

The DAWN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

The Struggle for Peace 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

Samuel Administers Justice 16

David Embodies God's Justice 18

Solomon Judges with Wisdom
and Justice 20

A King Acts on a Widow's Behalf 22

Jehoshaphat Makes Judicial
Reforms 24

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

Searching the Scriptures—Part 31
Our Sufficiency 26

Resting in the Lord 43

Contentment 56

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 15

OBITUARIES 42

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 63

The Struggle for Peace

“Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.”
—*Psalm 46:8,9*

THE VAST MAJORITY OF mankind has, throughout history, yearned for conditions in their life to include that of rest of soul, contentment of being, self-sufficiency, and peace among their fellow men. Most, however, who have these otherwise noble desires, have gone about seeking the attainment of these conditions after the fashion of their inherited fallen and sinful nature. Indeed, most of these efforts have not been according to God’s instructions as found in the Scriptures. In this month’s issue of *The Dawn*, we will examine these four related themes: rest, contentment, sufficiency, and peace—comparing fallen man’s ways with God’s all-wise methods.

Our first subject of examination is that of peace—specifically, man’s struggle to attain and maintain this condition with his fellowman and

fellow nations. Indeed, for man to achieve within his own being any measurable and satisfying peace, rest, contentment, and sufficiency, he first must be able to attain peace and harmony with his neighbor—his fellow human beings.

MAN'S EXPERIENCE WITH WAR

As our title suggests, man has greatly struggled for peace among peoples and nations. Civilized people throughout the ages have looked upon war as an evil. Yet, generally speaking, the majority have considered it a necessary evil, and have reluctantly participated in it. In some instances, professional militarists have abhorred war, and have hoped and prayed that some way to universal and lasting peace could be found. In the 1950s, President Eisenhower, a much-praised and leading general during World War II, in the face of the increasing hideousness of war, called upon nations to unite in an effort to develop and promote nuclear energy for the betterment of man rather than for destruction. In the sixty years which have passed since he issued that call, while there has been no war using nuclear weapons, there is still the continued threat, particularly from smaller “rogue” nations which perhaps feel that they have little to lose by developing and even using such weapons.

During the opening years of the new millennium, the struggle for peace has taken on even greater challenges, perhaps, than the threat of nuclear war. Terrorism, and the war against it, has been the focal point of conflict between nations and peoples during the dawn of the new century. Some nations and extremist groups, rather than choosing to wage

war with “conventional” weapons such as guns, tanks, ships, and bombs dropped from airplanes, have chosen to use implements such as car, road-side, and suicide bombs. “Improvised explosive devices [IEDs]” are widely used also, which, as the name suggests, utilize any materials commonly available to create an explosion powerful enough to kill or maim as many people as possible. In addition, there has been the increased threat of, and preparation for, possible biological and chemical warfare.

OPINIONS AND STATISTICS

Scholars who have studied man’s experience with war down through the ages have expressed varied opinions as well as provided many statistics on the subject, some of which we will note here. Noted British historian John Keegan has stated his belief that war is a universal phenomenon whose form and scope are defined by the society that practices it. A different argument suggests that since there have been, through the centuries, societies in which war did not exist, human beings are not naturally disposed to engage in warfare, and that it emerges only under particular circumstances. Despite this argument, some experts believe that approximately 90-95% of known societies throughout history have engaged in at least occasional warfare, with some having fought almost constantly. According to one source, approximately 14,500 wars have taken place between 3500 B.C. and the end of the 20th century, costing 3.5 billion lives, with only about 300 years of peace during that 5,500 year period.

Of the ten most devastating wars in human history in terms of loss of life, six have taken place within the past two hundred years. These six wars alone claimed an estimated 150 million lives, with World War II accounting for nearly half of that number. Shortly after that most costly of all wars, and upon seeing the rapidly increasing destructive consequences of modern warfare, Dr. Albert Einstein famously stated, “I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.” How chilling should such a thought be to the human heart and mind!

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program, a resource recognized by the United Nations, states that, as of the beginning of 2012, in addition to many other “small-scale” conflicts, there were ten ongoing wars in the world, causing at least one thousand deaths per year. It is interesting to note that eight of the ten on this list were (and still are at this writing) taking place on the continents of Africa and Asia. Lest Americans should feel completely isolated from these threats, however, the ongoing war with the highest loss of life during 2010-2011 has been right next door—the Mexican Drug War. The median length of time that these ten ongoing wars have been fought is eight years, and one of them has gone on continuously for nearly fifty years.

SCRIPTURES PROVIDE HOPE

With all of the history of warfare and conflict, and the ongoing wars of today, it would seem perhaps that man has almost completely lost any concept of the value of human life. Yet, research done by a

former brigadier general found that, on average, only 15-20% of American riflemen in World War II combat actually fired at the enemy. Similarly, a noted American Civil War historian states that of the 27,574 discarded muskets found on the Gettysburg battlefield, nearly 90% were still loaded—having never been fired in the battle. These interesting statistics perhaps provide a ray of hope, that one day man will have had enough of war, and lay down forever his swords and spears. Indeed, it is through the promises of God contained in the Bible that such a hope not only exists, but will surely come to pass in the not too distant future.

In keeping with our opening scripture, the prophecies of Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4 give us an assurance that peace will ultimately be enjoyed by man. These prophecies reveal that when the nations look to the Lord to be taught his ways, they will “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks,” and will learn war no more. There will be no aggressors then—none to “hurt nor destroy,” for “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9

These prophecies point up one of the main objectives of the great Messianic purpose of God as expressed by the angels on the night Jesus was born: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:14) This chorus of the angels was in keeping with the promise of Jesus’ birth, which stated that he would be “The Prince of Peace,” and that of the “increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”—Isa. 9:6,7

The Prophet David also foretold the blessings of peace which would come to the nations under the administration of Messiah's kingdom. "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness"—by obeying the righteous rule of Christ's kingdom, which all will be obliged to do.—Ps. 72:3

It will then be demonstrated that righteousness and peace are companion principles, both of which reflect characteristics of the loving God of the universe, and that war is an offspring of unrighteousness, being spawned by sin and selfishness. Through the kingdom of Christ will come the fulfillment of the poetic prophecy of Psalm 85:10-12, which reads: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase."

THE DIVINE PURPOSE

Because the fulfillment of these many promises of peace and goodwill among men has been so long delayed, many, even among the peace-loving, have come to think of them merely as statements of high ideals. Such believe that they are beautiful phrases to be quoted on suitable occasions, but lacking vital meaning as being expressive of actual conditions which will one day exist on this earth. A proper understanding of the divine purpose reflected in these reassuring promises leads to a different conclusion—the conclusion stated by the Prophet Isaiah, when he said, "The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."—Isa. 9:7

One of the blinding errors of Christendom is that the Lord is largely depending upon man to fulfill his promises for him. This view assumes that the main purpose of the many promises of God is to set forth what conditions ought to be in the earth, and that it is the responsibility of his people to see that these righteous conditions are established.

However, in Isaiah's promise of the birth of the Messiah, he said, "The government shall be upon his shoulder," that is, it is his responsibility to fulfill the purpose of God pertaining to the Messianic kingdom. That purpose cannot be legislated by fallen governments. It cannot be attained either by wars of aggression or of defense. It will be accomplished only by virtue of the fact that in his own due time, through Christ, "the God of heaven" shall "set up a kingdom."—Dan. 2:44

PARABLE OF THE NOBLEMAN

The disciples of Jesus correctly believed that he was the promised Messiah, the one appointed and sent by God to fulfill his promises to establish righteousness and peace in the earth. Shortly before he was crucified, he related a parable to them concerning a "certain nobleman" who went into a "far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." (Luke 19:12) The disciples understood that Jesus referred to himself as the "certain nobleman" who was to go away, so realized that there would be a delay in the establishment of his kingdom.

However, they did not realize that he would go away in death, and were confused and discouraged when he was taken from them and crucified. Shortly, though, he was raised from the dead, and when

meeting with them for the last time before going to the “far country” of the parable, they boldly asked him about the promised kingdom: “Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”—Acts 1:6

Jesus merely told them that the “times and seasons” of the divine plan were not yet to be known by them. They were to tarry at Jerusalem until begotten with the Holy Spirit, and then they were to be his witnesses throughout Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. (vss. 7,8) A little later they did receive the Holy Spirit, and entered with zeal upon their mission of witnessing for Jesus. They witnessed concerning his death and resurrection as the Redeemer and Savior of the world. They also witnessed concerning the fact that he would return from the “far country” and set up his kingdom, as God had promised.

The Holy Spirit refreshed the memory of the disciples concerning another great truth which he had taught them—namely, that if they suffered and died with him, they would, through the resurrection, live and reign with him. Therefore, they understood that it would not be their preaching of the Gospel which would set up his kingdom. They knew that the promised government of righteousness must wait until their Lord and Master returned, and that their faithfulness as his witnesses would prove their worthiness to then live and reign with him.

CHOSEN OUT OF THE WORLD

Jesus explained to his disciples that he had chosen them out of the world. (John 15:19; 17:6) He had said to them, “In the world ye shall have

tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) They understood this to mean that they were to take the same attitude toward the world, and all worldly things, as Jesus had taken. The servant was not to be above his Lord, or in any way exempt from obeying the precepts of righteousness which governed him.

They would have noted that Jesus did not campaign against the social order of his day, in the sense of trying to change its customs and practices. On the other hand, he gave instructions to “render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” (Matt. 22:21) The Apostle Paul caught the spirit of this admonition, and to the Christians at Rome wrote that they were to be subject to “the powers that be.”—Rom. 13:1

The witness of the Gospel which Christians were enjoined by Jesus to carry worldwide was not designed to convert the world. It was merely to attract those in the world, who, appreciating the truth of God’s plan of salvation and his design for establishing world peace, would be willing to forsake all and follow the Master. The chief aim of all these has been to be loyal to God, and to his Son, Jesus. By doing so, they are thus proving worthy to live and reign with Christ in his kingdom of peace and righteousness when it is established in power and great glory throughout the whole earth.

CHRISTIANS’ ATTITUDE TOWARD WAR

While the vocation of every faithful Christian has been to serve the Lord, the avocations of all bring them into contact with the world and with its

institutions and governments. This means that they are compelled to make decisions as to what their attitude should be under various circumstances. Ofttimes these decisions call for great courage, for frequently they place one in an unpopular position in the eyes of the world.

One of the decisions which many Christians have had to make has been with respect to what attitude they should take toward participating in war. This is a matter which each follower of the Master must conscientiously consider for himself. Probably very few fully consecrated followers of Jesus throughout the age have voluntarily participated in war. The real problem has arisen for those living under governments which conscripted their citizens to serve in the military. Over the centuries, this has been the case in practically all the countries where the Gospel of Christ has been preached. Historians indicate, however, that Christians kept themselves as free as possible from military service. They note that few Christians, if any, served in the Roman army during the first century and a half A.D., and even as early as the third century, there were Christian conscientious objectors. These objected not only to participation in war, but also to being in the military at all, because they might be called upon to take the life of another.

As the church, however, became more and more allied with the world and with worldly governments, many professed Christians began to abandon their conscientious objection to war. They increased in wealth and civil power, and as they did, objection to war began to decline. The conversion of Roman

Emperor Constantine to Christianity virtually made the church the agency of the state.

History indicates that during the Middle Ages various views and practices were adopted pertaining to Christian participation in war. Priests and monks, theoretically, were supposed to abstain from the shedding of blood, even though laymen might be called upon to do so in a "just war." That raised the question as to when a war was just, with the church-state governments of the time deciding.

For the most part, from the time of Constantine's conversion down to the present time, it has been only the minority groups which have taken such a strong stand against participating in war. However, due partly to the general increase of knowledge through the more widespread education of the masses, and because some of the prejudices of the past have been forgotten, many church groups now recognize the right of their members to be conscientiously opposed to war.

GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION

Governments in some countries of the world, most notably the United States, now make increased provision for the rights of individual conscience, especially with respect to obedience to God. They allow that conscientious allegiance to God has first claim in the life of a true believer, and that the laws of men should not attempt to set aside this claim.

In this country, many church groups today have established committees to assist any of their young people who may be conscientiously opposed to war, and to work with government agencies in connection with their stand in the matter. The

Dawn has cooperated for many years with the Bible Students National Committee For Religious Conscientious Objectors, as they work together with the young people of our fellowship, as well as the government, concerning these matters.

GREAT TRIBULATION—THEN PEACE

As we have noted, there are probably very few who do not recognize that war is an evil—a plague which blights humanity whenever and wherever it strikes. Noble-minded rulers and statesmen throughout the centuries have doubtless wished that some way could be found to abolish war. No theme has ever captivated the minds of men more than has the peace song of the angels.

Truth-enlightened Christians throughout the age have delighted to proclaim the message of Christ's coming government of peace, under the administration of which the Lord will "make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth." (Ps. 46:9) They have known that their message would not change the present course of the world with respect to war, or otherwise. They have known that the principle set forth by Jesus when he said to Peter, "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," would be verified at the end of the age by the "kingdoms of this world" being overthrown in a time of trouble such as the world has never seen.—Matt. 26:52; John 18:10,11; Dan. 12:1

The global nature of this "great tribulation" which Jesus said would, except for divine intervention, result in the destruction of all flesh, has been made possible by the prophetic increase of knowledge in this "time of the end." (Dan. 12:4)

While, however, because of human selfishness, this rapidly increasing knowledge leads to much destruction, it is also awakening some to realize that better things are purposed. As a result, there is not only an incessant clamoring for real and fancied rights, but also attempted, and at times actual, progress along humanitarian lines.

The minds of the people are being prepared for the blessings of the kingdom which is now so near. The awakening to the barbarity of war, and the legal provisions being made for those who are conscientiously opposed to it, are a part of this general pattern. The people are thus being prepared to welcome, even more wholeheartedly, the kingdom program of education, when the nations will learn war no more. It will be then that the long struggle for peace on the part of the peace-loving will end in an era of universal and everlasting freedom from war and conflict.

“BE STILL”

This will not be accomplished through human efforts, but because “the God of heaven” will “set up a kingdom”—a government in which divine authority will be declared and enforced. As God foretold, he will then say, “Be still, and know that I am God: . . . I will be exalted in the earth.”—Ps. 46:10

Meanwhile, we continue to proclaim the Gospel of the coming kingdom, rejoicing in the assurance of God’s promises, being assured that it is “at hand” in a very real sense. We are to rejoice also in our “witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.” (Rev. 20:4) The “weapons of our warfare are not carnal,” nevertheless, they are “mighty” through Christ in

the pulling down of strongholds of error which may have been entrenched in our own minds and hearts. They are “mighty” also in “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,” “and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.”—II Cor. 10:4,5

When the laws of his kingdom become operative “every knee should bow, . . . every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:10,11) This will be in fulfillment of Isaiah 45:22,23: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” Then there will, indeed, be peace! ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JULY 5—“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth,...and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”—II Corinthians 10:4,5 (Z. '99-11 Hymn 44)

JULY 12—“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”—John 8:36 (Z. '99-57 Hymn 297)

JULY 19—“The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”—John 18:11 (Z. '99-118; '01-91 Hymn 299)

JULY 26—“To him that overcometh will I give...a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”—Revelation 2:17 (Z. '99-140 Hymn 32)

Samuel Administers Justice

Key Verse: “*Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.*”
—I Samuel 7:3

Selected Scripture:
I Samuel 7:3-11,15-17

after the LORD.” (I Sam. 7:2) Samuel, seeing this, spoke the words contained in our Key Verse. In his words we note three specific requirements are set forth in order for Israel to be delivered out of the hands of the

DURING THIS PERIOD OF

Israel’s history, Samuel was their Judge, chosen by the Heavenly Father. In this position, he was called upon to administer justice among the people, and to also encourage them to serve God with their whole heart. This was not an easy task for Samuel, due to the people’s tendency to fall into the sins and ungodly practices of their heathen neighbors. At this time, in particular, Israel was guilty of worshiping the gods of the Philistines. Because of this, God allowed them to be subservient to that nation.

As time passed, Israel began to realize that because of their lack of faithfulness to God, they were not receiving his blessings and protection, and “lamented

Philistines and return to the full favor of God. The principles contained in these words are also fully applicable to Christians today who may find themselves temporarily drawn away from their covenant with God.

Samuel stated that Israel must first put away the false, heathen gods they were worshipping. The first commandment originally given to Israel was: “Thou shalt not have other gods besides me.” (Exod. 20:3, *Rotherham Translation*) God could not be expected to bless them if they were not even worshipping him, but looking to powerless and false gods. For the Christian, we would not think of literally worshipping a false god. However, there are many things in the world which could become “gods” to us—things which we might idolize and worship to a greater or lesser extent. These might include such things as earthly riches, worldly position, influence, abilities, and other such “gods” of this present evil world. Such must be put away from us if we desire to be in God’s favor.

The second requirement set forth by Samuel was that the Israelites must prepare their hearts to serve the LORD. The meaning of the word “prepare” is to “establish” or “fix.” In this is the thought that, as we put away the false “gods” from our life, the focus of our heart should become established—fixed—only upon our Heavenly Father and his will for us. This is the essence of the Christian’s consecration—doing God’s will in every experience of life to the best of our ability. To do this requires that our heart be continually fixed on him and his benevolent designs for our ultimate blessing.

The final step Samuel gave in his instructions to the Israelites was that they must serve God, and him only. This implied works on their part—keeping the various features of the Law arrangement, and serving God actively. For the Christian, it is equally true that service to God and his cause are a requirement to receive his full blessing. The Apostle James says, “Faith without works is dead.”—James 2:20 ■

David Embodies God's Justice

Key Verse: “*David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people.*”
—*I Chronicles 18:14*

Selected Scripture:
II Samuel 23:1-7;
I Chronicles 18:14

DAVID'S RIGHTEOUS REIGN

over Israel, as stated in our Key Verse, was centered in the fact that he justly and fairly executed God's laws among the people. In this, he was typical of the coming reign of righteousness of Jesus Christ and his bride, the church. When the angel Gabriel announced the coming birth of Jesus to Mary, he gave us this important truth, saying, “Thou shalt . . . bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS . . . and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.”—Luke 1:31,32

Shortly before David's reign ended and he fell asleep in death, he spoke in a prophetic way of Christ's eventual kingship, as recorded in II Samuel 23:1-7. In verses 1 and 2, David says that he was “anointed of the God of Jacob,” and that the “Spirit of the LORD” was with him, guiding his words, as king over God's typical people. Jesus, at the beginning of his earthly ministry, made a similar statement concerning himself, quoting from the prophet Isaiah. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, . . . he hath anointed me.” (Luke 4:18) In the case of both David and Jesus, having God's anointing and his Spirit was an assurance that they were the Heavenly Father's

choice as ruler over his people.

David continues by saying that one who is selected to rule over men must be just, and rule with fear, or reverence, for God. (II Sam. 23:3) One so guided, he says, “shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.” (vs. 4) These are again prophetic words, speaking of Christ. He is the “light of the world.” (John 9:5) Light represents the enlightenment of truth, and so it will be in Christ’s kingdom. He will rise, symbolically speaking, as the sun to enlighten mankind to the knowledge of God and his ways. This will also be a time without the storm clouds of trouble which are found throughout the earth today—as David says, “a morning without clouds.”

By his own admission, David knew that his rulership was “not so with God.” (II Sam. 23:5) That is, it was not a peaceful time without clouds. Much of David’s reign was spent fighting against the enemies of Israel. Yet, in the same verse, he claimed the promise of God’s “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.” David here spoke of the everlasting Abrahamic Covenant, in which God promised that in due time, a seed would come, through which all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14) Though he was of the lineage of Judah, the tribe through which the seed was promised, David prophetically spoke of a future day when the anti-typical seed of Abraham would come on the scene.

The Apostle Paul spoke of the seed of the Abrahamic Covenant promise with these words, “Now the promises were given to Abraham and to his seed. God did not say ‘and to seeds,’ as if speaking of many, but ‘and to your seed,’ since He spoke of only one—and this is Christ.” (Gal. 3:16—*Weymouth Translation*) It is through this covenant arrangement that David, and all mankind, will eventually say, “This is all my salvation, and all my desire.” ■

Solomon Judges with Wisdom and Justice

***Key Verse: “All Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment.”
—I Kings 3:28***

***Selected Scripture:
I Kings 3:16-28;
II Chronicles 9:8***

AFTER THE DEATH OF DAVID, his son Solomon was anointed king of Israel. Desiring to follow faithfully in his father's steps, Solomon properly sought God's help. He said, “Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people.” (II Chron. 1:10) Seeing Solomon's humble condition of heart and his noble desire, God granted his request and gave him great wisdom and knowledge, saying, “that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king.”—vs. 11

Almost immediately, Solomon's wisdom was tested. Paraphrasing I Kings 3:16-22: Two women approached the king concerning a most serious matter. Both had been living in the same house, and each had given birth to a child just three days apart from the other. Only they and their newborn children lived in the house. The child of the second woman lived only a few days and died during the night. Realizing this, she went to the room of the first woman, who was sleeping. She took the living child from beside the sleeping mother, and laid the dead child

in her arms. When the mother of the living child rose up in the morning, she saw the dead child in her arms, at first thinking it was hers. Almost immediately, however, she realized it was not her child, but that of the other woman. She approached the woman who had taken her living child during the night, but the woman denied that any wrong had been done, and claimed that the living child was indeed hers. Thus both women testified to the king that the living child was theirs, and the dead child belonged to the other.

The great wisdom of Solomon was shown in his response to the two women. He said, “Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other.” (vss. 24,25) On the surface, such a response seems repulsive to the human mind. However, as we will see from the response of the two women, it is clear that Solomon had no intention of carrying out such a cruel deed. In the wisdom he had gained from God, he knew that the truth would come out because of the way he had responded. The woman who was the real mother of the living child could not bear the thought of the king’s proposal to divide the child, so she gladly said she would give up the child to the other woman, so it would not be slain. On the other hand, the mother whose child had died, and who had cruelly switched the two children, coldly responded that it would be fine with her if the king divided the living child.—vs. 26

This was all King Solomon needed to hear. He gave the living child to its rightful mother, unharmed. (vs. 27) Our Key Verse indicates that word of Solomon’s wise actions quickly spread throughout Israel. Most importantly, the people recognized it as the wisdom of God. Truly, God’s wisdom in all ages is beyond human comprehension. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”—Rom. 11:33 ■

A King Acts on a Widow's Behalf

Key Verse: “*When the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.*”—II Kings 8:6

Selected Scripture:
II Kings 8:1-6

OUR LESSON IS A CONTIN-

uation of the account found in II Kings 4:8-37, in which Elisha restored to life the son of the Shunamite woman. After doing this, Elisha informed the woman that there was going to be a famine in the land of Israel for seven years. He recommended that she take her household and go live in the land of the Philistines until the famine was over. She did so, leaving her home in Israel.—II Kings 8:1,2

At the end of the seven years, the woman returned to Israel, only to find that her house, land, and possessions had been taken over by others in her absence. “She went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land.” (vs. 3) Although the king’s name is not stated, it was most likely King Jehoram of Israel. Providentially, at the same time that the woman approached the king, he was in conversation with Gehazi, the servant of Elisha. Gehazi was relating to King Jehoram all of the wonderful miracles Elisha had performed. He was telling the king about how Elisha had restored to life the son of a Shunemite woman

when she, along with her son, approached to plea for her house and land. Excitedly, Gehazi exclaimed, “My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.”—vs. 5

We can only imagine the amazement of all those present—the woman, her son, the servant of Elisha, and the king—as the events which had taken place over many years were unfolded before them all. It should be noted that Elisha was not even present at this meeting, yet it was he who had been involved in all of the experiences that had brought them together before the king. Our Key Verse says that upon hearing all that had happened, King Jehoram appointed a special officer who was to ensure that the woman’s house, land, and possessions were all restored. Even the money made from her crops while she was gone was to be repaid to her.

Our lesson is more than just a story with a happy ending. It fittingly pictures the blessings of Christ’s coming kingdom here on earth. The earlier restoring of the woman’s son to life points to when the resurrection of all mankind will take place. Jesus spoke of this time, when “all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth.” (John 5:28,29) The restoring to life of the woman’s son was only part of the picture. The famine in the land of Israel for seven years illustrates the fact that man has lived during a famine of truth and righteousness, by and large, since our first parents fell into sin. Just as the woman left Israel to dwell in the land of one of Israel’s enemies, so also man, cast off from the favor of God since sin entered the world, has been forced to dwell under the dominion of the “prince of this world,” Satan. The glorious conclusion to the story, in which the woman’s house, land, and possessions were restored, shows that once the famine of righteousness in this world comes to an end, man will have “that which was lost” restored to him during the time spoken of as the “restitution of all things.”—Luke 19:10; Acts 3:21 ■

Jehoshaphat Makes Judicial Reforms

Key Verse: “[He] said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.”
—II Chronicles 19:6

Selected Scripture:
II Chronicles 19:4-11

JEHOSHAPHAT WAS ONE of the few righteous rulers over Israel’s two-tribe kingdom of Judah. In particular, he instituted during his reign a number of reforms concerning justice and judgment. These important matters had fallen into disarray and corruption under the evil reigns of previous kings. Restoring these was critical, he knew, to his ultimate goal of bringing the people “back unto the LORD God of their fathers.”—II Chron. 19:4

The first thing Jehoshaphat did was “set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah.” (vs. 5) Just as important, as stated in the Key Verse, he instructed them to take great care that they not judge according to man, but that they do so “for the LORD,” who was to guide them in judgment. He continued his instruction by reminding them that there should be no “respect of persons” or “taking of gifts”—bribes—as they rendered judgment. This would be considered “iniquity with the LORD our God.”—vs. 7

There are lessons here for the Lord’s people of today. Although it is not yet time for the general judgment of man’s hearts before the Lord, it is the time for the

consecrated to be judging their own standing before him. The Apostle Paul counsels us to “judge ourselves,” making corrections to our life as we do, in order that we “not be judged” severely by our Heavenly Father. (I Cor. 11:31) This “judging” of ourselves involves many things—our decisions along the narrow way, the way we spend our time, how we use our means, the type of character we develop, the way in which we serve the Lord, our attitudes and actions toward our brethren and fellowman in general, and all other aspects of our life. As the king instructed the judges of his day, we, in our judging of the things mentioned above, are to seek to do so according to God’s will and way, and not man’s. We are also to judge matters not looking for the “respect of persons,” or for “gifts” of a worldly or fleshly kind which might cause our judgment to stray from God’s standard of righteousness.

Jehoshaphat appointed the Levites and priests to a special judgment task, that of rendering justice involving controversies and conflicts among men, as well as specific violations of the Law. This was a particularly sobering assignment, since it would involve the administering of punishment. Even life and death matters would have to be decided on occasion. Under such circumstances, to render righteous and fair judgment would be vitally important. The king specially counseled these judges to act “in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.” (II Chron. 19:9) He also encouraged them, saying, “Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.”—vs. 11

Like these special judges, those of the Lord’s people now who are faithful in the current judgment of their own life’s affairs, will be given a special privilege and great responsibility in the next age. Together with their head, Christ, they will “judge the world in righteousness” during the thousand-year judgment day of Christ’s kingdom.—Acts 17:31 ■

Our Sufficiency

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.”
—II Corinthians 3:5

IN II CORINTHIANS 3:3-6, the Apostle Paul explains that “the epistle of Christ,” is being written by the Spirit of God on “the fleshy tables” of our hearts. He contrasts this with the writing of the Ten Commandments on tables of stone. The writing of God’s law in our hearts constitutes us “able ministers of the new testament [covenant],” just as the tables of stone served, under the direction of Moses, as teachers of the Law of that covenant to the people. This places the followers of Jesus in a very high position in the outworking of the plan of God—so much so that Paul deemed it advisable to add the important words of our theme text.

This is a timely reminder for all the Lord’s consecrated people. However, probably very few of these feel that they are really worthy of the high position to which they are called—the High Calling of God which is in Christ Jesus. They realize that in their own merit they are not worthy to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. They know that they are not “sufficient” of themselves

to be made “kings and priests unto God” (Rev. 1:6), to reign with Christ a thousand years. Paul’s reminder would seem also to have an important application to the attitude of heart and mind which we maintain toward our present privileges and responsibilities, and especially in our association with the brethren.

One of the illustrations which might help us to grasp this thought is the case of Moses. Concerning him, the Scriptures state, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” (Num. 12:3) Prof. Strong indicates that the Hebrew word here translated “meek” suggests the idea of being depressed or needy. In other texts it is translated “poor.” It seems to carry essentially the same thought as that which Jesus expressed, when he said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:3) To be “poor in spirit” implies that one senses his inadequacies and the need for help beyond his own ability.

AT THE BURNING BUSH

Moses’ feeling of insufficiency particularly comes to our attention in connection with the Lord’s commission to him at the burning bush. Here he expressed his sense of inadequacy to carry out the assignment the Lord gave to him. Moses had not always felt this way. Forty years before this he had felt very sufficient to do something for his brethren, the Hebrew people, who were being oppressed as slaves in Egypt. He became very belligerent about it, and slew an Egyptian whom he found smiting one of his fellow-Israelites.

The Lord, through his providence, knows how to humble the hearts of those whom he calls into his service—how to make them “poor in spirit.” Because of his slaying the Egyptian, Moses was obliged to flee from Egypt, and he went into the land of Midian. There he married a daughter of Jethro, a priest of Midian, who was also a sheep rancher. Moses became a shepherd and helped to care for Jethro’s flocks, a position he occupied for essentially forty years.

Forty years is a long time in human experience, and here, as a tender of flocks, the once self-sufficient Moses had the opportunity to reflect upon his failure in Egypt. Perhaps his humble occupation as a shepherd gradually brought about in his heart a keen sense of insufficiency. Seemingly he reached the point where he felt both unworthy and unable to do anything very important, especially as a servant of God to deliver his people from Egyptian bondage.—Exod. 2:11-25

When the Lord informed Moses that he had chosen him to deliver his people from their slavery in Egypt, Moses replied, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (chap. 3:11) It is doubtful that forty years before this Moses would have raised such a question. Seemingly he was then willing to take the side of his people and do anything he could for them, although there is no record that the Lord had then specially commissioned him to do so.

THE LORD’S ASSURANCE

When Moses expressed his feeling of inadequacy for the task assigned to him, the Lord replied with

the assurance that he would supply his needs. The Lord said, "Certainly I will be with thee." (vs. 12) Moses was impressed by this and began to ask questions concerning the various problems which he foresaw would arise in this great undertaking. Patiently, the Lord assured Moses regarding these details, and we find the one who was to be the great lawgiver and leader of Israel ready and willing to embark upon the task assigned to him.

Moses had learned the great truth expressed by Paul, namely, that he was not sufficient of himself, but now, by faith, he knew that through his God he could be sufficient. How clear the record is that the Lord did go with Moses, and that he did give him wisdom and strength in his every time of need. One of the outstanding aspects of Moses' forty years of service is that in every crisis, with one recorded exception, he turned to the Lord for help. That help was always ready and was graciously provided.

All those who are "poor in spirit" likewise realize their need of divine guidance and help. It is not enough that we be in this attitude of heart only at the time we make a consecration to serve the Lord. Later in his life, Moses had an experience in which he felt that he could accomplish things in his own strength and in his own way. This was at the time when he smote the rock twice, instead of speaking to it as the Lord had instructed him. He said to the Israelites, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?"—Num. 20:10

In this instance, Moses failed to depend on the Lord. "Must we fetch you water?" he asked the people, as though by his own sufficiency he could duplicate the miracle which the Lord's power

performed on a previous occasion. An interesting particular about this incident is that water did gush forth from the rock, and “abundantly.” (Num. 20:11) However, the Lord was displeased with Moses’ attitude—so much so that he did not permit him to enter the promised land.—vs. 12

In this experience, the fact is revealed that at times the Lord overrules the waywardness of his people so that it might seem to them that he is blessing their efforts. This should be a warning to all of us to be exceedingly cautious, lest, in our zeal to do something in the Lord’s service, we take matters into our own hands, forgetful of our initial poorness of spirit. The Lord might not interfere with what we propose to do in his service, and we could easily assume that we are successful because of our own ability. This would be a form of pride, and the Lord hates a proud spirit.

PROPERLY DETERMINING GOD’S WILL

Sometimes the Lord allows us to do things which may not be his will. People become successful in the world, perhaps, through clever planning and perseverance. We could easily surmise that this is the way we should determine the Lord’s will in our affairs. On this basis, if we try hard to accomplish something we want to do, and do accomplish it, we might conclude that it was the Lord’s will. Actually, what this could mean is that we have determined the Lord’s will simply upon the basis of what he has not hindered us from doing.

Paul gives us the proper method of determining the Lord’s will. As we study it, we find that it precludes human reasoning and worldly methods. He

writes, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”—Rom. 12:2,3

We are not to follow the ways of the world in seeking to determine the Lord’s will. We are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. Moses asked, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?” When a great opportunity of service was presented to Moses his first thought was one of humble insufficiency. He did not determine the Lord’s will upon the basis of what he considered himself capable of accomplishing. This should be true of us also.

If we make a rational appraisal of our own abilities, we will realize that there is nothing we can do in the Lord’s service in an acceptable manner, except as he guides and otherwise blesses us, and through Christ, extends his mercy in connection with our imperfect efforts. In the beginning, it was essential to be “poor in spirit” in order to realize our need of the Lord, and of his grace to help. It is just as essential to maintain this sense of need throughout our entire course in the narrow way, if the Lord is to continue to use us.

FORGETTING THE LORD

The Lord does great things for his people for which they should ever be *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) thankful. He has given us his truth, and through the anointing of the Spirit he has made us ambassadors of Christ. In the exercise of our ambassadorship, the Lord provides daily help and guidance. As we watch the overruling of his providence, we marvel at the things he accomplishes through us, and this despite our insufficiency. Ironically, this showering upon us of the Lord's abundant blessings may result either in good or in harm.

The result will be good if these blessings of the Lord daily increase our appreciation of him, and produce an ever deepening conviction that, under all circumstances, our sufficiency is of him. However, it would be unfortunate should we lose sight of the Lord and begin to attribute what he is accomplishing in and by us entirely to our own ability. This was Moses' failure toward the end of his illustrious forty years of service. His viewpoint changed, at least temporarily, from the feeling expressed by his question, "Who am I?" to the self-sufficient attitude revealed in his statement, "Must we bring water from this rock?"

GOD'S ALL-SUFFICIENT GRACE

Saul of Tarsus was another ardent servant of the Lord, but until he recognized and accepted Christ, his zeal and service was not according to knowledge and was contrary to the Lord's will. When Paul did accept Christ and enter into the service of the Lord, he maintained his poorness of spirit. He knew that he had been appointed to be one of the twelve Apostles, but said that he was "the least of the apostles." (I Cor. 15:9) Remembering his sin in persecuting the church, he freely acknowledged

that “I am chief” among sinners. (I Tim. 1:15) How heavily his previous course in persecuting the brethren must have weighed down upon him. No doubt at times he anguished at the very thought of it and must have marveled at the grace of God in continuing to use him.

Paul also had “a thorn in the flesh.” (II Cor. 12:7) This was probably his poor eyesight, which could have been brought about at the time of his conversion by the light which shone down upon him brighter than the sun at noonday. This light actually did blind him for a time. While he received his sight back, it was perhaps not the clear vision which he enjoyed before. Whether it was this or something else which he later referred to as “a thorn in the flesh,” he felt that if it could be removed he could serve much more efficiently, so he asked the Lord to remove the “thorn.”

Paul recognized that this “thorn” had been given to him, as he said, “lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations” with which he had been blessed. Perhaps, however, he reasoned that he had now passed this test and it would be best if the “thorn” were removed. He petitioned the Lord to this end. He explained, “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.”—vs. 8

The Lord had a different view, and answered Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” This satisfied Paul, as he explained, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in

persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, than am I strong."—II Cor. 12:9,10

OUR WEAKNESS, THE LORD'S STRENGTH

From Paul's testimony it is evident that he had Moses' viewpoint of himself. This was the viewpoint expressed in the question, "Who am I?" In this response, Moses did not take the position that he was wholly incapable of doing anything for the Lord. Rather, he rightfully questioned whether he had the qualifications needed to persuade Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery. Moses did not refuse the assignment, but simply inquired of the Lord as to how he would meet various situations which he knew would arise. Moses felt that he was not effective as a speaker, so the Lord gave him Aaron as a mouthpiece. He showed Moses how he could make good use of the rod in his hand.

By the Lord's answers to his inquiries, Moses perceived that while he could not be the deliverer of Israel by his own wisdom and ability, the Lord could use him and would make every necessary provision for his insufficiencies. This was also true with Paul, and it is true of all the faithful followers of the Master. God uses his mighty power to supplement our weaknesses. In this way, we can go on from victory to victory, performing those tasks in his service which he chooses for us. If, however, we choose our own way on the basis of what appeals to us the most, and with the thought that these things we can do, ignoring what the Lord's will might be, there is the possibility that the Lord's help and guidance would not be forthcoming.

SERVING IN THE BODY

The question arises as to just how we can determine the Lord's will, especially in the matter of serving him in the harvest work. There are no hard and fast rules laid down for us in the Scriptures along this line. However, general principles are set forth, which, when we reason upon them with a pure, honest, and humble heart, will help to guide us. For example, when Paul admonished us not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, he continued by reminding us that we are a part of a "body" of Christians. He said that in this "body" there are various qualifications and offices. He wrote, "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."—Rom. 12:4,5

One of the principles here set forth is that we are not alone, but part of a group, and that this must be taken into consideration in determining the will of the Lord. Not all in this body are qualified to do the same thing. Not all are called by the Lord to render the same service. All should watch the providences of the Lord, and be ready and willing to serve in any way he might indicate to be his will in this "body" arrangement. Peter wrote, "Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he

may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”—I Pet. 5:5-7

To be subject one to another requires waiting on the Lord. If we lose sight of our poorness of spirit, our insufficiency, if we begin to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, then we may decide that in our particular case the Lord does not expect us to be subject one to another, but wants us to pursue our own course. We might begin to reason that, after all, the Lord does not want to see our talents wasted, and if the brethren do not recognize our talents, why should we be subject to them?

This is the viewpoint and way of the world. If one is employed by a certain company, and his services and talents are not properly appreciated, he looks for another place of employment where he can more easily “get ahead.” In the world, generally, no one condemns this practice. This, however, is not the way for the servants of the Lord to determine his will for them. The Lord knew the sort of experience that would best prepare Moses for the service which he would later entrust to him. Moses thought he was ready before he was forced to flee to Midian. The Lord allowed him to wait forty years, serving as a shepherd, until he was brought to a sense of his great need for the Lord’s assistance if he was ever to accomplish anything worthwhile in his service.

If we think others do not appreciate us as they should, let us endeavor to realize that it is really the Lord who is testing our humility and our willingness to wait upon him. This is an essential lesson for all the Lord’s people. Within the “body” there are various services to perform. Are we happy to serve in an inconspicuous manner? Do we realize

that we are not really qualified to do anything in the Lord's service except as he gives us wisdom and strength?

Another important consideration is our motive for serving. This is a matter which concerns our innermost heart relationship with the Lord, for he does not always prevent those with wrong motives from making an outward display of service. Paul wrote, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife." (Phil. 1:15) Paul did not compliment these. Neither did he condone what they were doing, although he was glad that the Gospel was being preached, even if in a wrong spirit. The point being stressed here is that the Lord did not prevent these brethren from serving, even though their motive was wrong. For us, individually, our motive in serving is of utmost importance, without regard to the "success" of our service.

FOLLOW THE PRINCIPLES

In order to make sure that the Lord is really blessing us in our service in his vineyard, it is essential to follow all the principles of righteousness given to us in his Word in deciding upon our course of action. A pure motive is one of the most important considerations. We need always, even as at the time of our consecration, to recognize our poorness of spirit and that we cannot really do anything except by the Lord's grace and help. Let us never undertake anything for the Lord in our own strength.

If we are privileged to be associated with a group of the Lord's consecrated people, it is important to be subject one to another. Let us not be overly concerned even if the brethren fail to recognize

what we believe to be our real worth and talents. Let us realize, rather, that whatever abilities we have are known to the Lord. He permitted Moses to wait for forty years, and it will do us good to wait on the Lord until he sees that we are prepared to serve him with our heart as well as with our head and our hands. If we begin to be concerned about our talents, it would be an indication that we still have a degree of self-sufficiency. The Lord might just be waiting until we feel as Moses did when he asked that question, "Who am I?"

The matter of having a proper assessment of our sufficiency concerns all of us. It is not limited to those who serve in the more prominent positions in the church. No matter how small our sphere of service might be, it is important that we should ever keep in mind that we are not sufficient in ourselves to do anything. This is the lesson the Lord is teaching us. He wants us to realize that we will only be qualified for that future glorious position in the kingdom if we now realize our own insufficiency, and continually look to him for wisdom, for strength, and for grace through Christ. Let this be a daily goal in our service to the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren. ■

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Helen Bielecki, Detroit, MI—May 6. Age, 89

Sister Marie Liberda, France—May 24. Age, 88

Brother Al Lewis, Kalispell, MT—May 30.

Resting in the Lord

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

... Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

—Hebrews 4:9,11

IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS,

chapters 13 and 14, we find the Israelites traveling through the wilderness of Paran. As they came near to Canaan they were instructed by the Heavenly Father through Moses to select from among their number twelve men, one from each of the

tribes, to serve as scouts to spy out the Promised Land. The charge they received included investigating the nature of the soil, whether or not it was rich, and the types of people who inhabited the land, as well as their numbers and strength. Additionally, the spies were to determine the types of dwellings of the inhabitants, as to whether they were tents or houses within walled cities. Furthermore, they were to bring back sample fruitage from the land.—Num. 13:17-20

Having received these instructions, the spies went into Canaan and traveled throughout the

area. At a place called Eschol, they cut a branch with a single cluster of grapes on it. It was so large and heavy that it took two men to carry it as they hung it on a pole and transported it between them. They also gathered some pomegranates and figs to bring back with them. (Num. 13:23) At the end of forty days, the spies returned and reported to Moses and Aaron what they had seen, and they brought with them the fruits which they had found. Ten of the spies brought a report of insurmountable obstacles to be faced if the Israelites attempted to enter the land. (vss. 27-33) Two of the scouts, Caleb and Joshua, brought a much different report, and encouraged the people to go up and take the land which God had promised them. They had faith and confidence in God's delivering power over any obstacles which might arise.—chap. 14:6-9

THE PEOPLE BELIEVE AN EVIL REPORT

The remarks made by the ten spies who gave an evil report contained a degree of subtlety. In their report to Moses concerning whether or not the land was rich, they indicated, rightly so, that it did appear to be very good and that there was plenty of food to eat. They added, however, that the cities were walled and the people numerous and powerful. They suggested that Israel would not be successful in their venture because it was too dangerous. In exaggeration, they stated that the Canaanites were so big that the Israelites appeared to be as grasshoppers in comparison and would be easily defeated. Despite the protestations of Joshua and Caleb, the people at large began to weep, because they took the words of the ten cowardly spies instead of the

encouragement which Joshua and Caleb provided them. They murmured against Moses and Aaron, stating that they should never have left Egypt. They questioned why God had brought them into this place where they would be killed by their enemies.—vss. 1-3

The people went so far as to enter into a conspiracy, determining to select another captain to lead them back Egypt. As Caleb and Joshua persisted that they should be courageous and proceed in the Lord's strength to conquer the land, the people even wanted to stone them. (vss. 4,10) God was most displeased with the response of the people of Israel. He told Moses he was going to send a plague to destroy them and no longer have them as his people. Furthermore, God indicated that Moses' descendants would become an even greater nation and take the Israelites' place. In nobility of character, Moses prayed to God that the people of Israel not be destroyed. Ultimately, the Heavenly Father granted Moses' petition, but not without punishment upon the nation. Because the people had disobeyed him so often, in spite of all of his blessings to them, God indicated that for forty years the nation would wander in the desert until all those adults who refused to go into the land were dead. Only their children and the two spies, Joshua and Caleb, who gave the good report, would live throughout this period and enter Canaan.—vss. 11-38

When the people heard this, they were sorry for what they had done and expressed to Moses that they now were willing to enter and invade the land. Moses cautioned them not to do that, because God would not be on their side. Nevertheless, they

disobeyed Moses and went up against the Canaanites. The inhabitants of the land came out against the Israelites, fought and drove them back to the desert again.—Num. 14:39-45

LESSONS FROM ISRAEL'S EXPERIENCE

Here are some observations drawn from lessons learned from Israel's experiences as recorded in Numbers 13 and 14.

1) God's patience and longsuffering may be extended to even those who doubt him.

The Heavenly Father's direction to Moses that representatives should be sent to spy out Canaan was in response to an earlier petition by the people to have the land scouted before attempting to conquer it. If the Israelites truly had confidence in God's providences on their behalf, there would have been no need for them to request a mission to search the land before entering it. Not only had God delivered them from Egyptian captivity, but he had made abundant provision for all of their needs through the supplying of water at Marah and Meribah. He had also given them manna and quail to eat. Even with all their murmurings, he said, "I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: Unto a land flowing with milk and honey." (Exod. 33:2,3) Surely, the fact that God continued to promise protection and success for his people should have been more than enough to give them confidence. Nevertheless, in his patience and longsuffering, God acceded to their request to spy out the land as a prelude to conquering it.

2) Israel desired to walk by sight and relied upon human wisdom.

The people depended upon human agencies to tell them what lay ahead in Canaan instead of relying upon the Word of God as to how they should proceed. The findings by ten of the twelve spies proved to be an evil report because they did not limit it to a factual description of what they saw—a land of milk and honey, with grapes, figs, pomegranates, and much fruitage. When they saw the walled cities and supposed “giants,” they discouraged the people from proceeding forward by counseling that they would be defeated because of their enemies’ strength. This was an affront to God in supposing the Canaanites were stronger than his almighty power. It also disregarded his previous providence on their behalf in providing water, quail, and manna as they traveled in the wilderness.

3) Israel was ungrateful for the Heavenly Father’s providential arrangements.

The people murmured against Moses and Aaron, whom God had appointed to lead them. Incredibly, they blasphemed the character of God by suggesting he had brought them and their wives and children to perish in the wilderness. Additionally, in their irrationality, they desired to have another leader than Moses who would return them to Egypt. Doing this, they disregarded how much they had groaned previously for deliverance from Pharaoh, and how in mercy, their pleas had been answered in such a miraculous fashion by God. The Israelites’ ungratefulness was almost beyond measure.

4) Faithful servants of God manifest nobility of character even in the midst of unthankfulness.

We are struck with the attitude of grief displayed by Joshua and Caleb, who rent their clothes in sorrow for the people's blasphemy against God and sedition against Moses' leadership. Yet, in an attempt to recover the Israelites from their folly, they again asserted the need for trust in God to give them the victory over the Canaanites. In the midst of this, however, the people's perversity was manifested in their desire to stone these two faithful servants.

The character of Moses in pleading to God not to utterly destroy these rebellious, unthankful people, and establish him and his posterity as inheritors of the promises, is also particularly noteworthy. Rather than being concerned with himself, he desired that no reproach should come upon the name or glory of Jehovah. Israel's enemies would not properly have understood such disinheritance as a sign of God's justice in dealing with them for their continued provocations. They, rather, would have wrongly attributed it to the failure of God's power to accomplish his designs and to keep his promise to bring the Israelites into the possession of Canaan.

5) God's mercy and justice are in perfect harmony.

God's mercy, and the value of intercessory prayer, were demonstrated in that he hearkened unto Moses' request by not destroying all of the Israelites. Nevertheless, he indicated that because the Israelites had failed to appreciate all of his wonderful miracles and leadings on their behalf, those adults who left Egypt who were above twenty years of age would spend forty years wandering in the wilder-

ness. Justly, he pronounced that they would all perish and only their children, and Caleb and Joshua, would ultimately enter the promised land. God's justice was further manifested in the sudden death of the ten evil spies, whose report instigated Israel's refusal to go up and possess the land of Canaan.

6) Hardness of heart was a continuing problem during the Israelites' wilderness experience.

Even with all the chastisements they received, the people were neither contrite nor repentant, nor did they listen to God's further instruction. Despite the edict that they should not possess the land at this time, and Moses' declaration not to proceed further, they in their rashness and continued rebellion tried to do so. Although Moses and the Ark of the Covenant remained in the camp, some of the Israelites went up against their enemies. The Amorites came out of the mountain, chased them "as bees do," and routed them. (Deut. 1:44) Truly the Israelites' perversity against God's commands was remarkable.

PAUL'S TESTIMONY

In the New Testament there are numerous references that address the experiences of Israel as being prophetic. In the 3rd chapter of Hebrews, verses 16-19, the Apostle Paul refers to this same apostasy. He points out that by the time those forty years of wandering ended, the wilderness was dotted with the graves of all those who rebelled against God's direction and who did not heed the good report given by Joshua and Caleb. Paul says they were excluded from the privilege of entering Canaan "because of unbelief."

Although much of the content in the book of Hebrews is addressed largely to Jewish Christians living in the first century, its principles have applicability to all believers throughout this Gospel Age. "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. 4:1) In this passage, the spirit begotten of this Gospel Age are admonished to take heed to the example of fleshly Israel. We should manifest a reverent sobriety with regard to our walk, lest we fail to properly act upon the exceeding great and precious promises which are given to us. These promises from God are for the purpose of helping us attain the heavenly rest of the divine nature by making our calling and election sure.

"Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (vs. 2) The good news has been preached to us, and we have received the invitation of the High Calling to be part of the spiritual seed of Abraham which is to bless all the families of the earth. Although the Law was a schoolmaster to bring the Jews to Christ, except for a remnant, they did not manifest in their heart the spirit of the Law. Hence, when Jesus presented himself to the nation as their promised Messiah, because of their unbelief and hardness of heart, they were cast off from favor and lost the exclusive right to become the body of Christ.

ENTERING INTO SPIRITUAL REST

"We which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall

enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” (vs. 3) God, through his son, has extended to us an invitation to partake of the redemptive merit of Jesus’ sacrifice by making a full consecration, resulting in justification and forgiveness of sins. True believers enter a rest of faith when accepted in the Beloved. By serving the Lord, and doing his will and that of the Father, we develop fruitage and a sense of increasing joy as we see the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Thus, consecrated and sanctified believers in Christ presently enter into an additional rest, a rest from our own works. As we grow in grace and knowledge along our pilgrim journey, our faith is strengthened and our rest increases. If we continue to progress by being obedient to the Father’s will to the greatest extent of our ability, then we will realize the hope of eternal rest in glory.

“He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.” (vs. 4) This verse alludes to the seventh day of the Genesis account in which God rested from his creative work with regard to the earth and the human family. Surely, this was not because of any weariness on his part. On the contrary, although the Heavenly Father ceased his immediate work with regard to mankind, he continued with his ultimate purpose toward man. This purpose was that his son would become the Head of the seed of the woman which ultimately will bruise the serpent’s head and do away with sin and death. (Gen. 3:15) If we are faithful, we will be a part of this seed class. (Gal. 3:16,29) This

New Creation has been in the process of development during this Gospel Age, while the world of mankind has largely been left alone to fend for itself until Christ's kingdom of righteousness is ushered in.

OPENED TO THE GENTILES

"In this place again, if they shall enter into my rest." (Heb. 4:5) The *New International Version* renders the same passage, "They shall never enter my rest." This confirms that God's Sabbath rest was still in effect when these words were uttered. It also points out that Israel as a nation had failed to enter into the rest of faith in God's spiritual promises. Since natural Israel was typical of the New Creation, this statement reemphasizes the earlier caution that we should not follow the example of unbelief which prevented those Israelites who came out of Egypt from entering the Canaan of rest. Like Caleb, we of the Gospel church, under the leadership of Jesus, the antitypical Joshua, now enter this rest of faith.

"Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief." (vs. 6) In a literal sense, those who died in the wilderness because of their unbelief, failed to enter literal Canaan. The initial offer of entering into the antitypical Canaan of rest was made to the nation of Israel at the time of Jesus' First Advent. Because of their blindness and hardness of heart under their leaders, the scribes and Pharisees, Israel failed to avail themselves of the opportunity of having the exclusive right to enter into this special

arrangement of the High Calling. Only a comparatively few Jews, a remnant, were of such a mind and heart to accept the privilege of discipleship offered at Pentecost. Ultimately, the opportunity of entering this rest of faith was opened to the Gentiles as well, commencing from the time of Cornelius' conversion, even to the present harvest time of the Gospel Age.

SPIRITUAL REST A LIMITED OPPORTUNITY

“Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” (vs. 7) The principle of hearkening to God and obedience to his will for protection has always been operative—from the time of Adam, during the Patriarchal Age, and throughout the Jewish Age. Nevertheless, this verse expresses urgency to each Gospel Age believer—antitypical spiritual Israelite—with regard to fulfilling our covenant of sacrifice. A time will come when there will be no more opportunity to run for the mark of the prize of the High Calling. “He limiteth” this period of time, after which there will be no further opportunity to be of the church class.

“If Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.” (Heb. 4:8) In the *Marginal Translation*, it is noted that Jesus is the New Testament equivalent of Joshua in the Old Testament. This passage is merely a continuation of the thought that, prior to the Gospel Age, the rest described here was not obtained. This is discerned when we remember that even with Israel's actual entrance into literal Canaan, there

was continual conflict, sickness, sorrow, and ultimately, death.

FUTURE REST

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” (vs. 9) This verse provides the climax to which the preceding ones have led. It points to a future and more complete rest when the church experiences its resurrection change and is united with Christ. All of our preparatory works of obedience, faithfulness, and sacrifice will be ended—we will rest from those works. If we attain such a station, whatever we have endured on this side of the veil will be as nothing in comparison to the glory which shall be revealed in us.

In our lesson, Joshua typically represents Christ Jesus, and Caleb represents the church. The children of that generation which perished in the wilderness may well picture the world of mankind. After the establishment of Christ’s kingdom, they will be led into their earthly Canaan of rest under the provisions of the New Covenant. This covenant, so much better than any previous to it, will be in effect to provide blessings to all the obedient of mankind so that they may obtain everlasting life upon the earth.

ADDITIONAL LESSONS

In drawing this consideration of resting in the Lord to a close, let us remember and note well five additional points from which we can draw needed lessons:

- 1) We have the privilege of entering into spiritual rest by our justification in Christ. This is a prelude to that still more glorious rest of our

Heavenly Canaan, if we prove faithful unto death.

2) The spying out of the land may well represent our investigation and appreciation of the message of truth. Its harmonious doctrines and the Bible's teachings demonstrate the magnificent character of God and the wonderful provisions which he has made to bring about the blessing of all the families of the earth.

3) The twelve who were sent to spy out the land might well represent all the spirit begotten of this age. These all experience a measure of the Lord's rest. The ten spies, however, seem to represent those who fail to properly appropriate the promises given to them—fail to have complete confidence in the power of God that they might be more than overcomers. Thus, they perhaps give an evil or discouraging report either by word or actions to others with whom they come in contact.

4) The Israelites' enemies, who inhabited Canaan, may well represent the various fleshly weaknesses which beset us as spiritual Israelites. These must be overcome, with the Lord's help and by his grace, before we can take possession of, and inherit, heavenly Canaan.

5) A major theme contained in this study is the necessity for continual faith in God. As the Heavenly Father's children, we above all others should see his leadings in our lives thus far. As such, we should trust him implicitly so that no matter what his Word reveals, to the very best of our ability we should be obedient to it. ■

Contentment

***“Let your
conversation be
without
covetousness; and
be content with
such things as ye
have.”
—Hebrews 13:5***

TO BE CONTENT WITHIN

the meaning of the apostle's words in our theme text does not imply a listless, do-not-care attitude toward life and its responsibilities. Rather, it implies a peace of mind based upon faith's convictions that God will supply all the needs of his fully consecrated people. The apostle continues the thought, saying, “For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”—vss. 5,6

The Greek word here translated “content” literally means to “ward off,” or “to avail.” The thought evidently is that the Christian can be content because, through faith, he knows that nothing which is done against him can prosper because the Lord is his helper. Not only is this a blessed assurance of help in the face of attacks from enemies of the New Creature, but it is also a guarantee to cover the daily needs of the Christian, concern for which might otherwise disturb one's rest of mind and heart.

COVETOUSNESS OPPOSITE TO CONTENTMENT

To believe that the God of the universe is our Heavenly Father, and that he will take care of us, providing for all our needs if we do our part, and protecting us against all our enemies, banishes all anxiety relative to material things from the hearts of the Lord's people. Covetousness is a form of selfishness, begotten by the urge for self-preservation. Fallen man has not only found it necessary to struggle against the "thorns and thistles" of an imperfect environment, but has also developed the erroneous idea that it is necessary to exert his combativeness against his fellow man in order to make a living. Sometimes this struggle of human selfishness is carried on with swords and guns. Generally speaking, however, it is seen in the more honorable guise of competitive business in the labor, industrial, and professional markets of the world.

The Christian finds himself in this world of selfishness, but he should endeavor not to be a part of it. That is, he should seek to have his "conversation," or activity, motivated, not by selfishness, but by love. The worldly-minded would think such an attitude a very foolish one indeed. However, they do not have the assurance of a kind Heavenly Father's care. They depend upon their own ability to provide for and to protect themselves and their own. For this reason, the "everybody-for-himself" principle seems to be a very logical one for most men and women of the world. The Christian, though, is not dependent upon his own wisdom and strength. He is assured that back of him and his interests there is the power of a loving and all-wise Father, so he commits all his affairs to him.

With this blessed assurance of divine care, we can ward off the spirit of fear and discontent, and not be governed by the principle of covetousness. Why selfishly compete with our fellow men for riches which are temporary, when we enjoy the blessings of heavenly riches, represented in God's care for us now, and the promised glory, honor, and immortality of the future? Truly, the Christian can have his conversation, or way of life, "without covetousness," and be content, because the Lord is his helper.

GOD'S PEOPLE NEVER FORSAKEN

The promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," was originally made to Joshua, when, by divine appointment he took over the leadership of Israel as the successor of Moses. (Josh. 1:1-9) The apostle in quoting it, applies it to all the consecrated. God is impartial in his care for his friends, servants, and sons. This means that his promises of watchcare made to any of his people are applicable, and sure to be fulfilled, and with perhaps even more force, for us today. Likewise, we may note the wonderful manner in which God did care for his ancient people. We are thus encouraged in the thought that the same God is now caring for us, and that the same love and power is being exercised for our blessing.

The circumstances under which this promise was made to Joshua are interesting to note. Moses, the great leader of Israel, was no longer with them. The Israelites had learned to recognize Moses as their leader, and there would be room for question in Joshua's mind as to whether he would be competent and accepted in taking Moses' place. Doubtless

the Israelites leaned on Moses more than they did on the Lord. Would they now have faith in the Lord's appointment of Joshua? It must have been very encouraging to Joshua, therefore, to have such a wonderful assurance of help from the Lord as contained in the promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

With such a promise from the Lord, Joshua could go about the business of leading Israel in a wholly unselfish manner. He would not need to show favoritism to any of his people in order to have the good will of the influential. He knew that, after all, God was their real leader, and that he was merely serving under him. Thus his only concern need be that of pleasing God. If he did that, he knew that God would care for all his interests, as well as the interests of all his true people.

SELFISH PRAYER NOT PLEASING

No facet of the Christian life should be influenced by selfishness, not even the prayer life of the consecrated. Our prayers should not be selfish in the sense of asking the Lord for earthly and material blessings which his wisdom sees might not be good for us as New Creatures. Our requests to the Lord should always include the thought, "Not my will, but thine be done." This principle should hold true even in respect to spiritual matters, either as they concern our own growth in grace, or have to do with the privilege of proclaiming the Truth.

We once heard of a brother who prayed earnestly that it might not rain on a certain day that he had planned to distribute circulars to advertise a public meeting. The brother's thought was that since this

was the Lord's work he would surely be willing and glad to see that the weather conditions were favorable for doing it. When the day came, sure enough it did not rain, and the brother was certain that the Lord had heard and answered his prayer.

Although it is true that the Lord might choose to overrule in such an experience in this fashion, there is another angle to a matter of this kind. The Lord is always pleased with the sincere zeal of his people to make known the glad tidings of his kingdom. It might, nevertheless, be his will that one endure the hardship of going out in inclement weather to distribute advertising material. Such an experience as described here is merely an example of the many daily experiences of every type which come into the Christian's life. The point is that our prayers should never be selfish. We believe that the Lord is pleased for us to take everything to him in prayer. However, proper prayer should never be in the spirit of demanding, but requesting and, with resignation, leaving the decision wholly with him as to just what experiences will serve our best interests and highest needs, in accordance with his will.

THANKFULNESS IMPORTANT

A goodly portion of our prayers should be those of thankfulness. Too often, perhaps, we think of prayer as a means merely of requesting things from the Lord. Our Heavenly Father is pleased for us to ask him for things, but let us commingle our requests with heartfelt praise and thanksgiving for the divine blessings which daily are lavishly bestowed upon us. There is no better aid to contentment

than the habit of thanksgiving to God for his abundant mercy, and for his grace to help in our every time of need.

PAUL'S TESTIMONY

The Apostle Paul, through his own experiences of the Lord's care and overruling, learned the great value of contentment. He emphasizes that such a condition can only come to the child of God by proper thought, conduct, and prayer. Notice his words: "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." "Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. . . . for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—I Tim. 6:6-8; Phil. 4:6-13 ■

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

Prince Albert, SK July 1,2

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

G. Balko

Vernon, BC July 6-8

M. J. Balko

West Newton, PA July 29

R. Charlton

Prince Albert, SK July 1,2
Vernon, BC 6-8

O. B. Elbert

Prince Albert, SK July 1,2
Vernon, BC 6-8

J. Freer

Vernon, BC July 6-8

R. Goodman

New Brunswick, NJ July 1

K. Humphreys

Vernon, BC July 6-8

B. Jakubowski

Vernon, BC July 6-8

S. Jeuck

Louisville, AL July 1

B. Keith

Chicago, IL July 15
Gary Area, IN 16
West Newton, PA 29
Indianapolis, IN 30

A. Kopczyk

Vernon, BC July 6-8

T. Krupa

Prince Albert, SK July 1,2

P. Mora

Prince Albert, SK July 1,2

T. Ruggirello

New Brunswick, NJ July 1

B. Siwak

Vernon, BC July 6-8

B. Sweeney

Vernon, BC July 6-8

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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.

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, June 30-July 1—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Farchione. Phone: (262) 895-4583 or E-mail: DebFarchione@aol.com

PRINCE ALBERT & SASKATOON CONVENTION, June 30-July 2—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR1 Stn Mpp Prince Albert, SK, Canada S6V 5P8

OKANAGAN CONVENTION, July 6-8—Schubert Center, 3505 30th Avenue, Vernon, BC, Canada. Contact: T. Fernets. Phone: (250) 558-3055 or E-mail: afernets@shaw.ca

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 21-26—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

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 5-10—North University, Baia Mare, Romania. Contact L. Griehs. Phone: (480) 837-4286 or (267) 688-8617. E-mail: griehs@comcast.net

OHOBIA, NIGERIA, CONVENTION, August 25—Contact M. C. Uzor. E-mail: kelechiuzor4u@yahoo.com

JACKSON CONVENTION, September 1,2—Fa-Ho-Lo Camp & Conference Center, 3000 Mount Hope Road, Unit 1, Grass Lake, MI 49240. Contact V. Lumley, 2531 Ashton Road, Jackson, MI 49203. Phone: (517) 782-7252 or E-mail: lumley@aol.com

NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 1,2—Doubletree Hotel Mahwah, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ

07430. Deadline for subsidized rate is August 15. For room reservations, contact G. Passios, 245 Grand Avenue, Rutherford, NJ 07070. Phone: (201) 939-3196 or E-mail: gpassios11@verizon.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 1-3—Seabeck Conference Center, 15395 Seabeck Hwy NW, Seabeck, WA 98380. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (253) 838-3822 or E-mail: laurie@flinn.us

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 7-9—Radisson Inn Huntsville Airport, 8721 Madison Blvd., Madison, AL 35758. Hotel Reservations: (256) 772-8855. Contact K. Getchel. Phone: (256) 660-1566 or E-mail: biblestudents@gmail.com

CLAY CITY CONVENTION, September 14-16—Canyon Inn, McCormick's Creek State Park, 451 McCormick Creek Park Road, Spencer, IN 47460. Cut-off date for reservations is August 14. Contact S. Clark, 7861 Clearwater Parkway, Indianapolis, IN 46240. Phone: (317) 578-2634

COLORADO CONVENTION, September 15,16—DoubleTree by Hilton Denver, 3203 Quebec Street, Denver, CO 80207. Contact L. Turner. Phone: (303) 278-4091 or E-mail: twink94@comcast.net

COLUMBUS, INDIANA OLDE TIME HARVEST CONVENTION, September 22,23—D. Ledwinka Farm, 10004 E. 550 N., Columbus, IN 47203. Contact G. Davis. Phone: (812) 372-7165

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, September 30—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. Contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 982-7253 or E-mail: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

PITTSBURGH CONVENTION, October 6,7—Se-wickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact G. Balko. Phone: (724) 771-0139 Or contact L. Mlinek. Phone: (724) 689-8733