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Awakening the Sleepers in Hell

***“Now is Christ
risen from the
dead, and become
the firstfruits of
them that slept.”***

—I Corinthians 15:20

FROM THE STANDPOINT

of human tradition it would be unthinkable that anyone could sleep in hell. The sacred Scriptures, however, reveal that all who are in the Bible hell are asleep, that they are in that state of unconsciousness which the Psalmist David described as “the sleep of death.” (Ps. 13:3) All who die succumb to this sleep, and the Bible shows them to be in hell—*sheol* of the Old Testament, and *hades* of the New Testament.

Jesus, the Redeemer and Savior of the world, went into *sheol*, the sleep of death, when he died. Jesus knew that his Heavenly Father would awaken him from this sleep, and said to his Father, as recorded in prophecy, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” (Ps. 16:10) Jesus was awakened from the sleep of death, and thus brought out of hell. On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter testified to this, quoting this same verse from the Psalms.—Acts 2:24-32

In our text, the Apostle Paul indicates the significance of Jesus' awakening from the sleep of death by referring to him as the "firstfruits of them that slept." This implies that there would be "afterfruits," that Jesus' awakening would, in God's due time, be followed by the awakening of others. Jesus' disciples will be the first thus to be awakened, and Paul speaks of these as being part of the firstfruits class. After that, during the period of Christ's Second Presence in the affairs of earth, will come the awakening of all mankind.—I Cor. 15:22-26

TRADITIONAL "VISION" OF HELL

Tradition disclaims that the dead are sleeping, in the sense that they are unconscious. These traditions claim, in fact, that there really is no death, and that those who appear to die are actually more alive than ever. The righteous who thus appear to die, it is claimed, go at once to a place of great happiness, and the unrighteous to a place of torment or, at a minimum, enter a state of conscious, eternal separation from God.

Traditional views concerning hell have taken on many forms over the centuries. Church history indicates that in the early centuries of Christianity very little was written about hell, and that most Christians did not think of it as a literal place. However, beginning around the fifth and sixth centuries, the "vision" of hell began to expand to a horrifying picture of a place of torture and torment beyond description. It is said, according to these medieval teachings, that those who go to this "place" are conscious and suffer literal pain and anguish eternally, with no hope of relief or even of

merciful destruction. To many, this vision of hell continues even today to be believed and adhered to.

Others, however, including many church leaders themselves, have modified their views and teachings concerning hell in more recent times. These say that hell, rather than being a literal place of eternal torment, torture, and physical pain, is a state, or condition, in which one is eternally separated from God. These teachings also include the claim that those in this state are conscious and eternally aware of their separation from God and from all good things.

Whether one holds to the older traditional view with its ideas of torment and pain, or the more modern view, that of eternal separation from God, or a view that perhaps lies somewhere in between, all of these “visions” of hell have two important features in common. First, they all hold that those in hell are eternally conscious; and second, that their fate is eternal, with no hope of change or release.

Unfortunately, none of these viewpoints on hell can be harmonized with the Word of God. Thus, we are faced with the necessity of deciding whether we will accept the testimony of the Bible, or continue to hold to human tradition, whether old or more modern. It is proper, then, that the testimony of the Bible be examined thoroughly in order that we may have no misgivings as to what it truly does teach. Does the Bible actually speak of the dead as being unconscious and in a condition properly likened to sleep? Does the Bible teach that both the righteous and the unrighteous are in this same state or condition of unconsciousness until

awakened in the resurrection? Let us examine these questions.

SLEPT WITH THEIR FATHERS

One of the often repeated statements appearing in the Old Testament when reference is made to the death of its various people is that they slept with their fathers. “David slept with his fathers.” (I Kings 2:10) “Rehoboam slept with his fathers.” (chap. 14:31) “Asa slept with his fathers.” (chap. 15:24) “Omri slept with his fathers.” (chap. 16:28) Some of these kings were righteous—some were not (see I Kings 16:25)—but in death they all “slept.”

If, according to tradition, the righteous go immediately to heaven when they seem to die, they would not be likely to sleep while enjoying themselves in the company of the holy angels. If, on the other hand, the unrighteous go to a place of torment, it would hardly be likely that they would be sleeping in the tortures which tradition says are inflicted upon them in such a state.

God, however, the author of the Bible, knows that in death there is no consciousness. This is revealed in a favor he showed to the good king, Josiah, of Judah. Because of the nation of Israel’s sins, great calamities were to come upon the people, but God said to King Josiah, “I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.”—II Chron. 34:28

JESUS’ TESTIMONY

Jesus employed the same language with respect to the dead as that which we have quoted from the

Old Testament. When the brother of Martha and Mary died, Jesus said to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." The disciples misunderstood this, thinking that Jesus referred to natural sleep. Then he said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead."—John 11:11-14

The Apostle Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, and referring to those who had seen Jesus after his resurrection, mentions five hundred brethren, "of whom," he said, "the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." (I Cor. 15:6) These were "brethren" who were so faithful to the Master that he manifested himself to them after his resurrection. Surely if tradition were true, those among them who had died should have gone to heaven, but not so. Paul wrote that they had fallen asleep in death.

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is another interesting case in point. He faithfully bore witness to the Gospel, and as a result was sentenced by the Jewish religious rulers to be stoned to death. His last moments of life, and his death, are described thus, "He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7:60) Nothing is said about Stephen being caught up to heaven. He simply fell asleep in death.

ALL CLASSES SLEEP IN DEATH

Job is one of the best known personalities of the Bible. James wrote, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." (James 5:11) Job needed patience because of the severe trials which God permitted to come

upon him. They became so distressing that at one point in his experience he began to wonder if it might not have been better had he died at birth. Expressing this sentiment, Job said, "Why died I not from the womb? . . . For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest."—Job 3:11,13

One of the appealing aspects of the tradition that the dead are not dead, is the belief that infants and children, it is said, when they seem to die, go directly to heaven and become angels. However, Job did not have this understanding. He believed that had he died when he was an infant he would have "lain still, . . . been quiet, . . . slept, . . . been at rest." This hardly describes the life of angels in heaven. This tradition is, perhaps, a pleasing prospect for grieving mothers, yet it is much more comforting, and harmonious with Bible teaching, to think of these little ones as sleeping quietly until the resurrection, and then being returned to their families.

Job does not leave the subject with what would have been his own experience had he died as an infant. "Then had I been at rest," he continues, "With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves; Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master."—vss. 13-19

There is no mistaking the meaning of this language. It reveals that the great, the small, the rich, the poor, the wicked, the weary, kings, princes, and babies are all in the same state or condition when they die. It is neither a state of happiness, nor of torment, nor of any conscious thought. No, as Job explains, it is a state of quietness—of sleep. That is why, a little later in his experience, Job asked God to let him die. He wanted release from his suffering and he knew that he would find it in death.

The record of Job's prayer for death is in chapter 14, verse 13: "O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!" A most revealing fact in this prayer is Job's use of the Hebrew word *sheol*, which is here translated "grave." This word is translated "hell" 31 times, "grave" 31 times, and "pit" 3 times in the Old Testament, and it is the only Hebrew word thus translated.

In reality, the Hebrew word *sheol* describes the only hell the ancient people of God knew anything about. It is the only hell that God said anything about throughout a period of more than four thousand years—from creation to the First Advent of Christ. Nor was any change made then. The original manuscripts of the New Testament were written in the Greek language, and the Greek words translated "hell" do not describe the state of the dead any differently than it was understood by God's people during Old Testament times.

Job asked God to let him go to hell to escape suffering! In the hell of tradition, Job's suffering would have been greatly increased, and would have

continued throughout the endless ages of eternity. However, the traditional concept of hell had not developed in Job's day, or, if it had, he knew it was wrong. Job knew that hell was the state of death in which he would lie still, where he would sleep in unconsciousness, and be released from his suffering.

In his prayer, Job put a limit on the length of time he wanted to remain in hell. "Until thy wrath be past," he said to God. The tradition is that hell is a place where God visits his wrath upon sinners. Here was Job, though, a righteous servant of God, asking to go to hell to escape divine wrath. What did he mean by this?

Evidently Job was referring to the sentence of death which was resting upon all mankind—that judgment which fell upon Adam and his race because of sin. This wrath, or disfavor of God, is manifested by all the things which are associated directly or indirectly with sickness, pain, and, ultimately, death. Job felt that he had experienced his share of suffering in connection with this penalty of death, so he asked God to let him die and thus be free from further pain.

Job was one of God's faithful servants, and in this prayer we find him using language which reveals God's loving plan for the redemption and recovery of the human race from the sleep of death. He asked to be hidden in hell only until God's wrath was past. This means that the sentence of death would one day—in God's due time—be lifted. The Bible confirms this over and over again. Job believed it, and he wanted to remain in hell only until God's due time for destroying sin, pain, and death.

THOSE ASLEEP TO BE AWAKENED

Paul wrote that through Christ's kingdom death would be destroyed. (I Cor. 15:25,26) Isaiah prophesied that God would "swallow up death in victory." (Isa. 25:8) In Revelation 21:4, we are assured that a time is coming when there shall be no more pain and no more death. The Bible likens the long period of the reign of sin and death to a nighttime of darkness, and we read in Psalm 30:5 that while weeping may endure for a night, "joy cometh in the morning." Job looked forward to this morning of joy, and asked God to let him rest in hell until it dawned.

Having asked God to let him die, Job then asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14) Job did not desire to remain asleep in hell forever, nor did he expect to, for he continues, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait [in death], till my change [from death to life] come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." (vss. 14,15) Job knew that those who die, and are therefore sleeping in hell, will be awakened from the "sleep of death" in the glorious resurrection day.

Daniel 12:2 reads, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." When God sentenced Adam to death, he said, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. 3:19) Sleeping in the dust of the earth, therefore, would mean sleeping in death, in the Bible hell.

The "many" that shall be awakened from the sleep of death are actually the multitudes who have died. We need only to consult the testimony of God's Word to determine who and how many are included in this "many" who are to be awakened from the sleep

of death. The Bible likens the dead to captives in prison, and the Old Testament describes their awakening as a returning from their captivity.

In Ezekiel 16:53, God assures us of the awakening from death of the Israelites, the Sodomites, and the Samaritans. Jeremiah 48:47 reveals that the Moabites will be awakened. Jeremiah 49:6,39 includes the Ammonites and the Elamites as among those who will be released from their captivity in death.

In a prayer of Moses, recorded by the psalmist, he said, “Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.” (Ps. 90:3) Moses’ prayer reminds us of Paul’s words, “Just as all men die by virtue of their descent from Adam, so all such as are in union with Christ will be made alive again.” (I Cor. 15:22, *Williams Translation*) Jesus said that “all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth.” (John 5:28,29) Paul testified that there would be a “resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”—Acts 24:15

In Revelation 20:13, we are informed that “death and hell” will deliver up the dead which are in them. Here, as throughout the Bible, those in hell are described as “dead.” They are not alive and being tortured, or conscious in any sense of the word. Being asleep in death, they are to be awakened, for this is the provision made for them by divine love, the provision of redemption through the shed blood of Christ.

“MANY”—ALL

So we see that the “many” referred to by Daniel as being awakened from death are really all the

dead. He explains that some of these shall come forth to “everlasting life.” Beginning with righteous Abel, and down through the centuries to John the Baptist, there were individual servants of God who proved faithful to him. Paul explains that these will come forth to perfection in a “better resurrection.”—Heb. 11:35

The disciples of Jesus in this age also come forth in the resurrection to “life”—to “glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.” (Rom 2:7) These, together with Jesus, are the “firstfruits” of the resurrection, and they will live and reign with him in his kingdom.—Rev. 3:21; 20:6

There are many, however, countless millions, who in this life did not qualify for these special classes. When these are awakened from their sleep in *sheol*, or hell, it will be, as Daniel says, to face “shame and everlasting contempt.” Because of traditional misconceptions of the future punishment for sinners, the expression “shame and everlasting contempt” has been thought to mean an eternity of torture. This is wrong.

A moment’s reflection will reveal clearly what the Prophet Daniel means. The awakening of those who will come forth to shame and contempt means that they will be alive again, as humans, right here on the earth. The Jewish people of Daniel’s day were taken into captivity because of their idolatry. Their captors were far from pleasing to God. In every generation of human experience, iniquity has flourished, and aside from those who have earnestly and sincerely endeavored to know and do God’s will, the vast majority would not be found praiseworthy when compared with the high standards of

righteousness which will prevail throughout the earth at the time they are awakened from the sleep of death.

In every generation there have also been thieves, murderers, exploiters, and oppressors. During the reign of sin and death those who have thus worked wickedness have usually been “delivered.” (Mal. 3:15) However, it will be different when they are awakened from hell. The authority of Christ’s kingdom will prevent a continuance of their wicked ways. Beside this, they will be mingling with those whom they injured, and will no longer be able to hide the facts from them. The person who was murdered will then be able to identify his assailant. How great indeed will be the shame of the wrongdoers, and how they will be held in contempt.

There will be very few, perhaps none, of those awakened from the sleep of death in the general resurrection who will not have some cause for shame. Thankfully, however, this will not continue for eternity. The word “everlasting” in the phrase “everlasting contempt” is translated from a Hebrew word meaning “age lasting,” or “lasting to a consummation.” It will continue until proper amends are made and the individual involved proves worthy of the respect and confidence of his fellows.

So it will be true, as Isaiah wrote, that “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,” because “there shall be no more death.”—Isa. 35:10; Rev. 21:4 ■

A Living Hope

Key Verse: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*
—I Peter 1:3

Selected Scripture:
I Peter 1:3-12
Spirit and conform their lives to the image of the Master.—Rom. 8:29

PETER INTRODUCES THIS epistle by identifying himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, and addresses his words primarily to Jewish Christians who resided outside the commonwealth of Israel. These were members of God's elect, but not because the Heavenly Father arbitrarily selected them as individuals to be members of the church. On the contrary, they accepted the invitation to become part of a body of believers who would obey Jesus Christ their Savior, consecrate themselves, receive the Holy

Spirit and conform their lives to the image of the Master.—Rom. 8:29
This same privilege of becoming a part of the body of Christ is offered to devoted individuals throughout the entire Gospel Age, who after accepting the redemptive merit of our Lord's shed blood, sacrifice their earthly interests and make the doing of God's will a priority in their conduct.—I Pet. 1:1,2

Our Key Verse affirms that neither God nor Jesus is part of a coequal trinity. This verse also states that the Heavenly Father has set forth the magnificent hope of a heavenly inheritance for us based upon the resurrection

of Christ, who provided the ransom price needed to redeem us from the death sentence which fell upon mankind in Eden.

Consecrated believers also have the prospect of receiving an incorruptible inheritance if they faithfully maintain a continuing relationship with the Heavenly Father. This hope “that fadeth not away” will preserve them until the end of their earthly course.—vss. 4,5

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”—vss. 6-9

In the foregoing mention of salvation, two aspects may be considered. Peter reminds us that the believer who is diligent in pursuing a life of holiness will have the ultimate privilege of being a part of the royal priesthood and will live and reign in heaven with the Savior, Jesus Christ. Additionally, in that capacity, when God’s kingdom is established on earth, the church will have a share in helping to bless all the willing and obedient members of the human family who will learn righteousness under the most favorable of conditions when Satan is bound for one thousand years.—Rev. 20:1-6

God’s great mercy in giving believers an abundant hope to be joint-heirs with Christ in the promised kingdom should spur each of us to be diligent in developing the necessary graces and crystallization of character to participate in such an important feature of the Heavenly Father’s overall divine plan for all the families of the earth. ■

Equipped with Hope

Key Verse:
*“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.”
—II Peter 1:3*

Selected Scripture:
II Peter 1:3-14

THE WRITER OF THIS EPI-
tle identifies himself with the double name Simon Peter. Perhaps this was done to distinguish the two significant aspects of his life, before and after he became a disciple of Christ. (II Pet. 1:1) In his salutation to the brethren, Peter indicates that an abundance of grace and peace could be attained based upon an intimate knowledge of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.—vs. 2

Our Key Verse emphasizes that God's power will be instrumental towards the consecrated believer's transformation and progressive development of essential attributes required for moral excellence and the attainment of the divine nature.

In verse 4 of our lesson, Peter indicates that as a means of assisting believers in their Christian journey, we receive from God's Word “exceeding great and precious promises” which, when meditated upon and applied in our hearts, will furnish us with what is needful to have the hope of a divine inheritance become a reality in our lives.

The following passages enumerate specific areas needed for our spiritual growth and development which are sometimes referred to as “The Christian Ladder.”

“Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [love].”—vss. 5-7

The importance of the foregoing virtues in believers who hope to become part of the body of Christ is underscored by similar listings of attributes found elsewhere in the Scriptures. These include the Beatitudes as given by Jesus, the fruits of the spirit recorded by Paul, and James’ elucidation regarding the wisdom that comes from above.—Matt. 5:1-10; Gal. 5:22,23; James 3:17,18

We have been inspired to give our lives in consecration to God because we have come to appreciate his magnificent plan of salvation. This plan offers an opportunity not only to have the world of mankind recovered from the death condition into which Father Adam plunged his posterity, but one which has also provided exceeding great and precious promises for the church to share with the Redeemer in blessing all the families of the earth in God’s kingdom. We have seen how reasonable the philosophy of the atonement is and embrace and espouse these good tidings of salvation because of our confidence and faith in the Word of God. We have received in our hearts the true doctrine based upon the words of Christ and the inspired apostles. Peter reminds us that not only must we believe the Truth, but its intended effect upon our lives is that we must put on holiness and truly follow in the Master’s footsteps.

In view of these assurances, how powerful is Peter’s summation as to the end result of following his admonitions in this lesson. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”—II Pet. 1:10



Hope through Stewardship

Key Verse: *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*
—I Peter 4:10

Selected Scripture:
I Peter 4:1-11

BELIEVERS WHO APPRECI-ate Christ’s great sacrifice of his perfect humanity in order to provide redemption from sin will consequently desire to devote their own lives to following the principles of righteousness in their daily conduct. As fallen beings we cannot actually manifest perfection in our thoughts, words, or deeds in every particular. However, by accepting the merit of Christ’s

sacrifice as the basis for our justification, we, as New Creatures whose lives have been transformed by the influence of the Holy Spirit, will not willfully desire to practice sin. In those instances where we recognize we have fallen short of the divine standard of righteous conduct, we will promptly seek forgiveness at the throne of heavenly grace.—Heb. 4:16; I Pet. 4:1,2

“The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.”—vss. 3,4

The foregoing passage describes a period prior to our

having made a full consecration to do God's will. Although we may not have been afflicted totally by such degrading influences, to whatever degree any of those qualities might have been present in our lives, our focus should now be upon the manifestation of holiness in all of life's affairs.

Peter continues by telling us that from the divine standpoint we are dead to the world's aims and ambitions. Therefore, God judges us based upon our heart intentions and faithfulness in walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit despite our imperfections as well as the disesteem of others who might ascribe evil motives to our efforts in walking righteously. (vss. 5,6) Continuing, the apostle reminds us of God's promises that a time of future blessings for all the human family draws nearer each day. This should make us sober in our conduct and sympathetic toward the needs of all with whom we come in contact, especially the household of faith.—vss. 7-9

Our Key Verse affirms how gracious God has been to us both in spiritual and temporal matters. As stewards, we should minister unto others according to their needs as we have opportunity. Some of the ways in which many of the Lord's people fulfill their stewardship include visiting shut-ins, volunteering for projects to promote the Gospel, circulating convention recordings, creating web pages, hosting brethren, praying for others engaged in witnessing activities, transporting brethren to meetings, writing spiritual articles or poetry, visiting consecrated believers in foreign lands, providing financial support to help further spread God's Word, and assisting with humanitarian needs. All of these activities cost us something. However, if done from a joyful heart, they demonstrate a spirit of devotion to the Lord and give evidence that we are setting our affections on things above as opposed to seeking earthly pleasures. May we heed the spirit of this admonition: "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."—I Cor. 4:2 ■

Hope in the Day of the Lord

***Key Verse: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
—II Peter 3:9***

***Selected Scripture:
II Peter 3:1-15***

give evidence of being willingly forgetful that the present sinful order will not continue forever. (vss. 3-7) Jesus illustrated this fact by referring to Noah's day, emphasizing that just as there was a general unawareness that a flood would occur to destroy that evil social order, in similar fashion, at the time of his Second Advent, there would be a lack of discernment as to the imminent removal of present unrighteous conditions. (Matt. 24:37-39) It should be noted, however, that just as this physical planet was not destroyed by the flood at

IN TODAY'S LESSON, PE-ter addresses the return of Jesus Christ, a subject of great interest to Christians throughout the entire Gospel Age. Peter reminds his readers that his epistle is based upon divine authority, as revealed in the words of the holy prophets, and upon precepts that were given by our Lord Jesus Christ.—II Pet. 3:1,2

Peter also issues a warning against false teachers who would scoff at the assertion that Christ would actually return. Such individuals would

the end of the first dispensation, the earth will likewise not be literally destroyed by fire in the future because “the earth abideth for ever.”—Eccles. 1:4

“Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (II Pet. 3:8) This passage refers to the Day of Judgment. Contrary to a widely held belief, it does not refer to an interval of twenty-four hours. Rather, it is a period of considerably greater duration—one thousand years—which will be necessary given all of the work to be accomplished at that time.

Our Key Verse indicates this “day of the Lord” has a dual purpose. First, it is for granting the church a heavenly reward. Second, it is for dealing with the rest of the human family, both living and dead, to the intent that all might receive the benefits of Christ’s redemptive sacrifice.

Consecrated believers who recognize the prophetic evidences concerning the impending dissolution of earth’s society should be stimulated to pursue a life of increased devotion and godliness in completing the work that God has given them to do. The prospect of participating in the reign of a holy, spiritual government that will guide a reorganized earthly social order should make us very diligent in keeping our vows of consecration, and in the doing of God’s will at all costs.—II Pet. 3:11-14; Rev. 20:6

Despite the seeming difficulties and perplexities that surround us on a daily basis, let our hope in the fulfillment of all that God has promised be buttressed by Peter’s final admonition in this epistle. “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”—II Pet. 3:17,18 ■

Crucified—Yet Living—with Christ

***“I am crucified
with Christ;
nevertheless I live;
yet not I, but Christ
liveth in me: and
the life which I
now live in the
flesh I live by the
faith of the Son of
God, who loved me,
and gave himself
for me.”***

—Galatians 2:20

ONE OF THE IMPORTANT

ways that we develop the “mind of Christ” is to remember Jesus’ example of being daily crucified in his sacrifice of all earthly things, yet living to perform his Father’s will for him. While Jesus’ ultimate crucifixion on Calvary’s cross was the literal climax of all the experiences of his earthly ministry, it was his daily sacrifice and fulfillment of his consecration vows which truly showed his faithfulness to God in being crucified, yet living. Jesus told his disciples, including us, that if one truly desires to follow in his footsteps, he must likewise “take up his cross daily, and follow me.”—Luke 9:23

It is to this end that Paul, in our opening text, states that he was “crucified with Christ.” It is clear from Paul’s words that he was not talking about literal crucifixion, because he immediately says, “nevertheless I live.” Then he explains that his “life” consisted of Christ living in him, by means of faith. To Paul, that which was crucified was his former will, desires, and deeds, which were now to be replaced by those exemplified in his perfect pattern—Jesus. He was crucified, or dead in Christ, yet he lived for Jesus by serving him and the Heavenly Father. Similar to Paul, we are also to be crucified with Christ as he was, yet living in faith. This, in reality, is the true essence of the daily fulfillment of our consecration vows. This is what is meant by the taking up of our cross daily [being crucified] and following him [living in and for him].

REFLECTING ON OUR CONSECRATION

Do we often reflect on the circumstances that brought us to the point of consecrating our lives to God, and on the vast change that has taken place in us since first we believed? Surely, we who are striving to walk in the steps of Jesus, were drawn to God in the first place by an appreciation of the fact that we were in need of a Redeemer, and that Christ had died for our sins. We came to know that this was necessary if we were ever to come into God’s favor. Based on our faith in Christ’s precious blood, we gave our hearts and will to God in full consecration. Then, through the begetting power of the Holy Spirit operating on our minds, we began to know and appreciate more fully the fact that Adam was created perfect, that he had sinned willfully,

and that therefore the sentence of death was pronounced upon him. We saw that this meant Adam's extinction. We saw, also, that this sentence applied not only to Adam but to all his offspring—even to us.

How wonderful was the knowledge of the philosophy of the ransom—that since all were condemned in Adam, even so, because the perfect man Christ Jesus took Adam's place in death, the condemnation could be lifted from Adam and all his offspring. Then came the full realization that salvation was not just for us, as consecrated footstep followers of Christ, but for every human being that has ever drawn the breath of life. We understood that this was to be accomplished by a “restitution of all things”—a restoration of mankind to perfection, to have communion with and be reestablished in the favor of God. (Acts 3:21) We appreciated that these great truths were all made possible, and guaranteed, by Jesus' death as the ransom price.

It was after we realized these truths that the hope of being a part of the body of Christ became a real and living hope, that if faithful we would have the responsibility and opportunity of bringing blessings to all the families of the earth. Let us be assured of this—that it is the wonderful hope of man's full recovery from sin and death that makes our consecration to God a joyful experience. Without this understanding, we would have little in which to truly rejoice. This beautiful gem of truth is held out before us just as it was held out before our forerunner, Jesus, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of

God.” (Heb. 12:2) We must never lose sight of this lofty and holy purpose of God. It is really his eternal purpose, formed from the beginning, to have this earth filled with perfect human beings who will love God supremely and their neighbors as themselves.

WORKERS TOGETHER WITH GOD

It is through the kingdom that this eternal purpose is to be realized. (Eph. 3:10,11) We, as Christ’s footstep followers, were included in the structure of God’s original design and purpose, to be instruments to help bring his objective to fruition. The Apostle Paul expresses both our privilege and responsibility in the matter thus: “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace [favor] of God in vain.”—II Cor. 6:1

It is because of our appreciation of the wonderful provision of mankind’s restoration in God’s plans and arrangements, and especially that we have been invited to share in this greatest of all creative works, that we are moved to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and to be crucified with him, yet live by him. With Christ as our pattern, we endeavor to walk in his footsteps, experiencing the things that he experienced in order to be conformed to his image and to be developed, as he was, as a sympathetic high priest. We read in Romans 8:29, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

The experiences we encounter in the narrow way of sacrifice have a very definite correlation to our being crucified with Christ. The Apostle Paul

expresses the matter in more detail with these words: “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead [the first resurrection]. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect [mature], be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.” (Phil. 3:8-11,15,17) Then again, in Galatians 4:19, Paul states, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.”

HOW CRUCIFIED, YET LIVING?

As we contemplate all these things, and the great privilege set before us, we ask this all-important question—what is meant for us to be crucified with Christ, yet live in him? The Bible clearly indicates that we are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. As previously quoted, Jesus said that if we desire to come after him we must “deny” ourselves—that is, renounce our own will and follow the will of God, as exemplified in his perfect Son. We must also daily “take up” our cross, by following in Jesus’ way of sacrifice and suffering for righteousness. So if we

desire to walk after him, in his footsteps, and pattern our lives after his, let us find out what our perfect Master did. How did he spend his life and strength as he served his Heavenly Father?

In the Book of Isaiah, we are given a prophecy concerning Jesus and his mission. Our Lord applied the prophecy to himself in Luke 4:18,19, and therefore we can be certain that he used it as a guide for his ministry. The prophecy reads, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”—Isa. 61:1-3

As we analyze this wonderful prophecy, it becomes evident that Jesus was to spend his ministry—this most important part of his life—making a proclamation of the kingdom. As we review the gospels, we find that this was one of the primary things that occupied his time and efforts. Even the miracles of raising the dead and healing the sick were illustrations of the kingdom and the great blessings that would come to the people when it would be established. Preaching the Gospel of the kingdom was the chief concern of Jesus. This was his life, and it is to us an important part of how we “yet live” even

as we are crucified with Christ. His was a life of service, spending his strength and talents to the glory of the Heavenly Father and to the benefit of his fellowman, especially to those whom God had called—his disciples. Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, left his place of glory and honor in the heavenly realm and became the greatest servant the world has ever known.

In another prophecy concerning himself, Jesus says, as recorded by the psalmist, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.” (Ps. 40:9,10) With this sense of fulfillment, it was possible for Jesus to say on the cross with confidence, “It is finished.”—John 19:30

IN NEED OF CHRIST’S ROBE

As we strive to be crucified, yet live, with Christ—that is, endeavor to walk in the footsteps of Jesus—we become more acutely aware of his perfection and of our imperfections, for try as we might, we cannot perform perfectly. How thankful we are for the provision of Christ’s “robe of righteousness.” (Isa. 61:10) In God’s sight, we are righteous because of this, and we fulfill the requirement that those who engage in his work must have “clean hands, and a pure heart.” (Ps. 24:4) However, our standing with the Heavenly Father through the righteousness of Christ should not remove our desire and responsibility to be as nearly pure in

heart, thought, word, and deed as it is possible for us to be. In fact, the Lord expects that we will attain to perfection of intention, or will. In his mercy, he accounts the perfection of intention for the deed.

The experiences we receive in conjunction with our activity in the Heavenly Father's work are the tools he uses to help us grow up into Christ, and to help us be conformed to his image. As our forerunner, Jesus was conformed to the image of his Father, not in body or person, but in his spiritual mind. The Apostle Paul states, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect [complete in character] through sufferings." (Heb. 2:10) Further on, Paul says in Hebrews 5:8,9, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect [complete in character], he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." In John 14:9, Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In other words, the mental and moral characteristics of Jesus were the same as those of the Father.

ENDURING SUFFERING

The Apostle Peter relates our experiences incurred in the Heavenly Father's work, and our being crucified with Christ, saying, "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even

hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” (I Pet. 2:19-21) The word “suffer” means to endure or experience. How did Jesus suffer for us? He did so by holding forth the Gospel message, and because he did, we are blessed with the Truth. However, this activity brought on persecution by his natural brethren. He was the object of scoffing, ridicule, derision; he was even accused of blasphemy. With all of this, however, our text continues, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”—vs. 23

In endeavoring, then, to be crucified with Christ, we can expect to receive evil for good, and these experiences will be difficult. However, they will be used by the Heavenly Father to form Christ in us—thus allowing us to live in him. In all these experiences we must conduct ourselves as he did, so that as representatives of the Father we will bring only glory to his name.

MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

The Apostle Paul, in II Corinthians 6:3, states the matter thus: “Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed.” In the concluding verses of the previous chapter, the apostle summarizes what our ministry is, saying, “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are

ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (II Cor. 5:18-20) The unmistakable thought is that the ministry of reconciliation was originally given to Jesus. After his death and resurrection, this ministry, and the responsibility that is inherent with it, was passed on to his footstep followers. In confirmation of this, Paul says, as quoted earlier, that we are "workers together with him."—chap. 6:1

To the Apostle Paul, and to us also, the privilege of the ministry of reconciliation transcends all other responsibilities and privileges that we have in following in Christ's footsteps, being crucified with him, yet living in him. Such an honor identifies us as being representatives of the Heavenly Father, doing his work and will during this age. (John 4:34) This is why the apostle admonishes that we are in no way to give offense, that the ministry be not blamed. Rather, Paul says, in everything we should prove ourselves as God's servants "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.—II Cor. 6:4-10

(Continued on page 36)

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CHARACTER QUALITIES NEEDED

This is how we establish, or prove, ourselves as ministers of God. This is an important part of our being crucified with Christ, yet living because of him, and is the underlying reason for all the scriptural admonitions to purity and righteous living. The Apostle Peter tells us, "If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Pet. 1:8) These qualities of character and mind will demand activity in the Lord's service. In Philippians 2:14-16, we read, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life." In I Peter 2:9, the Apostle Peter tells us, "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." In these scriptures, Paul and Peter tell us that one of the important purposes of our calling is that we hold forth the wonderful light of truth.

The well-balanced consecrated believer is aware of the need for developing the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. These are also important as we are crucified, yet live, in Christ. All our efforts in the Lord's service would not be acceptable if they were not accompanied by love and the other Christlike graces. Furthermore, the fruits and graces of the Spirit alone will not benefit us ultimately, unless

they are accompanied by good works. Our development as well-balanced followers of Christ, however, must be done in the proper way. "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." (II Tim. 2:5) In the Lord's arrangement, he has designed that we will develop in the character of Christ largely through our activity in the service of the Truth, rather than in service to the many causes of the present world. The all-important purpose of our service is that by it we will put into practice the lessons taught by the experiences God permits us to have. If we do this, and do so in the proper way, directing our service toward the proper channels, we will develop love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and all the fruits and graces of the Spirit which will make our efforts to serve and please God acceptable.

BORN IN ZION

Jesus, in speaking to his disciples and to us, said, "Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." (John 4:35,36) It will be said of those who are faithful in their ministry of reconciliation, "This and that man was born in her [Zion]: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there." (Ps. 87:5,6) These will be those spoken of as having faithfully been "beheaded [symbolically] for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God."—Rev. 20:4

Let us, as we strive to more fully develop the mind of Christ, seek to know and follow ever closer to his pattern of life, being crucified with him, that we may live with him. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”—Rom. 6:3-5 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MAY 2—“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”—II Timothy 3:12 (Z. ’03-164,165 Hymn 183)

MAY 9—“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”—Colossians 2:6,7 (Z. ’03-199 Hymn 93)

MAY 16—“Thou shalt be called by a new name, . . . thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.”—Isaiah 62:2,3 (Z. ’03-164 Hymn 281)

MAY 23—“Ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.”—John 13:14 (Z. ’97-243 Hymn 23)

MAY 30—“Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation.”—Romans 12:12 (Z. ’95-20 Hymn 203)

“Buy the Truth, and Sell It Not”

***“Buy the truth,
and sell it not.”*** **THE LANGUAGE OF OUR**
—Proverbs 23:23 opening text implies that the
truth is of great value, and
that if we desire to possess it we must be willing to
pay whatever it costs. It also indicates the possibility
of losing possession of the truth after we have pur-
chased it—that it is possible to sell the truth. What
is this truth which we are admonished to buy, and
not sell? How do we buy it, and how can we sell it?

The “truth” referred to is God’s truth. When Je-
sus told Pilate that he had come into the world to
be a king and to bear witness to the truth, Pilate
asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38) Jesus had an-
swered this question the night before when, pray-
ing on behalf of his disciples, he said, “Sanctify
them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (chap.
17:17) God’s “word” in Jesus’ day consisted of the
Old Testament Scriptures. Later, this word of truth
was completed by Jesus’ own teachings and exam-
ple, and by the writings and sermons of the apos-
tles. The last of these was John’s account of the
wonderful vision which the Lord gave to him on

the Isle of Patmos, which we know as the Book of Revelation.

There is much in the Bible that is historical, much that is prophetic, and a great deal of what we may properly speak of as devotional truths, consisting of God's precious promises to guide his faithful people and to give them strength to do his will in their every time of need. The Bible's teachings on the subject of prayer also come within the category of devotional truth.

Much of the prophetic truth of the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, is of the short-range variety, pertaining largely to the experiences of the nation of Israel. Many of these prophecies were fulfilled within the lifetime of a given generation, and their fulfillment recorded—thus they became a part of the Bible's history. On the other hand, there are many prophecies of the Bible whose fulfillment would occur hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of years in the future from the time they were given. These are of the greatest importance to us because they relate to the working out of God's plan of the ages.

Then there are the doctrinal truths of the Bible. These are the truths which outline God's great theme song of redemption and restoration for the human race. The psalmist wrote, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance." (Ps. 89:15) This "joyful sound" is the great Messianic theme of the Bible which can be traced from Genesis to Revelation. The individual doctrines which make up this theme, together with the devotional, historical, and prophetic aspects of the Bible, are the great body of truths by which we are sanctified,

and for which we are dedicated to lay down our lives.

DISOBEDIENCE AND DEATH

Man's ability to continue living depended upon his obedience. However, our first parents disobeyed. Eve was deceived into partaking of the forbidden fruit. Adam willfully transgressed the divine command, and because of his disobedience brought upon himself the penalty of death which, in turn, was passed on by heredity to all his progeny. (Rom. 5:12) When passing sentence upon our first parents God said to "that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" (Rev. 20:2), that he—Satan—would bruise the heel of the "seed" of the woman, and that the "seed" of the woman would bruise his head.—Gen. 3:15

In the statement to the serpent, we have the first indication given us in the Scriptures of a coming deliverance from sin and death for the fallen human race. Later, this prospect became more comprehensive when God said to Abraham that through his "seed" all families of the earth would be blessed. We speak of this as the Abrahamic Covenant, or promise.—Gen. 12:3; 22:16-18

From Abraham's time onward, his descendants looked for this coming seed of blessing. When Jesus was born, the angel announced, "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) Later, Paul explained that Jesus, and his loyal footstep followers, constitute the seed promised to Abraham.—Gal. 3:16,27-29

THE RANSOM

The Apostle Paul wrote, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:3-6) The Greek word here translated “ransom” means “a price to correspond.” The perfect man Jesus gave his perfect humanity as a corresponding price for the perfect man Adam who had sinned and forfeited his life. This “ransom” feature of God’s plan is the very hub of the entire divine arrangement to rescue mankind from sin and death.

Many of the prophecies pertaining to the coming of Jesus as the Messiah foretold the redemptive work he would accomplish. (Isa. 53) It was also foreshadowed by the slaying of the unblemished lamb in Israel’s annual Passover celebration. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, made this connection for us when, seeing Jesus coming to him to be baptized, he said, “Behold the [Passover] Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin [Adamic sin] of the world.” (John 1:29) The resurrected Jesus, testifying to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, pointed out to them from all the prophets that Christ must first suffer and die, thus providing the ransom price, before he could enter into his glory.—Luke 24:25-27

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Another fundamental feature of God’s plan—this precious truth—is the resurrection of Jesus

from the dead. Paul, writing concerning Jesus, says that he “was delivered [to death] for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Rom. 4:25) To the Athenians on Mars’ hill, Paul explained that God had “given assurance unto all men” of the truth concerning his plan of salvation by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.—Acts 17:31

It is important to realize that Jesus was not resurrected to life as a human, but as a glorious divine being. He gave his flesh for the “life of the world.” (John 6:51) The Scriptures clearly teach that while Jesus was put to death in the flesh, he was made alive in the Spirit, in the exact image of the invisible God.—II Cor. 5:16; I Pet. 3:18; Col. 1:15

Jesus was present with his disciples for forty days between the time of his resurrection and his ascension, but for only a very small portion of this time were the disciples able to see him. The last of these miraculous appearances was on the Mount of Olives. It was then that he renewed his commission to them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, and promised that they would shortly receive the Holy Spirit to give them guidance and strength for this great undertaking.—Acts 1:4-8

NOT TO CONVERT THE WORLD

The preaching of the Gospel throughout the world since Christ’s First Advent has not been for the purpose of converting the world. At a conference of the apostles in Jerusalem, James repeated Peter’s earlier assertion that it was to take out a people for the Lord’s name. While the Jewish nation generally rejected Jesus as their Messiah, some did receive

him and became his followers. These became “sons of God,” members of the Lord’s family. However, there were too few of these to make up the number called for in God’s plan, so the message went to the Gentiles.—John 1:11,12; Acts 15:14

This company, identified as only a “little flock,” has been called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. (Luke 12:32) These have been called to suffer and to die with him, with the promise that, if faithful in this, they will live and reign with him. (II Tim. 2:11,12; Rev. 20:6) Paul speaks of them as running for “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” and as being “partakers of the heavenly calling.” (Phil. 3:14; Heb. 3:1) Jesus promised that these would be with him, and John adds that they would be like him and see him as he is.—John 14:3; I John 3:1-3

CHRIST RETURNS

The work of gathering out from Jews and Gentiles “a little flock” to live and reign with Christ was to take an entire age in the plan of God—the Gospel Age. During the ending portion of this age there was to be a harvest, when the “wheat” would be separated from the “tares.” This work was to be supervised by the returned Lord, who was to be invisibly present as the chief “reaper” from the beginning of the harvest.—Matt. 13:24-30,36-43

Jesus was not to return as a human. As we have seen, he gave his human life to redeem the world from death, and in his resurrection was highly exalted to the divine nature. It is as a divine being that he was to return, first to supervise the work of harvest in this end of the age, and then to establish

the long-promised Messianic kingdom. While we will not here go into detail concerning the scriptural proof of these points, we believe that we are living in the time of harvest—even nearing its close—and that our Lord has been present in conducting this work.

When the harvest work of this Gospel Age is complete, Jesus explained, those represented by the “wheat” will “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” (Matt. 13:43) At that time, all of these will have had their part in the “first resurrection,” and together with Christ will then “live and reign with him [Christ] a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6

Also, during the closing harvest period of this age is a “time of trouble” (Dan. 12:1), during which the present sinful order of things—under the leadership of Satan—will be brought to an end. This trouble, though very severe, is necessary in order to prepare the remainder of mankind for the righteous rulership of Christ and his “little flock.” Here again, we believe that the world is in the midst of such trouble at the present time, and that it will continue until God, through the work of the returned Lord, says, “It is done.”—Rev. 16:17

THE KINGDOM WORK

When the work of the harvest of the present age is finished, then will quickly follow the outpouring of the foretold blessings of health and life to all the families of the earth as promised to Abraham. Peter spoke of this phase of God’s plan as a period of “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21), declaring that it had been spoken by God through his holy prophets from the beginning of the world. What a

glorious climax to God's plan this will be, for it will mean the end of sickness and of death, and all the other evils which have afflicted mankind since the fall in Eden to the present time.—I Cor. 15:25,26; Rev. 21:4

Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines the word restitution, as used in Acts 3:21, as follows: "restoration of the perfect state before the fall." In order to accomplish such a complete restoration, Christ's thousand-year kingdom will be a period of enlightenment, so that the people will no longer be ignorant of God and of his laws as they are today. Because they will be enlightened and no longer in darkness, as is the case under current sinful conditions, mankind will be expected to obey, and the penalty for disobedience then will be the same as it was for Adam and his race—namely, death. Thus, Peter declares that those who do not obey will be "destroyed from among the people." (vs. 23) Today the whole world—the righteous and the unrighteous, the believers and the unbelievers, are dying. However, in Christ's kingdom only those who willfully refuse to believe and who disobey the laws of the kingdom will die. This is described in the Bible as "the second death."—Rev. 20:14,15

When our first parents transgressed divine law, they not only lost life, but they became estranged from God. During the thousand years of Christ's reign, the whole world of mankind will be reconciled to God. This is described in Jeremiah 31:31-34 as entering into a covenant with God—the foretold "New Covenant." In that covenant of reconciliation, the people will have the law of God written in their hearts. They will be restored to the full divine

image possessed by Adam before he sinned. Surely this will be a restitution—a restoration—of all that was lost by our first parents, and is a glorious prospect for the sin-cursed and dying race!

HOW TO “BUY” THE TRUTH

We have presented but a brief outline of the main features of the “joyful sound” of the Gospel of Christ, the truth of God’s plan. How can we “buy” this precious treasure of knowledge which is stored up so abundantly in the Word of God?

We buy the truth by making it our own. It is like a jewel we may see on display. We admire the jewel, but realize that in order to own it there is a price to pay. Using this as an illustration, we might think of the Bible as a display case in which, through reading, we see and admire the many and varied facets of the truth. Many “see” the truth in this way, and up to a point admire it, but do not truly make it their own.

The truth reveals the glorious character of God, and if it is received into good and honest hearts, it has a drawing power, causing us to love and want to serve God. If we receive our knowledge of the truth in the proper spirit, we will be led to make a full consecration of ourselves to do our Heavenly Father’s will. The full dedication of ourselves to God and to his cause is the price—or cost—of the truth.

As we have seen, the very center of God’s plan for the salvation of the world is Jesus and his work of redemption. Paul outlined what the result of the knowledge of Jesus and his place in God’s plan should be to those who see it displayed through the Word: “The love of Christ constraineth us; because

we thus judge, that if one died for all, . . . they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”—II Cor. 5:14,15

NOT MOMENTARY

The giving of ourselves to God is not a momentary act. It begins, of course, with a definite surrender of ourselves to him to do his will. However, this original presentation, this agreement or covenant, would be of little value should we fail to follow through by obediently laying down our lives in divine service day by day, year by year, until we have been faithful even unto death. This, too, is the cost of the truth, if we are to really make it our own, and have its mighty power continue to transform our lives, to make us suitable to participate in the first resurrection to live and reign with Christ.

Not only is the glorious plan of the ages itself revealed throughout the Bible, but the will of God for his dedicated people is also to be found there. One of the great tests of the sincerity of our consecration is maintaining our loyalty to the Lord's instructions. All of the Lord's people are imperfect according to the flesh. One evidence of this is in the fact that we often find ourselves preferring some aspects of the divine will above others, or perhaps by giving undue emphasis to one or two aspects of the truth while ignoring others.

For example, the Lord wants his people to look to him in prayer for guidance and comfort. This is a part of the Lord's will for all his people. This does not mean, however, that we should ignore other aspects of his Word. The Lord wants us to love one

another, and Paul wrote an entire chapter on love (I Cor. 13), but this does not mean that love should displace the other fruits of the spirit and their related activity in our life. Jesus, quoting Moses, said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”—Matt. 4:4

WITHOUT REPROACH

Another way in which we “buy the truth” is to live a life of service, carrying out the “ministry of reconciliation.” (II Cor. 5:18) However, if our service is to be acceptable, it is essential that we be guided by the Word of God with respect to the message we give out to the people, and also adhere ourselves to the standards of righteousness which the Lord has given us.

Ministering to the truth demands love, patience, purity, and a proper use of the Word of God. It calls for the emptying of self, that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit. It calls for sacrifice of self, that we may make others rich in the things of God. It calls for putting on the whole armor of God, that as good soldiers of Jesus Christ we may resist the onslaughts of Satan, who goes about as a roaring lion, “seeking whom he may devour.”—I Pet. 5:8

All of this is essential to our retaining the truth and its spirit as the inspirational power in our life of sacrifice. Thus, while recognizing the marvelous beauty of the truth, it is costly to “buy,” and difficult to retain throughout all the days of our earthly pilgrimage. It might well cost us the scorn of our friends, and persecution by those who prefer darkness to light.

When the psalmist spoke of the blessedness of those who “know the joyful sound” of truth, he said that such walk in the light of God’s countenance. (Ps. 89:15) This makes the truth worth much more than it costs, because those found worthy to possess it have the assurance of God’s favor. How wonderful that is, for, as Paul wrote, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31) It indicates, as Paul also wrote, that since we love God and are called according to his purpose, all things are working together for our good as new creatures.—chap. 8:28

“SELL IT NOT”

Solomon admonished us not only to buy the truth, but to hold on to it—“sell it not.” How could we sell the truth? In a word, this could be done by failure to live up to our vows of consecration. Paul wrote, “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”—Heb. 2:1; 4:1

Every precious promise of God to his people has conditions attached to it. Meeting these conditions faithfully and joyfully is part of the price of truth. We can sell the truth by failure to meet the conditions surrounding the promises of God. The “things which we have heard,” mentioned by Paul, are the great truths of the Word of God. Taking heed to these things implies loyalty to the Word of God as the supreme authority in our lives.

We could sell the truth by giving heed to other voices than that of the Good Shepherd, whose voice of truth has reached us through the Bible. If we

give heed to tradition rather than the Word of God, we are selling the truth. A simple example of this is what the Bible says concerning the penalty of sin. The Bible declares it to be death, but tradition says it is eternal torture. This is merely an example. There are many traditions which run counter to the Word of God, and our loyalty to the Scriptures as against the traditions and opinions of men is part of the price of truth. We could also sell the truth by letting it be crowded out, or exchanging it for things of the world.

The Bible makes it clear that God has provided human teachers to help us understand more clearly his inspired Word. We should appreciate these, and profit from the help we receive from them. There is a tendency at times to lean too heavily upon the helpers, to the neglect of the Word of God. The value of helpers provided by the Lord is measured by their faithfulness in serving merely as an index finger to point us to the Word of God.

Even the inspired Apostle Paul, one of the outstanding teachers in the church, complimented the Bereans of old, saying that they were more noble than those of Thessalonica in that they searched the Scriptures daily to prove whether or not the things he taught them were true. (Acts 17:11) If one who was an inspired apostle of the Lord rejoiced to note the desire of his pupils to prove all things by the Word of God, should it not be so with us? Surely any lessening of this determination would indicate a degree of unfaithfulness which could, if not corrected, lead to a selling of the truth.

Are we maintaining our “first love” for the truth—that glorious truth of God’s plan? This truth is that

simple “gospel of Christ: . . . the power of God unto salvation.” (Rom. 1:16) Does the Gospel of the grace of God continue to inspire us to lay down our lives in its proclamation, and in building up our brethren in this most holy faith? Do we accept the opportunities of sacrifice in God’s cause with the same degree of enthusiasm as when we first dedicated ourselves to the doing of his will? If so, we are demonstrating that we are willing that the truth should continue to cost us our all.

If we maintain this attitude, it means that we are not in danger of selling the truth, but are determined to be faithful to it, and to all its precepts, even unto death. Such faithfulness will, in God’s due time, lead to glory and honor and immortality, which Paul wrote could be attained only through patient continuance in well doing.—Rom. 2:7 ■

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 Sanjeeva Rao, Mysore, India—February.
Age, 77

Brother Niraiyarul Sundar, Mettupalayam, India—March. Age, 39

Brother David Bruce, Portland, OR—March 22.
Age, 94

Sister Violet Winske, Grand Rapids, MI—March 27.
Age, 88

Sister Margaret A. Peters, Louisville, KY—April 1.
Age, 82

Brother James E. DeGroot, Las Vegas, NV—April 2.
Age, 62

General Convention Bulletin

July 20-25, 2013

THE 2013 GENERAL CONVENTION will be upon us in only three months. If you have not yet made plans to attend, now is the time to do so. We encourage as many as are able to join in the blessings of this annual gathering of the Lord's people. The convention will be held on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family style apartments (also air conditioned) with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities are available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge in their own sleeping bag if both beds are occupied. If a child is alone in a bedroom sharing the bathroom with other adults, the double occupancy rate will apply to all family members.

The convention program appears in this issue of *The Dawn*, on the pages following the General Convention registration form. Included on the program is a dialogue between two brethren on the subject, "Think it not strange," based on I Peter 4:12,13, which we believe will be of special interest and an encouragement to the Lord's people as they experience and are touched by the trials and difficulties of the narrow way.

All room and meal costs for children 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. In addition, 100% of the cost of those from ages 13 through 17 will be refunded if the young person attends at least 75% of the studies for his or her age group. This subsidy does not cover meals paid in cash at the door.

The convention will provide one shuttle bus leaving the Pittsburgh airport in the early evening for the college in Johnstown on Friday, July 19. There will also be shuttle bus service leaving the college in the morning hours for the Pittsburgh airport on Friday, July 26. ■

Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast	\$7.00	\$6.00
Lunch	9.00	8.00
Dinner	12.00	11.00
Total, three meals	\$28.00	\$25.00
Lodging (per night)		
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)	\$35.00	\$30.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)	\$30.00	\$28.00
**single occ (LLC)	\$65.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)	\$35.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals		
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)	\$360*	\$325*
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)	\$230*	\$195*
**single occ (LLC)	\$520*	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)	\$270*	n/a
If no breakfasts, deduct—*\$35 **Air conditioned ***100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group		

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707

E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com (407) 670-4189

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 19, 2013				
Saturday, 20th				
Sunday, 21st				
Monday, 22nd				
Tuesday, 23rd				
Wednesday, 24th				
Thursday, 25th				

Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals ☐
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts) ☐

Check: ☐ private bath **or** ☐ shared bath
☐ double occupancy ☐ single occupancy
☐ interested in APTS

Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)

Address:

Saturday, July 20

Chairman: Tim Thomassen, *Albuquerque NM*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Orientation by College

10:00 **Welcome Address**

David Christiansen, *Seattle WA*

10:45 Intermission

11:15 Discourse

Kent Humphreys
Phoenix AZ

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Erwin Kalinski
Chicago IL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse

John Trzeciak
Grand Rapids MI

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Kome Ajise
Sacramento CA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **“What doth the LORD require of thee.”**
—Micah 6:8

Do Justly:

Todd Alexander, *Columbus OH*

Love Mercy:

Dan Wesol, *Albuquerque NM*

Walk Humbly:

Tom Ruggirello, *Chicago IL*

8:15 Songs in the Night

Sunday, July 21

Chairman: O. B. Elbert, *Delaware Valley PA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse Rayappan Selvaraj
Chennai India

10:30 Intermission

11:15 **Theme Discourse—Colossians 3:16**

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you
richly.”

Robert Goodman, *Orlando FL*

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony Aaron Kuehmicel
Chicago IL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Rick Suraci
New Haven CT

4:00 Intermission

4:30 **“Think it not strange.”—I Peter 4:12,13**

Tom Gilbert, *South Wisconsin*
Brian Montague, *Highland Park NY*

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Effectual Prayer—James 5:16**

Byron Keith, *Seattle WA*

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Monday, July 22

Chairman: Robert Gorecki, *New York NY*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse

Michael Balko
Orlando FL

10:30 Intermission

11:15 Discourse

George Tabac
Chicago IL

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Ken Fernets
The Dawn

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony

Mark Nemesh
Detroit MI

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Leo Houlmont
Grand Rapids MI

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **“Strong Meat” is:**

Doctrine

David Stein, *Allentown PA*

Character

Peter Mora, *Los Angeles CA*

8:00 Songs in the Night

8:15 Elders' Meeting

Tuesday, July 23

Chairman: Jonathan Benson, *New London CT*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 **Baptismal Discourse**

Russ Marten
Chicago IL

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Immersion Service**

Joe Dolan
Middletown NY

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony Len Griehs
Delaware Valley PA

2:45 Intermission

3:15 **How God's Attributes Work
with the Church**

Robert Gray, *New Brunswick NJ*
Homer Montague, *Highland Park NY*

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Allan Allers
Boise ID

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

Wednesday, July 24

Chairman: Bill Dutka, *Detroit MI*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Convention Business Meeting

10:45 Short Recess

11:00 Convention Business Continues

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse Edmund Blicharz
Orlando FL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony David Rice
San Diego CA

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Jim Parkinson
Los Angeles CA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **God's Promised Blessings to all Nations**
G. Russell Pollock
(1897-1976)

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Thursday, July 25

Chairman: George Balko, *West Newton PA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Praise and Testimony Jonathon Freer
Sacramento CA

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Panel Discussion: How Do We Handle
Adversity in our Fellowship?**

Ernie Kuenzli, *Orlando FL*

George Passios, *New York NY*

Doug Rawson, *San Francisco Bay Area*

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse Carlton Chandler
Portland OR

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Randy Shahan
New York NY

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Chris Kuenzli
Milwaukee WI

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Closing Discourse**

Richard Doctor
Chicago IL

7:45 Melodies of Praise

8:30 Love Feast

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below are routed through the Pilgrim Department of The Dawn. Their visits are furnished free upon request. Write to: The Dawn Pilgrim Department, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. A visit will be arranged whenever possible.

K. Fernets

Los Angeles, CA May 25,26

J. Freer

Korbach, Germany May 18-20
Hamburg 21,22
Dortmund 23,24
Ludwigshafen 26
Bollwiller, France 27-29
Kensworth, England June 1
West Wickham 2
Lydney 3
Kempsei 4
Chesham 7,8
Evesham 9

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

G. Balko

West Newton, PA May 5

L. Griehs

Hartford, CT May 5

M. J. Balko

Louisville, AL May 26

T. Krupa

Los Angeles, CA May 25,26

E. Blicharz

Jacksonville, FL May 5

E. Kuenzli

Chicago, IL May 25-27

E. Byrd

West Newton, PA May 5

H. Montague

Chicago, IL May 25-27

D. Christiansen

Los Angeles, CA May 25,26

J. Parkinson

Detroit, MI May 4,5

O. B. Elbert

Agawam, MA May 19
Los Angeles, CA 25,26

T. Ruggirello

Detroit, MI May 4,5

R. Goodman

Detroit, MI May 4,5

CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 5—Holiday Inn Hotel, 620 Wells Road, Orange Park, FL 32073. Phone: (904) 562-7400. Contact C. Hires, 2405 Hugh Edwards Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32210. Phone: (904) 781-0506 or E-mail: clanky3@comcast.net

WEST NEWTON CONVENTION, May 5—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact G. Balko. Phone: (724) 771-0139

AGAWAM CONVENTION, May 19—Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001. For accommodations, contact M. Wardak. Phone: (413) 789-6198. Other information, contact A. Gonczewski. Phone (863) 450-8299 or E-mail: aga49@yahoo.com

CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 25-27—Addison Park District, 120 E. Oak Street, Addison, IL 60101. Contact L. Manzuk. Phone: (630) 660-1874 or E-mail: leemanzuk@aol.com

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 25,26—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. Contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 982-7253 or E-mail: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com. Special room rate at Ramada Inn by contacting N. Nekora. Phone: (310) 454-5248. Deadline for special rate is April 24.

BUFFALO CONVENTION, June 1,2—Holiday Inn Buffalo-Intl Airport, 4600 Genesee Street, Buffalo, NY 14225. Contact R. Morin for reservations by May 4. Phone: (585) 322-3430 or E-mail: morinbliss@gmail.com

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 2—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA 19047. Contact R. Eldridge. Phone: (215) 949-0652

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 28-30—Ramada Inn, 6221 NE 82nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97220. Contact D. Grudzien, 11970 SE Zion Hill Drive, Damascus, OR 97089. Phone: (503) 658-4757 or E-mail: dariusg@acm.org

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, June 29-July 1—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR 1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK, Canada S6V 5P8. Phone: (306) 764-7692 or E-mail: ahsiwak@inet2000.com

EAST SASKATCHEWAN CONVENTION, July 5-7—Sturgis Community Hall, Highway #9, Sturgis, SK, Canada. Contact N. Paley, Box 1522, Canora, SK, Canada S0A 0L0. Phone: (306) 563-5441

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 20-25—(see page 53 of this issue) University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

NIGERIA MISSION GENERAL CONVENTION, August 24,25—Emmanuel College, Owerr Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. Egbu, #2 Darlington Street Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Phone: 2348033339949 or 2348082146621. E-mail: egbucaje@gmail.com

JACKSON CONVENTION, August 31-September 1—(New Location) Holiday Inn Jackson NW, 2696 Bob McClain Drive, Jackson, MI 49202. Contact V. Lumley, 2531 Ashton Road, Jackson, MI 49203. Phone: (517) 782-7252 or E-mail: lumley@aol.com

COLORADO CONVENTION, September 27-29—Quality Inn Central Denver, 200 W 48th Avenue, Denver, CO 80216. Contact L. Turner. Phone: (303) 809-1957 or E-mail: twink94@comcast.net

“They continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”—Acts 2:42