of the great Adversary are varied and many. Sometimes he comes as a roaring lion, and may be somewhat easy to spot. Other times, however, he is more subtle, wily, and deceptive. He even uses our fallen flesh, if we allow, to draw us from God. These subtle attacks are appropriately called “little foxes, that spoil the vines.” (Song of Sol. 2:15) These “little foxes” could be things such as envy, strife, hatred, pride, doubt,

and discouragement. These foxes must be dispelled with love, truth, righteousness, and faith. To those who do so, the “wicked one toucheth him not.”—I John 5:18

SEEK GODLINESS

To seek godliness, or “God-like-ness,” is to develop “love-like-ness,” for God is love. Godly love is a reflection of “the wisdom that is from above,” that is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits.” (James 3:17) To attain this wisdom, and to have the pure law of love fulfilled in us, we must not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts [desires], we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for . . . the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”—Tit. 2:11-13

The development of godliness requires that we keep ourselves separate from the world. Jesus prayed concerning his followers with these words, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” (John 17:16) Our Heavenly Father has separated us from the world by his divine call and by the begetting of his Holy Spirit. Therefore, our loyalty must only be to him, to seek his character likeness with sincerity and honesty. Seeking godliness means the bringing forth of the fruits of the Spirit. These are the qualities of character which Paul speaks of, when he says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance.”—Gal. 5:22,23

In conclusion, we ask once again, “What seek ye?” To this we answer, We seek the Heavenly Father and his dear Son, Christ Jesus. We seek the Truth. We seek those of our brethren who have likewise sought and found these things. We seek to have fellowship with the Lord and become his disciples. Finally, we seek to be a joint-heir with Christ in his heavenly kingdom, for the purpose of blessing all the families of the earth. All of these things we diligently seek! ■