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THE OPENING YEAR

Christians cannot remain oblivious to the very real and dangerous problems that exist in the world today both locally and worldwide, our news media inform us daily of the crises and hardships which so many suffer and we cannot but feel for those involved, even though there may be little we each can do. Only God's Kingdom holds the final and complete solution. In the meantime, we have the assurance of God's word given long ago that all those "will be kept in perfect peace whose hearts are stayed upon Jehovah", those whose lives have been firmly established thereon for support. (Isa 26:3)

The promise of peace within a world of turmoil was reiterated by our Saviour, through whom we have come to know God as our Heavenly Father – "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto thee; let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid". "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good courage, I have overcome the world. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace". (John 14:27, 16:33) Peace is His will for His followers!

Such peace is the treasure and privilege of all the Lord's people and we do well to draw deeply upon this source of inner peace and rest in the Lord. Such peace will strengthen us and enable us to go forward in trust and assurance into the new year, whatever 2003 may hold for us as individuals, as assemblies of God's people, as part of that one Church "which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all". "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His". (2 Tim 2:19) He who knows and loves each one of His children will surely be their peace, as they trust Him.

As we look back over 2002, can we say with Samuel "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us!" (1 Sam 7:12) Surely He has indeed done so for us each as we think carefully back over the experiences of the way. God's promises do not fail as we are reminded in Lam 3:22,23 – "His compassions fail not, they are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness", also in 1 Thess 5:24 – "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it". So in times of special stress when it seems that "help delays to come", we need to trust Him even more, knowing "He will send the answer, though in wisdom oft delayed". In such times, we can help one another, by prayer, by the word of encouragement, by practical support.

Yes, even in a troubled world, Christians may still know real joy, in the abiding presence of our dear Master, in present enjoyment of the great and precious promises of God, in the rich and satisfying truths of His Word as they have been opened up for us in these last days, in the glorious prospects for all mankind, when the dark night of sin gives way to the light of a new and glorious day. Such inner peace and hope and joy will help to sustain us each one whatever our experiences may be in the coming year.

At this turning point, then, when one year closes and another opens before us, let us take stock. What progress has been made "in the school of Christ" in faith and understanding, in character and daily living, in love for the brethren, in appreciation of the so great love of our Heavenly Father, in zeal for His service even in what may seem the smallest way, in the joy of our Lord? All these things are His will for us, let us resolve then to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith". (Heb 12:1) May we each prove "more than conqueror" through Him who loved us. Amen.

THOU SHALT REMEMBER (Deut 8:2)

'Tis good to remember the way He hath lead us,
To view once again both the track and the road;
To muse on the fact that unfailing He fed us,
Our faithful and loving, compassionate God.

'Tis good to review how He surely was leading,
Though we saw Him not, nor knew all He planned.
'Tis good to recall that whate'er we were needing
Was wondrously met by His bountiful hand.

'Tis good to remember, to pause, and to ponder,
It stirs us to worship, and tunes us to praise;
Such retrospect helps us of Him to grow fonder,
Whose goodness and mercy have followed our days.

JOY OF HEAVEN

I propose to share some thoughts on the nature and extent of God's indwelling of our Lord Jesus. It seems natural to turn then to the indwelling of God and our Lord Jesus in the believer and our response. The book of Titus highlights the very special importance of God's indwelling of the Son of His love - indwelling to a degree far greater than any other. God did indwell our Lord Jesus to the extent that it was almost as if the two beings were one. Perhaps this caused the error where early scholars thought the Two were in fact One.

They should have realised that God could never die. Yet our Lord Jesus was always a person in His own right, not a robot operated by His Father. *"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart."* (Psalm 40:7,8 KJV) To Titus, Paul stated that God's grace appeared. One does not expect that an abstract like grace, that is favour, could appear or be seen in any way, but *"the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,"* (Titus 2:11 NIV)

But wait. In 1 John 4:12, John tells us *"No man hath seen God at any time."* John's Gospel chapter one, verse 18 repeats these words and then explains that Jesus Christ revealed God's nature, which must include God's grace: *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."* Clearly God's grace appeared in the person of Jesus Christ Whom God had sent. When the Word of God Who had been with God in the beginning, became a man, God's favour was seen. God's nature was so much part of His Son that he that saw the Son saw the Father's nature.

Other modern renderings explain that God's grace did not 'appear' to all. We did not see Him, ourselves. The word 'all' does not refer to those who saw but to *all* those who will benefit from God's grace or undeserved favour. *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all,"* (Titus 2:11 NRSV) Word for word renderings by Marshall and Wilson support the NRSV. God was in Christ. It reminds us of 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, reading from the NASB.: "Now all these things are from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

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Verses in Titus add to our understanding of 'indwelling'. When spirit beings dwell in, guide, lead, even push humans to action they also disclose their own nature. Other spirit beings can indwell. We need to know God's nature to ensure that we only follow God and His Son. Paul's letter to Titus went on to distinguish between the appearing at Christ's first advent, which revealed God's grace, and His glorious appearing. Paul said they were to look for this as a blessed hope still future. *"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;"* (Titus 2:13 KJV)

This time it is The Moffatt Translation which makes the meaning more clear. *"Awaiting the blessed hope of the appearance of the Glory of the great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,"* RSV, NRSV, NASB, Wilson, and Marshall all support that it is the Glory which shall appear in Christ. This certainly reminds us of our Lord's great prophecy: *"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the land lament, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* (Matt 24:30 Darby)

Paul brings us back to God's indwelling of our Lord Jesus at the first advent in the third chapter of Titus. He refers to former weaknesses and continues *"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,"* (Titus 3:4 KJV) Clearly, this is not referring to the future blessed hope. It has happened. After mankind was in an undone state and in need of a saviour, God's kindness and love appeared. Again this was in the person of His only begotten Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ showed the kindness and love of His Father, Who was indwelling His Anointed and motivating Him.

We should not be confused by the reference to God as our Saviour. The plan of salvation was designed by God and implemented by His Son. Accordingly the word 'Saviour' is applicable to both He Who planned and He Who carried out the plan and is the centre of every aspect of the plan. It was the pre-human existence of Christ, which enabled Him so well to portray God's nature. Paul called *"Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."* (1 Cor 1:24 KJV)

The passage in Proverbs chapter eight tells much of the beginning. There, Christ declares God's wisdom just as He shows forth God's grace and loving kindness in the New Testament. Selecting some verses from NASB:

v23 *"From everlasting I was established, From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.*
v28 *"When He made firm the skies above, When the springs of the deep became fixed,*
v30 *"Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him,*
v31 *"Rejoicing in the world, His earth, And having My delight in the sons of men."*

We can only imagine the love and closeness that bonded Father and Son as they planned the universe and then cre-

ated all that exists. God's daily delight can well be described as the Joy of Heaven. This master workman of the almighty God had to become a man before he could show mankind God's nature. Remember the effect the partial revelation had on Moses' person.

For many the revelation of the nature of God in Jesus Christ is but a witness. In this regard it is a little like the preaching of the Gospel. Those who really see Christ and in Christ, God's true nature, His love and His kindness, are constrained to give themselves to such a wonderful God. To those who do give themselves to God in this age, Christ is indeed the Joy of Heaven. He said "*These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*" (John 15:11 KJV)

In the third chapter of Titus, Paul continued, telling more about the effect God's love and kindness has on those who come to Him. Again it was only by becoming a man, that the Joy of Heaven could make it possible for human beings to come to God. He had to be a corresponding price to Adam. "*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, Which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour,*" (Titus 3:4-6 RSV)

God's Spirit poured out so richly on the Christian can lead, give wisdom, sustain in difficulties, and convert trials to joy. It is the only real source of comfort. God can work out most needs for good in this life. Ultimate comfort may have to look ahead to the resurrection. The justified have but a measure of God's Holy Spirit and it comes through Christ. They will always depend on Christ. He was without sin and remained without sin even while He was a man. Only such a being would be able to receive and manifest God's Holy Spirit, without measure. "*For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.*" (Col.1:19 KJV)

God's workmanship in the Christian starts with mere clay. To be useful to the potter the clay needs to be pliable and smooth to the Master's touch. God's goal is very high. He wants His Spirit to lead Christians to do His perfect will in their absolute free choice. Hopefully, the measure of God's Spirit which we receive through Christ will increase more and more as we yield ourselves, making His will our will.

This is what Paul wanted for the Christians at Colosse. He told them of his prayer for them "that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; *Giving thanks unto the Father, Which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:*" (Col. 1:9-12 KJV)

God is able. But we have to let Him. Beyond the giving of self to God we have to yield ourselves - we have to keep on letting God work in us. Like the driver, we have to keep our eyes on the road, be watchful for instructions and quick

to heed them. Sir Arthur Sullivan's hymn pointed to the need to be observant, to recognise God's Holy Spirit and to obey.

"Oh, give me Samuel's ear –
The open ear ,O Lord!
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of Thy Word:
Like him to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee first of all."

To the Philippians, the apostle Paul drew attention to instinctive reactions from the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. These instincts seem to split the person making one try to go in opposite directions at the same time. "*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*" (Philippians 2:12,13 NIV) On the one hand the believer rejoices, appreciates and maximises the benefit gained. We should draw as close to God as we can. At the same time reality demands awe and reverence at our being in the presence of the Most High. Our insignificance almost makes us want to hide.

But the fear of God is one of awe and reverence not terror (1 John 4:18). We must not let our person be divided. It would mean desolation like the divided kingdom in Matthew 12:25. There is no way one can hide (Hebrews 4:13). The instinct to hide must be overcome through our Lord Jesus Christ. "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*" (Hebrews 10:22 KJV)

The Amplified Bible seeks to present the full meaning of the earlier language by using multiple English words. It sometimes restates an expression in a different idiom to make it more clear. Philippians 2:12,13 become somewhat larger but the extra words really emphasise our need to work diligently together with God's Holy Spirit – to respond to the call of Christ. "*Therefore, my dear ones, as you have always obeyed [my suggestions], so now, not only [with the enthusiasm you would show] in my presence but much more because I am absent, work out – cultivate, carry out to the goal and fully complete – your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling [self-distrust, that is, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation; timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ]. (not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you – energising and creating in you the power and the desire – both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.*"

We should remember that both Father and Son indwell the believer – the true Church. "*Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him."*" (John 14:23 NASB) The more we yield, emptying ourselves of self, the more room there is for God's Holy Spirit and the Son of His Love – the more we

can receive the Joy of Heaven.

Ponder for a moment what is the object of that indwelling – of God's will and good pleasure in us. Firstly, it is to reflect His nature – the very nature that the Joy of Heaven revealed for all mankind. To do this, we have to "*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,*" (Phil. 2:5 NRSV) – the mind of love, of humility, the mind too of faith delighting to do God's will. Reflecting His nature will always be an object of the indwelling, of His work in the believer. Other objectives vary somewhat with time periods or dispensations.

In this 'work experience age' the Church is being built up into a spiritual house, into a holy priesthood, into Christ the head stone of all the corners. It is a creative work developing the new creature begotten again from above by God's Holy Spirit through our Lord Jesus Christ. "*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*" (Eph. 2:10 NIV)

God's plan included developing a little flock in this age to fit it for the next age. The little flock will then have a responsibility of care for the subjects of Christ's Kingdom "*Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" (Luke 12:32 KJV) Note that there is a difference between subjects of a kingdom and those into whose care the Kingdom is given.

Preparation is an important part of this 'work experience' age. Letting God's Spirit through Christ develop the Christ-like nature is a big part of building up the spiritual house. For that little flock, being built up in this way, the Joy of Heaven is already here. God is in Christ and Christ is in the believer. We rejoice already in fullness of joy. The next age will be a 'teaching age'. God "*will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*" (1 Tim. 2:4 KJV)

The delight of Christ in the sons of men was a joy set before Christ when He "*endured the cross, despising the shame,*" to save all mankind.. By paying the penalty on Adam's behalf, Christ set aside all the consequences of Adam's sin. This enables the resurrection of all who sin because they were born sinners. All will come to know the truth. Almost all will cling to Christ and eternal life.

That delight of Christ in the sons of men is also a joy set before the Little Flock as God indwells through Christ leading it to help the world of mankind up the Highway of Holiness. How rich will be the Joy of Heaven in the little flock throughout the teaching age!

The teaching millennium will end with the short release of Satan and the overthrow of the revolt that Satan will lead. Moses foretold how Christ ends all opposition to God. "*Moses said, 'the Lord God shall raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you. And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'*" (Acts 3:22-23 NASB)
Death cannot cease until the rebels who in full knowledge

do not want to live under God's laws of paradise are destroyed from among the people. Christ's Kingdom where everybody loves everybody will then be fit for Christ to deliver up to God. "*Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.*" (1 Cor. 15:24 KJV)

Thus will be ushered in the 'Ages to Come'. That era will be the achievement of Christ – The Joy of Heaven. Love will have replaced any need for rule, authority or power. "*Then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'*" (1 Cor. 15:54 NIV) Think of the great joy which will follow the learning millennium – the surpassing loveliness of perfect humanity. What will then be the work of God indwelling the little flock? What does the Creator do when the creation is complete?

How easy it will be to love each other when everybody is both worthy and lovable. The prospect puts joy in our hearts. All our loved ones, past, present and future, will rejoice together. But apart from our dear ones, there are a lot of lovable people whom we have not yet met. Even more will become lovable. It will take a long time to come to know them and to love them all. Eternity is a long time.

Ah, that is the ultimate achievement by the only One Who could do it. Not only did He make the restart possible but it will be by the power of Christ's resurrection that everybody will be able to keep the law – the simple but essential law "*Love God; Love thy neighbour*". All is made possible by God indwelling, without measure, Him Who is God's constant delight – the Joy of Heaven. (FG:)

LOVE divine, all love excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down:
Thou hast made with us Thy dwelling,
Love doth all Thy favors crown.
Father, Thou art all compassion;
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Thou hast brought to us salvation;
Thee we love with all our heart.

O Almighty to deliver!
Let us more Thy life receive;
Dwell in us, and never, never,
Never more Thy temples leave;
Thee we would be always pleasing,
Love Thee as Thy hosts above,
Serve and praise Thee without ceasing,
Witnessing to Thy great love.

Finish, Lord, Thy New Creation;
Pure and spotless let us be;
Show us all Thy great salvation--
Thine shall all the glory be.
Changed from glory into glory,
Till we see Thine own dear face;
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love and praise. **BHS 227**

GOD'S HABITATION

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph.2:19-22)

The word 'Habitation' is sometimes rendered 'dwelling place'. Perhaps Moses was the first one to suggest that a dwelling place of God could be in a human being. Let us read Ex.15:2: '*The Lord is my strength and song and he is become my salvation: he is my God and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him*'. Our text tells us that over the course of time the members of God's true church were to become God's habitation or dwelling place.

Often when you begin to prepare a sermon on a particular subject you are confronted with related matters that would take other sermons to explain and, because of the time it would take to do so, you have to discard them for the time being. One such instance is right here when the verse says we become a habitation of God **through the Spirit**. Without dealing with that subject now, it must be said that it is the most important feature by which we can become a dwelling place of God.

According to Vine, our text could be translated to give the meaning that the Holy Spirit is the habitation of God in a person, and that would be correct. Remember how it says in another place we, that is Christians, are **sealed** with the Holy Spirit. The impartation and the indwelling of God can only be recognised by the Spirit. No one can really know God any other way. Let us read 1 John 3:24: '*And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*' One has said 'Discovery of the fact that the heart is God's dwelling place will revolutionise the life of any Christian'. It should and it will.

Some things presented here may be new to some. So in introduction I am going to use some words of Job and leave you to consider them. In Chapter 34:3 Job said '*for the ear trieth words as the mouth tasteth meat*'. If meat is off, the mouth will tell you immediately and you won't accept it. He continues, '*let us choose our judgment, let each know what is good*'. So what thoughts your ears hear now, weigh up whether they are true and good or not. For the most part I will be repeating what others have said and which my ears have decided are good.

Let us read John 14:23: '*If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*' He will make his abode with us, we will be his dwelling place. One has said,

'Has the solemn fact dawned on us that at consecration we will become his dwelling place?' Let us read Isa.66:1,2: '*Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*'

Have you ever thought what you are saying when you sing the third line of the third verse of hymn 121, '*Make our hearts Thy habitation*'. While our interest now is in God's people of the present time, we may refer to a future time also. In Rev.21:3 some translations read: '*Behold the dwelling place of God is with men*' whereas the authorized version reads: '*Behold the tabernacle of God is with men*' and the passage goes on to say that as a consequence there will be no more tears, sorrow, pain, etc. Of course, that is referring to the Kingdom Age, but we know it will come ...every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess Him as Lord – God will be in their hearts. Oh, the prospect! It is so transporting. 'On the words 'Hallowed be thy Name' in the Lord's prayer, one commented: "Perhaps no quality of heart is in greater danger of being blotted out today amongst professing Christians than the thought of reverence for God." If God dwells in the heart, there will always be deep reverence for His Holy name.

The following words were gleaned from an old copy of Bible Students' Monthly: "The church is the expository of the Word of God and it is no exaggeration to say that God reveals Himself to mankind between the first and second Advents of Christ by means of the church; this is a solemn thought reminding us of solemn responsibility." God is invisible to the naked eye – no one has ever seen Him in that sense. The only way we have learned anything real about God is by having it revealed or manifested by His son Jesus, our Saviour and Redeemer. He lived amongst men and was **seen** by them. But that is a long time ago. We knew Christ after the flesh while he was here but now we know him so no more.

So now, how does man know God? He is known or manifested forth by the disciples of His Son, Jesus Christ. The hearts of all the true children of God have become His dwelling place and from there His character is revealed to others; it is an important way in which anyone can see God now. Two texts well confirm this.

Let us read 1 Cor.3:16: '*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*' and also 2 Cor.6:16: '*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.*' The figure of a temple is variously used in respect to the church. Each Christian is spoken of as being the temple of the Holy Spirit. Each congregation might be considered the temple of God. Prof Barclay translated Eph.2:20-22 thus: "All the building that is going on is being fitted together in Him, and

it will go on growing until it becomes a holy temple in the Lord, a temple in which you too are built as part, that you may become the dwelling place of God **through the work of the Spirit.**"

Do we realise this? Differences of opinion there are sure to be amongst the members of the church. How do we meet them? Does the Holy Spirit of God dwell in us as we reason and declare our thought? What a test!

Perhaps there is some disagreement with the thought that we can reveal God's true character to anyone. We may be overcome with the thought of our imperfection but I am sure that example occurs more often and in ways that we do not realise. We know of ourselves that we meet people who have a tremendous effect upon us. It is so evident that they have some power in their life that makes them different from others. It is so evident that they have something that others have not. Such persons encourage desire to know the God who can do that!

How many times can we see the opposite effect caused by professing Christians who seem to pay little attention as to how they conduct themselves generally. A quote again: "Two different men may utter almost the same words but spiritual power is not merely in what they say but in **who they are.**" Can we take an example of that in two who spoke of divine things? Isaiah spoke faithfully of the things to God's glory. Balaam's message was hindered by thoughts of personal advantage. Let us read 1Tim.4:12: '*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity.*'

Again: "Every Christian should strive to be a pattern worthy of imitation – a pattern of earnest endeavour to copy Christ in his daily life." Note the words 'strive' and 'endeavour'. We can do all things if it is Christ who is strengthening us. And again: "Only loss of confidence in the Lord can separate us from his love and promises." John 15:4 has something to say about **abiding** in Christ: '*Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*' Abiding in Christ leads to God abiding in us. He is the source of life. Fellow members of the body of Christ can help us only by directing us to the source. We can do nothing ourselves. We need to remember this always in our studies and worship and afterwards too.

Everywhere and at all times we should remember that we are ambassadors for Christ who always sought **God's** glory in everything He did. It is a battle. As another has said: "the cares of this life, its necessities, the customs of the world, our fallen tendencies, all would absorb every hour of our life if we let them." Some people who go to church leave something behind in the pew when they go out – their Christianity. Do Bible Students do the same when they leave their room of study? How we all need the wisdom which knows when to speak and when to be silent, and the Christianity which is as careful how we live in our homes as how we act before our brethren.

In Ephesians 1:18 there is a suggestion that the saints are

God's inheritance: '*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.*' How indeed can this be? It is by the things we have been discussing. If the hearts of all Christians were a habitation of God, one of His dwelling places, how precious He must regard it! (WS 01)

*Wherever I am, whatever I do,
O God, please help me to live
In a way that makes me credible
As your representative*

PATIENCE

There is one quality that always comes to the aid of a man in times of adversity: it is Patience.

Patience is a virtue of accepting a disagreeable and painful situation without becoming bitter.

An effective method in developing patience is uninterrupted listening and gentleness in response.

If you press a matter too hard or too often, it may become self-defeating.

Patience achieves more than force.

To know how to wait is the great secret of success.

God is not finished with the picture of your life yet; He is still painting.

There is nothing to be gained by answering in haste, but much to be gained by letting a few nights of sleep pass over it.

Life is hard by the yard but a cinch by the inch.

A slow drizzle for a length of time is more effective in watering the soil than a cloud-burst.

Patience is a plaster for all sores.

“YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE”

2 Peter 1:3-11

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” (Verse 10)

This verse is taken from a letter written by Peter, “a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ” and is addressed to “them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” In it he tells us that we have to give Diligence to making our calling and election sure. This key word is translated from the Greek spoudazo which signifies “to hasten to do a thing, to exert oneself, to endeavour.” Thoughts that the word convey personally would include –

- (a) we have no time to waste
- (b) we need to hasten in our endeavours to make our calling and election sure
- (c) the time is short, we do not know when our Heavenly Father may call us to account of our lives.

Peter knew from his time spent with Jesus that there was a need for diligence to come to the standard required by our Lord. He learnt that service for Christ is the only way to the highest honour, as we are told in John 12:26 – “If anyone serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant also be; if anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.” (NAS) Christ Himself is King of kings and Lord of lords, and He makes all His faithful servants kings and priests unto God, and as we are told in Rev 1:5,6 – “Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth, to Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever.” (NAS) How great an honour is it to be servants of this Master!

In Peter’s first epistle, we are given details of the people to whom it is written. They are those elected “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood, may grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.” (1 Peter 1:2 NAS) As we read further into the two epistles, we realize that there is a lot of work that we need to strive toward the standard desired by our Heavenly Father. Let us look at some of the areas that need our attention if we are to make our calling and election sure –

- (a) **Faith**
- (b) **Knowledge**
- (c) **Works**
- (d) **Character**

Faith:

The like precious faith mentioned in verse 1, the faith that we strive for, is vastly different from the false faith of the

heretic, the feigned faith of the hypocrite or the faith of those who put their trust in gold and silver. It is the faith of God’s elect. Titus 1:1,2 reads – “Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.” (NAS)

True faith is a precious grace, and can be scarce even among many professed Christians. There are comparatively only a small number of true believers among the many who profess Jesus Christ, who really have any clear understanding of the plan of God, few who fully comprehend true faith, as we are told in Matt 22:14 – “for many are called, but few are chosen.” (NAS) True faith is of the greatest blessing and advantage to those who have it. Indeed, Paul speaking to the Galatians states – “the just shall live by faith.” (Gal 3:11 NAS)

It is through our Faith that we are able to procure all the necessary supports and comforts for our earthly life. Faith brings us to Christ, the only source of the proper nourishment required by the new creature. Through faith, we can become as tried gold, the heavenly treasure that enriches our lives. Job gives a great example (Job 23:10) – “But He knows the way I take, when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” (NAS) It is only through faith that we can take and put on the white raiment, the royal robes that clothe and adorn and cover our inadequacy. (Rev 3:17,18) Faith is just as precious to Christians today as it was to the apostle; it produces the same precious effect in all.

Faith unites the weaker believer to Christ in the same way it does the stronger believer. Faith purifies the heart of one believer as truly as the heart of another. “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:1 NAS) Faith allows us to take hold of our precious Saviour, and allows us access to the many precious promises of our Heavenly Father. This precious faith is obtained from our Father; it is the gift from Him that we cannot earn, as it can only be obtained through the righteousness of Christ. Paul speaking to the Ephesians says – “For by grace you have been saved by faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” (Eph 2:8 NAS)

Knowledge:

Knowledge of our Heavenly Father and faith in Him are the ways whereby all spiritual support and comfort are conveyed to us, as we are told in John 17:3 – “this is life eternal, that they might come to know Thee (come to a knowledge of Thee) the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” (KJV) we must also accept and acknowledge our Heavenly Father as the author of our calling and that this comes from no other source. The apostle Peter in verse 3 states – “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.” (KJV)

The last part of this verse “called us to glory and virtue” is

better translated in the NAS as “called us by His own glory and excellence.” This seems more in keeping with the passage of scripture, as we have no glory or virtue of our own, as we are told in Eph 1:17-19 - “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.”

It is only through our Heavenly Father’s power that we can be brought out from the darkness of the world to stand before Him, as Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:9 – “but ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (KJV) Peter goes on to give encouragement through the promises of our Heavenly Father as we are told in 2 Peter 1:4 – “for by these (His own glory and power) He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.” (NAS)

Some of these promises of our Heavenly Father include –

- For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:26 KJV)
- Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. (Gal 4:28 KJV)
- In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. (Eph 1:13 KJV)
- Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (2 Peter 3:13 KJV)
- This is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life. (1 John 2:25 KJV)
- And of course the greatest promise of the verse just read – That you might become partakers of the divine nature.

The apostle Peter uses the promises of our Heavenly Father to excite and engage us to make advances in grace and holiness. By His grace, we have been able to obtain this precious faith through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is so much needed to assist us on our journey along the narrow way. This is a very good beginning, but we are not to rest as if we were already perfect. Rather, the apostle exhorts us to press forward. We should also exhort our brethren and excite them to the use of all proper means to obtain what we desire of God to bestow His rich gifts upon them. To make any progress in our Christian walk we must be diligent and industrious in our endeavours. Without our giving all diligence, there is no gaining of any ground in the work of holiness; those who are slothful in the business of religion will make nothing of it. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” (Luke 13:24 KJV)

This striving requires that we have come to a knowledge and love for our Heavenly Father’s plans, not only for us, but also for all of mankind. We have to learn what He wants from us. We have to comprehend the great sacrifice of Christ and what this means for all of us. To gain this knowledge or understanding of God’s plan, we have to be diligent in studying the Bible. It soon becomes clear to us that just the reading of the Bible does not bring or deepen this understanding or knowledge. We find that studying together gives us an opportunity to learn from one another and as we are told in Heb 10:24,25 – “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.” (KJV)

We soon realize, however, that there is more to knowledge than just studying or meeting together; there are many who do this, yet seem to have little knowledge of God’s plan and often greatly limit His goodness and mercy. We soon realize that fuller knowledge comes only from our Heavenly Father. “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” (Eph 1:17,18 KJV)

We further realize that without the gift of the Holy Spirit we cannot understand the deeper things of God as Paul tells us in 1 Cor 2:13,14 – “which things we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” (NAS) We have to change from thinking as the world does, because the knowledge of God is foolishness to them, His ways do not give them the rewards they are looking for. We need the sanctified, spiritual mind that is centred on our Heavenly Father and His Son, so that we are ready to glean from the Scriptures the knowledge that we require to make our calling and election sure.

Works:

The faith and knowledge that we have the privilege of receiving from our Heavenly Father should be able to be seen by others around us. “Keep your behaviour excellent among the gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.” (1 Peter 2:12 NAS) Paul tells us in Rom 3:28 – “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (KJV) So we realise that our works do not save us any more than the law was able to save the Jews, but they do give a way to demonstrate to those around us the love and reverence we have towards Christ and our Heavenly Father.

James gives a very good demonstration of works showing forth our faith when speaking to the brethren (James 2:14-26 KJV) – “What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

and....ye give them not those things which are needful, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone....Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ...Ye see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." James shows that our Heavenly Father expects us to demonstrate our faith to Him. Abraham's faith was tested by God and so at times we can expect our faith to be tested

Character:

As we develop our faith, demonstrating its growth, through the opportunities that are given to us by our Heavenly Father, by works that give the honour to Him,, we also need to study diligently how we can better serve our Lord and help our brethren and mankind. In addition, we see from Peter's words (2 Peter 1:5) we should at the same time be developing our character to be more like our Lord. The word add (to your faith) has the meaning of to fully supply, so we can see that he is stressing the importance of character development if we are to make our calling and election sure. Areas for development as listed by Peter are –

- **Virtue:** Fortitude or strength of character. Our Lord told the apostles in John 14:1 – "Let not your heart be troubled...believe in God, believe also in me" and later in the chapter (V 27) – "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." (NAS)
- **Temperance:** Self-control or moderation. We must be moderate in desiring and using the good things of natural life; an inordinate desire after these is inconsistent with an earnest desire after God and Christ. "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand," (Phil 4:5 KJV)
- **Patience:** The Greek word has the meaning of Cheerful Endurance. We have to learn to bear calamities and crosses that we may be called to bear with silence and submission, without murmuring against God. James tells us "let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1:4) All the trials that we go through are to complete our character development.
- **Godliness:** "To be devout", denotes goodness, characterized by a God-ward attitude, i.e. our behaviour should be such as is well pleasing to our Heavenly Father.
- **Brotherly Kindness:** Tender affection to all our fellow Christians, who are children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travelers on the same narrow way and heirs of the same inheritance. We have to love them with a "pure heart fervently", in the same way that we unreservedly love those of our natural family. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you,

that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34.35 NAS)

- **Charity:** A love of goodwill to all mankind. This must be added to the love of delight which we have for those who are the children of God. We are to sympathise with mankind in their calamities, and as we are able relieve their necessities. We must remember that if we make our calling and election sure, these are the ones that we will be working to restore to harmony with God in the next age. "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So then while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men. And especially to those who are of the household of the faith." (Gal 6:9,10)

It is worth noting what the apostle Peter tells us in verse 8 – 'For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (2 Peter 1:8 KJV) Note that we not only have to have these qualities of faith, knowledge, works and the different character traits, but we have to be continually working on them to improve all aspects of our journey along the narrow way. The word translated barren in the text is given in the margin as idle, a more accurate rendering of the Greek. We cannot be idle but must add one grace to another, remembering that all Christian graces come from the heart, so we have to thrive and grow. If we abound in grace, then we will aspire to good works.

Peter, however, sounds a warning in the next verse (V 9) – "But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." (KJV) The blindness here is that of a new-born babe who is unable to focus. So the Christian who is blind in this sense does not focus on the word of God. This is further brought with the thought of "cannot see afar off" which is used by Peter. This does not contradict the preceding word "blind", it qualifies it; he of whom it is true that he is blind in that he cannot discern spiritual things, is near-sighted in that he is occupied in regarding worldly affairs. (Vine) He has forgotten his obligation to his Master and his Heavenly Father as one saved by the blood of the Lamb.

Conclusion:

It is the duty and privilege of all believers to strive to make their calling and election sure, remembering that they were called of God. This requires diligence and labour,. There must also be close self-examination - Are our minds enlightened? Are our endeavours renewed? Are our whole minds fixed on heavenly things? Have we personally examined ourselves to identify those areas of our lives that could do with improvement or need to be worked upon?

Above all, we have to remember that it is God who does the calling and election and it is only through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit that we can, by His grace, make our calling and election sure. (RC)



MOUNTAINS OF THE LORD

There is something about a mountain that is always fascinating. It has captured the imagination of many a poet and writer. Many hymns have a mountain as a background of the message intended for us. If we climb to the top of a mountain we are generally rewarded by a very pleasant view of the surrounding country. The air is fresh and crisp and it gives one the feeling of being lifted above the busy chores and things that engage us each day. One can look down on the busy cities and realise that it is man that made the cities but God who made the country and the mountains and the beauty that goes with it. It is no wonder then that there are occasions in the Bible when mountains are mentioned as places where one can go to for quietness and meditation.

This is what Jesus did. We can read of it in Matthew 14:13-23 (v.13) *"When Jesus heard of it (John the Baptist's death), he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.* (v.14) *And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.* (v.15) *And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.* (v.16) *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.* (v.17) *And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes.* (v.18) *He said, Bring them hither to me.* (v.19) *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.* (v.20) *And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.* (v.21) *And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.* (v.22) *And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.* (v.23) *And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when evening was come, he was there alone."*

Here it is evident that Jesus and his disciples needed rest after the arduous task of feeding all these people. He sent the disciples away in a boat to allow them to get away from the crowd of people. But he himself went into a mountain to pray: *"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when evening was come, he was there alone."* There are two points here to remember. It is possible in verse 15 that the idea of the disciples was, in asking Jesus to send the multitude away, so that they could have a time with Jesus without the interruption of the people around them. In verse 23 Jesus desired to have a period of quietness with His Father in heaven, to shut out the world and commune with his Father. This occasion was probably what prompted the words of Hymn 59 (BSH).

*"Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile
Weary, I know it, of the press and throng;
Wipe from your brow the sweat and dust of toil,*

And in my quiet strength again be strong"

*"Come ye aside from all the world holds dear,
For converse which the world has never known;
Alone with Me and My Father here,
With Me and with my Father, not alone.*

*"Come, tell Me all that ye have said and done,
Your victories and failures, hopes and fears;
I know how hardly souls are wooed and won;
My choicest wreaths are always wet with tears.*

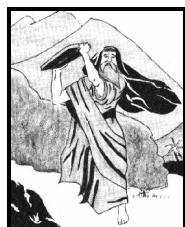
*"Come ye and rest! the journey is too great,
And ye will faint beside the way, and sink!
The bread of Life is here for you to eat,
And here for you the wine of love to drink.*

*"Then fresh from converse with the Lord return,
And work till daylight softens into even,
The brief hours are not lost in which ye learn,
More of your Master and His rest in Heaven."*

For us, the lesson could be that while we are engaged in our daily round and common task, it is our privilege always to realise that the task is done 'as unto the Lord' and our efforts should be applied with patience and cheerfulness. But when the opportunity arises, we can then seek quietness with the Lord. This is what Jesus did. After the busy times that engage our attention for the larger part of a day, we can depart into a mountain and have communion with God. *"Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee"* (Psalm 116:7)

"While engaged in the active duties of life we must of necessity bend our mental energies to the work in hand, for if we do anything merely mechanically and without concentrating thought upon it, we cannot do it well; yet even here Christian principle, well established in the character, will unconsciously guide. But when the strain of labour and care are lifted for a time, the established habit of thought, like the needle to the pole, should quickly return to its rest in God." (Manna comment, February 9)

MT SINAI



To climb to the top of a mountain requires some effort. This reminds us of the time when God gave Moses the Law. This is recorded in Exodus Ch.19. The whole chapter is interesting but let us read verses 17-20: *"And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God and*

they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up."

Mount Sinai is 7,400 feet high and 3,000 feet above the surrounding country, yet Moses was called upon to go to the top of the mount. This would not be an easy journey. It would take some time and effort to climb 3,000 or 4,000 feet, but Moses was compensated for it. He received a great blessing - the blessing of receiving the Law and the Commandments. He also experienced a blessing by actually hearing God speak to him.

Even when Jesus went up into the mountain to pray, it would be an upward path. This could well be a lesson for us. If we are to receive a blessing from a mountaintop experience, it requires effort on our part. We all gather together on occasions to receive a blessing from fellowship together but it requires an effort to get there, to prepare for the occasion, especially for our elderly ones. It would perhaps be easier to stay home, but then there would not be the same blessing at the end of the day. "Lord, lift me up and let me stand" – again the words of a hymn (Alexander 165) come to mind and express the sentiments of all the Lord's people.

*"I'm pressing on my upward way,
New heights I'm gaining day by day,
Still praying as I onward bound.
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.*

*"My heart has no desire to stay
Where doubts arise and fears dismay.
Though some may dwell where these abound,
My constant aim is higher ground.*

*"I long to scale the utmost height.
Tho' rough the way and hard the fight,
My song while climbing shall resound
Lord, lead me on to higher ground.*

*"Lord lead me up the mountainside,
I dare not climb without my guide,
And heaven gained I'll gaze around
With grateful heart from higher ground.*

*"Lord, lift me up and let me stand
By faith on Zion's tableland
Where love and joy and light abound.
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."*

MT PISGAH

There is another hymn which is written for us intending to

give us a vision of the blessings of the millennial kingdom, (BSH 47):

*"Come all ye saints to Pisgah's mountain,
Come see the view beyond the tide;
Millennial Canaan is before us,
Soon we'll sing on the other side."*

This hymn was based on the experience of Moses when he was taken by God to the top of Mt. Pisgah to view the promised land. The story is in Deut.34:1-4: "And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan. And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the uttermost sea, And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither."

At this time the Israelites were in the land of Moab at the northern end of the Dead Sea, opposite Jericho. They awaited the Lord's direction by the pillar of cloud before crossing Jordan to take possession of Canaan. Moses' work was accomplished by then, and the Lord led him up to the top of Mount Pisgah. The mountain is 3,586 feet above sea level. From this point a beautiful panoramic view is possible. From here Moses saw all the rich land promised to Israel. No doubt, also, by faith Moses would recall the promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that 'in thy seed' all the families of the earth would be blessed.

There is an antitypical picture in this incident. The antitypical Moses, Christ the head and the Church His body, have been raised up and are heading up to the millennial kingdom. Today we are at the close of a great epoch and the journey is almost completed, so to speak. We are now like Moses on Mt. Pisgah and looking across to the promised land – to the glories of the age to come, looking forward to the blessings that will come to the world of mankind during the millennial reign of Christ. With the eye of faith we see the blessing of all the families of the earth through the faithful ones of spiritual Israel and the Ancient Worthies, who will be the earthly representation of the Kingdom. We perceive the blessing of the light of the knowledge of the Lord as it will fill the whole earth. As we read in Isa.11:9: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain for the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the water covers the sea" and in Jer.31:34 that "All shall know him from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord."

From this elevated position on Mt. Pisgah we can even look so far as to see by faith when even death will be done away with, as we are told in Rev.21:4 "there shall be no more death." Verse 3 of hymn 47 says:

*"Faith now beholds salvation's river
Gliding from underneath the throne,
Bearing its life to whomsoever
Will return to the Father's home.
They will walk mid the trees by the rivers*

*With the friends they have loved by their sides
They will sing the glad songs of salvation
And be ready to follow their guide."*

Moses was not allowed by God to enter the promised land. His work was completed at this stage of his life. So we read in Deut.34:5 that "*Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord.*" There could be a picture here of the Church during this present time. The Millennial blessings are not for us. We have been called to a higher calling. But the vision of the Kingdom and a knowledge of God's plan of salvation that will in due time come to all mankind through Jesus, and his love for the human race, fills us with a deep appreciation of God's justice, wisdom, love and power and His plan of salvation which we treasure so much.

MT ZION

There is another mountain which figures prominently throughout the Bible, and that is Mount Zion. Mt. Zion is the highest mountain in Jerusalem. In Psa.48:2 the literal Mt. Zion is spoken of as a beautiful place. "*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mt. Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*" Let us read also Psalm 132:13,14: "*For the Lord Jehovah hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.*" There is a special reason for the reference to Zion as being a place of beauty and a place that Jehovah desired for his habitation. This mountain is also used as a symbol, and is used in this way in Micah 4:1,2:

"But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord (the mountain here represents God's Kingdom) and to the house of the God of Jacob (the natural Israel in God's Kingdom) and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion (the spiritual phase of the Kingdom, which will be Christ and His Church) and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (the seat of the earthly phase of the Kingdom).

In Rev.14:1 we see how the Apostle John saw in vision the Lamb on Mount Zion. We read: "*And I looked and lo, a lamb stood on mount Zion and with him a hundred forty and four thousand having his Father's name written in their foreheads.*" There is no doubt that this has reference to our Lord Jesus with those called-out ones during the Gospel Age who will be with him during His Kingdom reign. This picture of the Lord Jesus and his 144,000 faithful ones on Mount Zion seems to speak to us of the ultimate joy when the bridegroom united with His bride will rejoice because the time has come for earth's new government to be set up.

This is shown in verses 2 and 3: "*And I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps. And they sung as it were a new song be-*

fore the throne.... and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth." The song they sing could be the glad tidings that restitution is about to begin. Remember, this is what Moses saw from Mt. Pisgah – a picture of the new age.

There is another Psalm which uses Mount Zion as a symbol of the new Kingdom, Ps.50:1-5: "*The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself.*" Yes, after the Lord has gathered His saints together to Him and the trouble in the world is over, the perfected saints will be with their Lord to bring peace to all mankind. (JH)

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined!"

THIS YEAR

I know not whether dark or bright
This year shall be.
I only know he giveth light,
And I can trust his love and might
Who leadeth me.

I know not what may be the way
That I must take.
But I can humbly trust and pray
That I may never from him stray,
Nor him forsake.

I know not what the year may bring
To those I love.
But we can sweetly rest and sing
Beneath the shadow of his wing
Here and above.

I know not whether short or long
Our lives may be;
But naught he chooseth can be wrong,
And he shall be our strength and song,
Now and eternally.

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