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PEACE THROUGH CHRIST'S KINGDOM

A PREVIOUS ISSUE of *The Dawn* magazine had an article entitled "When There Is No Peace," which quoted from a news article in which the writer forecast that global peace would be an unlikely prospect in 1998. Many people are unaware that the threat of war exists in the world today. Such troubled areas exist because of the availability of huge quantities of conventional arms from industrialized countries selling billions of dollars worth of arms to smaller nations, encouraging them to threaten war. In that article the major trouble spots in the world were mentioned. First they listed small countries around the Caspian Sea in Central Asia. Many are newly independent nations, having emerged from a breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. Three major powers are the players in this drama. We quote again from the article:

"China has launched a major effort to lock up Caspian energy supplies, directly challenging U.S.

firms vying for contracts. Russia still considers the region its backyard, and is trying to use economic pressure and the stationing of military troops along its borders to obtain oil concessions.”

Additionally there are ethnic conflicts which, when combined with a rivalry over a resource such as oil, make this region a powder keg.

Closer to the U.S. border is the trouble in southern Mexico's province of Chiapas. Peace appeared to be attained when, over a year ago, the poor people of that province—the poorest in Mexico—revolted and then the government officials negotiated a truce. Suddenly, on December 22nd, there was a massacre of forty-five peasants by Mexican paramilitarists.

There is an ongoing dispute between Taiwan and mainland China. Taiwan wants independence. China wants Taiwan as a part of China, and has threatened military action for a number of years. The United States has a treaty to defend Taiwan and would feel pressured to send troops to the region if a military conflict breaks out.

Closer to home is Colombia, where Marxist guerrillas have allied with drug warlords to fight the elected government. Again, in another area, peace appears to have been successfully forced by UN peacekeepers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but trouble looms to the south in Kosovo—originally part of Yugoslavia—where 90% of the people are Albanians, but where Serbs are in power. The Albanians have peacefully protested for eight years, and now have formed the Kosovo Liberation Army which violently attacked Serbian police stations. Albania and Greece could become involved in this area.

Other trouble spots are Iraq, under Saddam Hussein; Central Africa, where widespread war made 1997 the continent's most violent year since the nations became independent in the 1960's; and Central and South Africa, where small wars never seem to stop. Islamic fundamentalists are a threat to destabilizing Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and other countries along the Persian Gulf where the U.S. has bases.

There is the hope that the United Nations will in some manner find a way to peace. Indeed, the United Nations was formed for the very purpose of maintaining peace. Posted at the UN headquarters, for all to see, is the Scripture text, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—Micah 4:1-4

The United Nations is, of course, a powerful organization, and it is hoped that through its influence for good the nations of earth will actually see the advantages of not going to war. The purpose is good, and the motive doubtless sincere, but will this particular 'peace front' really result in peace? Certainly the United Nations is, in certain areas of human relationship, accomplishing a great deal of good. It is helping to build up some of the backward nations of earth, especially in the fields of medicine and hygiene, and in other respects which contribute to human well-being and happiness, but the UN has been unable to keep the peace.

In the matter of the political maneuvering of the great nations of earth, the UN has proved itself to be almost without power. The veto in the Security Council means that a powerful nation can prevent

what other nations may wish to accomplish toward peace through the United Nations. This means that the real moves on the international diplomatic check-board are being made outside of the UN.

A NEW WORLD GOVERNMENT NEEDED

The lesson of history is that armament races and balances of power do not prevent war. With fallen human selfishness dictating the policies of nations, the only hope for peace is in the establishment of an authority in the earth powerful enough to impose laws of justice and righteousness which transcend the petty jealousies and selfish ambitions of individual nations. Such an authority cannot stem from any existing nation or government of earth. Only the kingdom of God is capable of exercising such an authority and of executing justice and righteousness in all the earth.—Zech. 14:9

But in this, many earnest students of the Bible have failed to realize that in the outworking of the Divine plan there is to be an actual government of righteousness established in the earth, a government that will effectively rule the nations and assure peace and happiness to all mankind. Despite all the marvelous references in both the Old and New Testaments to this 'kingdom' which is to have "dominion" from "sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8), many insist that God's kingdom is merely a righteous spirit, or disposition, in the hearts of individuals.

This false concept of the kingdom is based on the expression, "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21) These are purported to be the words of Jesus, but they are a faulty translation of what he actually said. The Pharisees had asked Jesus

“when the kingdom of God should come.” Replying, he said, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [*Marginal Translation: ‘with outward show’*]: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you [*Marginal Translation: ‘among you’*]” (Luke 17:20, 21) A more exact translation of this statement would be, “God’s Royal Majesty is among you.” (*Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) This brings it into harmony with the conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees.

LACK OF FAITH

The Pharisees did not believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the great King of the Old Testament prophecies. From their standpoint, how could he set up a kingdom in opposition to Rome, liberate Israel, and extend peace and joy to all nations? He had no army. His friends were not people of importance. What could embarrass him more than to be asked just when he expected to set up his kingdom? Jesus knew what was in their hearts, and answered accordingly. The kingdom of God, he explained, was not to come into power in the manner of other kingdoms or governments. There would be no outward show—no armies, no wars of conquest, and no display of armament. As a matter of fact, as he pointed out, the King-to-be in this kingdom was *even then in their midst*, although they refused to believe it. Jesus’ work at his First Advent was related to his future kingdom, but no soldiers were needed to accomplish it. The expression, ‘the kingdom of God is within you’ could not be true, for Jesus was talking to the Pharisees whom he had styled “hypocrites,” “whited sepulchres,” “children of the Devil.” (Matt. 23:27; John 8:13,44) How could the kingdom of God be within them? It was not, and

later Jesus cast them off from ever having any share in the rulership of his kingdom.

NOT OF THIS ORDER

Another statement of Jesus which also has been greatly misunderstood is the one he made to Pilate, when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36) This has been taken by many to mean that all the promises of God pertaining to a kingdom are to be fulfilled in the experiences of Jesus' followers when they die and go to heaven. After all, say these, the kingdom promised in the Bible has nothing to do with this world of sin, because Jesus said so.

The difficulty here lies in the translator's use of the word 'world' to translate the Greek word *kosmos*, which means 'order' or 'arrangement of things'. What Jesus said was that his kingdom was not of this present order of society. The Bible reveals that there are three 'worlds', ages, or social arrangements in the plan of God. The kingdom social order is the one which follows the present one. The new social order is ushered in by the return of Christ, at his Second Advent. It is during that time when his kingdom becomes established, that the "government shall be upon his shoulder" and the promise will be fulfilled, "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."—Isa. 9:6,7

The disciples at first did not understand this, so Jesus related a parable to illustrate it. It was a parable concerning a certain nobleman—which was himself—who went into a far country to receive

a kingdom, and to return. (Luke 19:12) In his introduction to this parable, Luke explains that Jesus related it because his disciples thought that his kingdom “should immediately appear.”—vs. 11

All of Jesus’ teachings were related directly or indirectly to God’s promised kingdom. They do not all pertain to the blessings which will reach mankind through the agencies of that kingdom. Many of them relate to various aspects of preparation for it, and Jesus’ death as man’s Redeemer is in this category. The Divine plan is that the Messiah of promise was not to rule over a dying race, but a race redeemed from death—each individual of which would be offered the opportunity, upon conditions of obedience, to live forever.

A NEW WAY OPENS

On the other hand, the disciples of Christ are offered the opportunity of reigning with him if they are willing to suffer and die with him. (II Tim. 2:11, 12) The Gospel call to those willing to accept these terms of discipleship has been going out during the entire Gospel Age since the First Advent, and this has been in preparation for the kingdom. Many of Jesus’ parables relate to this Gospel Age work, illustrating from one standpoint or another the joys, blessings, difficulties, and trials of these “children of the kingdom.”—Matt. 13:38

Not understanding the plan of God, it was easy to conclude that all the kingdom promises of the Bible related simply to the enjoyment of a home in heaven for all eternity; for there are many heavenly, or spiritual, promises associated with the theme of the kingdom. However, these promises are to those called to be rulers in that kingdom and not to its

subjects. When Jesus, the King of kings, was raised from the dead, he was highly exalted to the Divine nature, having given his flesh for the life of the world. Those who will live and reign with him in his kingdom are promised that they will be made like him, and share his heavenly home and nature.—John 6:51; I John 3:2,3

THE EARTHLY PHASE

These spiritual rulers in the kingdom of God will have human representatives on earth. The religious rulers of Israel thought they were to represent God in his kingdom, and they could have, had they qualified through humility and obedience. These were in line to be the “children of the kingdom” (Matt. 8:12) but when the kingdom is established they will discover that through unfaithfulness they forfeited the right to any official position therein. Jesus explained this, saying, “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.”—Luke 13:28,29

The expression, ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’, is descriptive of the chagrin and disappointment to be experienced by those who, while once in line to be used in the kingdom, find, when they are raised from the dead, that this desired position is occupied by Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, who also then will be raised from the dead in what the Apostle Paul speaks of as a “better resurrection.”—Heb. 11:35,40

These earthly representatives of the kingdom are prophetically referred to in Psalm 45:16 as those who will be made "princes in all the earth." This will be the earthly phase of Christ's kingdom, which will represent and operate in conjunction with its spiritual phase, made up of the glorified Jesus and his faithful followers, who, in the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:6) are exalted to live and reign with him.

These two phases of the kingdom of Christ are symbolically described in Micah 4:1-4 as "Zion"—the spiritual, and "Jerusalem"—the human, or earthly. This prophecy also refers to Jesus and his followers, the "sons of God," as the ruling "house of the LORD," symbolized in this prophecy as the "mountain [kingdom]" of the LORD. The prophecy reads:

"In the last days [of this present evil order] it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills [controlling all nations, large and small]; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the Law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it."

ALL NEEDS PROVIDED

Peace will come to mankind through Christ's world government. It will not be a peace through mutual fear, but a peace so complete and enduring that there will be freedom from fear—for none 'shall make them afraid'. But peace alone, even peace with economic security as symbolized in this prophecy by the idea of dwelling under vine and fig tree, would not be wholly satisfactory. Even with these much desired and sought-after blessings attained, there would still be sickness and death. However, another Old Testament prophecy in which a 'mountain' is used to symbolize Christ's kingdom, assures us that even death is to be destroyed. We quote:

"In this mountain [kingdom] shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees . . . well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering [superstition and ignorance of the true God] cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the LORD God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:6-9

What more could we ask? And how apparent it is that these inspiring kingdom promises mean more—so much more—than merely a righteous sentiment in the hearts of individuals, that they describe a literal and genuine government which will rule the world in righteousness bringing peace and

health and life to all mankind. (Isa. 26:9) It will be the rulership of this government that will bring the answer to the Christian's prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." —Matt. 6:10

—A booklet entitled, *"Peace through Christ's Kingdom,"* is available free upon request. ■

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

COMFORT FOR THE STRONG

"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"—Jeremiah 12:5

QUESTION: What is the lesson intended for us in the Scripture Jeremiah 12:5?

ANSWER: Jeremiah proclaimed God's message fearlessly, even though it was unpopular. We cannot avoid noting the remarkable similarity of Jeremiah's position to that of the LORD's people today, who are enlightened with the truth of the kingdom. As he saw in his day, we now see efforts being made to save this civilization through human wisdom. We know that these attempts, no matter how well intentioned, will fail. We cannot withhold the prophetic fact that the time of trouble in which we live will increase in intensity until the present order of things is destroyed. At the same time, Jeremiah-like, we present a reason for optimism—the kingdom will soon come when God's will is done in earth as it is in heaven. Jeremiah heard the words of the

LORD saying, "He that hath my Word, let him speak my Word faithfully," and so we do.—Jer. 23:28

We learn in Jer. 12:1-4 that the prophet had been discouraged and ready to quit. The way of the wicked had prospered and brought forth fruit, while his prophecies seemed to wait for fulfillment. Then God answered him in the words of our text, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?" His answer to Jeremiah, is an answer to those of his people today who would quit through discouragement. It is a challenge to the completeness of our consecration to God. It is as if he said, "Why do you complain about your providences? You have endured nothing to what you may be called upon to endure as you enter further into the time of trouble," to prove your complete submission to the will of the LORD.

Such comfort is only for the strong in the LORD; but what comfort it is! Of the Apostle Paul our Master said, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9:16) The one who is a Christian in name only has avoided this requisite of discipleship through inactivity. Those consecrated to God find the echo of these words deep down in their own lives, stirring and challenging them to speak his Word faithfully, as did Jeremiah. ■

OBITUARIES

The following brother has recently finished his Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to the family and friends in the loss of this dear one.

Brother Harold Priebe, LaSalle, IL—February 25, 1998. Age, 83.

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

LESSON FOR MAY 3

OPEN TO TRUTH

KEY VERSE: *"With many such parables spake he the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it."*
—Mark 4:33

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Mark 4:1-9, 26-34

ON THE OCCASION of this lesson, our Lord was sitting in a boat while a multitude of people had gathered on the seashore to hear him preach. The majority of those who were assembled may have appreciated his gracious words and considered him to be a great teacher sent from God, but they doubtless understood little of the deeper meaning in this parable of the sower.

Others who were listening to him, however, included the twelve apostles and other interested followers, who had crowded around him to ask the meaning of the parable. This was in re-

sponse to the Master's words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Mark 4:9) They had ears not only for the interesting story, but also for the interpretation of the symbols used.

"He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand." (vss. 11-13) The worldly wise and self-seekers did not heed our Lord's message; therefore they remained in igno-

rance of the more meaningful lesson.

In this parable of the sower there is deeper significance in the very basic teaching concerning four different kinds of soil in which the sower cast his seed, and these represent the heart condition in which the seed of truth was sown. In the first illustration some of the seed fell by the wayside where birds quickly ate it up. This represents those who never make the truth their own, and Satan steals it away from them, or because of the hard-packed clay soil where people walk, the seed never penetrates the soil to germinate. Such are the hearts of most of mankind.

Other seed fell on stony ground where there was little soil to nourish it and to take root. The shallowness of nature in this kind of Christian becomes manifest when the sun of opposition and discouragement begins to wither the seed. The stonyhearted ones lack character to develop acceptable fruitage.

In another instance, thorns choked some of the

seed that had been sown. Although the soil was deep with rich nutrients and could have brought forth good fruitage, these Christians had other concerns and earthly ambitions that conflicted with the interests of the truth. They may have had the potential for developing strong, deep characters but because of the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, no fruit is produced.

Lastly, there was good ground on which the seed fell. By God's abundant care on their behalf the experiences of life have developed in them the proper appreciation of the Gospel call, as well as the necessary fruitage of his grace. These will be of the class that partake of the kingdom blessings as joint-heirs with our Lord.

May we be of those who receive the seed into good and honest hearts, bringing forth much fruit to the honor of God. Let it choke out the thorns of earthly interests, and separate us from the world's spirit, thus sanctifying us to the love of God who hath called us out of darkness. ■

BARRIERS TO TRUTH

KEY VERSE: *"You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."*—*Mark 7:8—New International Version*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Mark 7:1-13*

IN THIS LESSON the Pharisees and scribes, confronted our Lord with accusations concerning the reason why he allowed his disciples to eat bread with unwashed hands. The Jewish religious leaders reasoned that they were more pure and clean than were Jesus and his followers. The formal ceremonial washing of hands was stressed as an important part of their religion, and those who did not conform to their teachings were considered unclean.

This became a barrier to the fundamental truths the Master preached because it emphasized the ritualistic aspects of the Law instead

of the simple truths as outlined in the Word of God.

"The Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?"—*Mark 7:5*

Jesus never taught impurity nor carelessness of any kind, but answered his questioners by citing a passage of Scripture from the Prophet Isaiah who said: "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." *Isa. 29:13*

The 'tradition of the elders' consisted of the theories and opinions that had been formulated by Israel's Doctors of the Law, and passed down through successive generations. These practices were not based on the true principles of the Word of God. Jesus not only preached the Scriptures, but manifested the spirit of the truth in all his proclamations concerning God's laws.

The Pharisees, however, were blinded by the customs of men while endeavoring to uphold the letter of their own Talmud. The letter of the Law became a snare to those who failed to see the spirit of the perfect Law of God.

They professed to keep the commandments of God carefully, while actually being followers of human rituals. There is a lesson for all Christian people to be on guard concerning the matter of keeping their hearts clean and pure. The food and drink that may be consumed will sustain the body for a short time, but the words and actions that arise from the body may do

lasting injury. "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."—Mark 7:20-23

The Apostle Paul brings this to our attention in his Epistle to the Romans. He said, "The kingdom of God does not consist in eating and drinking, but in uprightness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and whoever in this way serves Christ, pleases God, and is approved by men."—Rom. 14:17,18, *Weymouth*

The Jews set up ceremonial barriers to the purity of the truth, and were thus blinded by their own traditions. No matter how clean the hands of an individual are, there would be no effect upon an unclean heart from which much pollution may flow. Therefore, let us always be on guard against every form of hypocrisy. ■

STRUGGLING WITH MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

KEY VERSE: *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”—Mark 10:9*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Mark 10:1-12*

THE PHARISEES HAD again confronted our Lord Jesus by raising a question concerning marriage and divorce. They “came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.” (Mark 10:2) They sought to trap him, and were seeking to take an occasion against him, thus entangling him in dispute and controversy.

Jesus, understanding the motive of their hearts, responded quickly with a question which he proposed to them. “What did Moses command you?” (vs

3) His reply testified to his understanding and respect for the Law of Moses, and that they too held him in high esteem. They acknowledged Moses (Deut. 24:1-4) who stated that a man was permitted to write his wife a bill of divorcement for reasons of uncleanness, and that when he had put her out of his house she was free to marry again. The Law, as expressed by Moses, however, would not tolerate a relaxation of the strict bonds of the marriage vows.

Our Lord’s words in reply demonstrate his ability to read their hearts: “Jesus

answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept." (vs. 5) He was addressing their own low moral and lax state which interfered with their ability to abide by the Law of Moses, or to question it. Next he proceeded to draw their attention to the true meaning of marriage and its original institution by God in the Garden of Eden, together with its Divine purpose.

Man and woman are no longer separated after marriage takes place. Jesus explained, "They twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."— vss. 8,9

The Law stated that a man must leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, which points to the closeness of the relationship as well as its perpetuity. God has joined them together, and the bond which he has tied is not to be lightly set aside. While it is important to respect the sanctity of marriage as Divinely institut-

ed, it, nevertheless, is a symbol of the love that is expressed between Christ and his church. During the present Gospel Age, this bride class is being selected and called from the world, to be brought together in due time in the spiritual realm where the grander marriage of our Lord and his bride will take place.

The Apostle Paul addresses this relationship, saying, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." (Eph. 5:22-24) Paul continues to emphasize the responsibilities, care and love that the husband must always have in mind for his wife's best interests.—vss. 25-29

The example of the perfect marriage is that of Christ and his church. As Paul says: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."—vs. 32 ■

WHAT IS TRUE GREATNESS?

KEY VERSE: *“Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”—Mark 10:45*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Mark 9:33-37; 10:35-45*

IN EACH OF the above scriptural selections our attention is drawn to the importance of humility. The spirit of rivalry and selfishness should not be condoned. It must be overcome by all who are of the household of faith.

In the first selection Jesus asked his disciples what it was that they had been disputing about while on their way to Capernaum. (Mark 9:33) Perhaps it was because they wished to show no disrespect toward their Master that they “held their peace,” as well as to hide their embarrassment of having disputed among

themselves as to which one of them would be the greatest in the kingdom of God.—Mark 9:34

Jesus proceeded to teach them an important lesson, “And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.” (vs. 35) Then he took a small child in his arms, and told his disciples to turn away from this self-seeking spirit of rivalry and become as little children themselves. The meaningful traits of a small child are love, trust, obedience, and teachableness. The lesson for the

Christian is that they must humble themselves even as children, and to emulate these important characteristics.

The second selection of scripture reading concerns the two sons of Zebedee—James and John—who approached Jesus with a special request. “They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.” (Mark 10:37) His direct answer to the two brothers reveals what it means to seek joint-heirship with our Lord in his kingdom. “Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”—vs. 38

Our Lord wanted his disciples to grasp the significance of the special cup which the Heavenly Father had given him to drink of. It was a cup of self-denial, and a baptism unto death. Those who would participate with him in his kingdom must also share with him in the sufferings of the present time. He assured

them that they would take part with him in the experiences of this life, but that he did not have the authority to place certain friends in positions of glory. He said, “To sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.” (vs. 40) Peter learned this lesson well and said, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”—I Pet. 5:6

Jesus did not have one standard for his followers and another for himself. He became a man not only to redeem his disciples, but to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He explained to them, “Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” — Mark 10:45

He humbly and voluntarily laid down his life for others, and his followers are admonished to do likewise. “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”— Luke 14:11 ■

FAITH FOR UNCERTAIN TIMES

KEY VERSE: *"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."*—Mark 13:31

SELECTED SCRIPTURES; Mark 13:1-7,24,27,31-35

MARK'S ACCOUNT DRAWS attention to the great events that would take place during this present Gospel Age, the nearly two-thousand-year period between the First and Second Advents of our Lord Jesus. The Early Church lived in faithful expectation of our Lord's promised return, but over the course of time many lost sight of the prospect. At the end of this age, however, that hope was again revived by those faithful watchers who studied the prophecies in God's Word.

In anticipation of that promise the Apostle Paul cautioned the Thessalo-

nian brethren "that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." (II Thess. 2:2) It was a common basis of faith that the Lord would return some day, but the length of time was wisely concealed by God. Again, as Paul's ministry drew to a close he wrote to Timothy and said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also

that love his appearing.”—
II Tim. 4:8

A few of Jesus’ disciples came and asked him the meaning of some of the prophecies he was speaking about. They said: “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?” (Mark 13:4) He then briefly, as recorded by Mark, outlined the events that would transpire during the intervening age. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”—vs. 32

At the time Jesus spoke these words the Heavenly Father alone knew the exact length of the Gospel Age. Now, at the end of this period, these remarkable prophecies have been revealed to the LORD’s people who are continuing to watch the events that mark the end of this age.

They hear the admonition of the Master who said, “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.” (vs. 33) Any who have been alert to the sure word of prophecy have

been richly blessed by the Word of truth!

Those who are vigilant note the signs of the impending conclusion of the age. They also seek understanding through prayer, strive to keep their hearts in a humble and teachable condition, and feed upon spiritual food from God’s great storehouse of truth. Jesus said, “The Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.”—vs. 34

Jesus tells us, “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” (vss. 35-37) During the long centuries of the Gospel Age, many of the LORD’s people became lethargic. But near the end of the 19th century, the time had come to fulfill the prophecy! (Matt. 24: 44, 45) What a blessing for God’s people! ■

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

THE PLAN OF GOD IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS — PART 11

“TAKE NOW THY SON”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

VERSES 1,2 “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

“And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

‘It came to pass after these things’. Evidently this statement refers to the experiences of Abraham following the weaning of Isaac, as related in the preceding chapter. These accounts indicate that some time had elapsed—sufficient for Ishmael to grow up and marry; and, in addition, for what may have been somewhat protracted dealings with Abimelech.

While the period between the weaning of Isaac and the time when the LORD asked Abraham to

offer him as a burnt offering is not clearly defined, it is safe to assume that the boy was well past twenty when the LORD spoke to Abraham on this occasion. To appreciate the full value of the lesson set forth in this chapter it is essential to remember that Isaac was a grown man, not a young boy, when his father was called upon to offer him up as a sacrifice.

The Hebrew word translated 'tempt' in verse one signifies 'to prove'. The apostle tells us of God, "neither tempteth he any man," and explains that one is tempted when he is drawn away by "his own lust." (James 1:13-15) Temptation is usually associated with sin. God 'tests' his people by holding before them the opportunity to cooperate with him—sometimes at great cost—but he does not 'tempt' them to do wrong.

'Take now thy Son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest'—Abraham certainly must have loved Isaac very dearly, and it is reasonable to conclude that this fact is especially mentioned here because the LORD was making an illustration of a much more important sacrifice which, in the Divine plan, was to be made later—the sacrifice of his own beloved Son, Christ Jesus.

God had promised Abraham that his seed was to be the channel of blessing for all the families of the earth. But before this blessing could flow to the people, a loving father must give up in sacrifice his beloved son. In the outworking of this arrangement it was the Heavenly Father who gave his own beloved Son to be this sacrifice, and here the LORD is making an illustration of this by having Abraham offer his son in sacrifice—his 'beloved' son.

VERSES 3-6 "And Abraham rose up early in the morning. and saddled his ass. and took two of his

young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

“Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

“And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.”

Abraham met this test of faith with courage and determination. He had waited a long while for Isaac to be born; and the child was born under such circumstances that there could be no doubt about the LORD's hand in the matter. This increased Abraham's faith so that now, even though the LORD had asked him to do something that might seem out of harmony with his promises, he had faith to believe that it would in some way be overruled. The Apostle Paul tells us that Abraham had sufficient faith to believe that if it were necessary God would raise Isaac from the dead.—Heb. 11:19

It was a three days' journey to the land of Moriah, where Isaac was to be offered, and this afforded plenty of time for Abraham to think the matter over and change his mind, had he been disposed to do so, but he did not. His was no half-hearted obedience. Having received the request from God to offer his son as a burnt offering he 'rose up early in the morning' to be on his way to the place where the LORD had directed him to go. And the same spirit of faith and obedience enabled him

to endure the suspense of those three days which it took him to reach the specified destination.

VERSES 7-10 "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

"And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

"And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."

When Abraham and his party came within sight of the mountain on which the sacrifice was to be offered, he told his servants to remain behind while he and Isaac proceeded alone. By this time Isaac was getting curious. He was carrying the wood for the burnt offering, and his father had the fire, and also a knife with which to kill the lamb; but they did not have a lamb, so he asked Abraham, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

This question must have pierced the heart of Abraham, but he continued to spare Isaac from knowing the real truth, and replied, 'My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering'. Abraham, of course, did not realize how literally true this would turn out to be, either in the type, or in the antitype. In the antitype, Jesus was the Lamb which God provided, to take "away the sin of the world."—John 1:29

Arriving on the mountain on which the LORD had directed that Isaac was to be offered, Abraham built the altar, placed the wood upon it, and then laid Isaac upon the wood ready to be slain. Here it is well to remember that Isaac was a mature man, and could not have been placed upon the altar against his will by his aged father. By this time Isaac must have known what the LORD had asked his father to do, and the fact that he was willing voluntarily to cooperate helps to make the type accurate; for Jesus, the antitypical Isaac, also willingly laid down his life because it was his Heavenly Father's will for him.

VERSES 11-14 "And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

"And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen."

Up to that time, evidently Abraham believed that he was actually to slay his son. He poised his knife ready to strike the fatal blow when, by means of an angel, the LORD intervened and called his attention to a ram in the nearby bushes. Abraham was directed to use this ram as a substitute for Isaac on the altar. Thus is pictured the fact that the

antitypical Isaac, even Jesus, would become identified throughout the Scriptures as a 'lamb'—the lamb which God provided to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world; the seed of Abraham through whom, upon the basis of his sacrifice, all the families of the earth are to be blessed with an opportunity to gain everlasting life.

The angel who intervened to prevent the slaying of Isaac said to Abraham, 'Now I know that thou fearest God'. This angel was speaking for the LORD, and we get the thought from this statement that God was allowing Abraham to demonstrate his faith and obedience before reaching a decision as to his true attitude of heart and mind. Certainly God could have known this without putting Abraham to such a severe test. God has the ability to know by intuition, but we are not to conclude because he has this ability, that he is limited to this method alone, or that he cannot—if he so wills—choose, by observation, to find out things he desires to know.

VERSES 15-19 "And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

"And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

“So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.”

When Abraham had fully demonstrated his faith by his works, God confirmed the original promise he made to him, by his oath. Thus it became the ‘oath-bound covenant’. Paul refers to this in Hebrews 6:13-19, and speaks of God’s promise, and the oath by which he bound the promise, as “two immutable things.” In the first place it was impossible for God to lie, so his promise apart from the oath was immutable; and his oath was also immutable, and by virtue of these two unshakable testimonies, we “have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

The church is vitally concerned with this oath-bound covenant because as members of the body of Christ they are the spiritual seed of Abraham, and will be the channel of Divine blessings to all nations. (Gal. 3:27-29) Abraham’s seed was to be as the ‘stars’ of heaven, and also as the ‘sand upon the seashore’; that is, there will be a spiritual seed and also an earthly seed.—Acts 7:1-7

The spiritual seed is Christ and the church; and the earthly seed, beginning with the resurrected ancient prophets, will eventually include all the restored world of mankind. The oath-bound covenant, then, embraces God’s promise to develop a ‘seed’ which would be the channel of his blessings; and also the actual pouring out of his blessings of life, purchased by the antitypical Isaac, even Jesus, the Redeemer and Savior of the world.

VERSES 20-24 “And it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham saying Behold

Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor;

“Huz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram,

“And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel.

“And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham’s brother.

“And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah.”

Having proved his faith and obedience, the story of Abraham now begins to enter another phase; and these closing verses of chapter twenty-two introduce the patriarch’s brother and his family. This is in preparation for the account which is later given of Abraham’s servant seeking a bride for Isaac from these kinsfolk of Abraham. This family of the patriarch’s relatives apparently has no great importance in the Divine arrangements except that it provided Rebekah to be Isaac’s wife.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

VERSES 1,2 “And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah.

“And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.”

Sarah died at the age of 127 years. She was ten years younger than Abraham, who was 100 years old when Isaac was born. (Gen. 17:17; 21:5) Therefore Sarah lived to see Isaac grow into manhood, and no doubt knew that he was presented as a lamb

(Continued on Page 38)

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Psalms 42:2

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"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister."

—Matthew 20:28

IF THE CONSECRATION be to the LORD, then every sacrifice of our just rights and interests on behalf of ourselves as New Creatures, on behalf of husband or children, father or mother, neighbors or friends, brethren in Christ, is counted of the LORD as so much done to him; whereas if the very same services were rendered from any other standpoint—by any one unjustified, and not consecrated to the LORD, or merely done to the individuals and not as a sacrifice unto the LORD—these things would not count to us as priests, as our sacrifices.

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(Continued from Page 31)

for a burnt offering to the LORD, and had been received back from the dead 'in a figure', a ram having been substituted for him on the altar. Sarah is the only woman whose age at death is given in the Bible.

Sarah died at Hebron, the more ancient name of which was Kirjath-arba. Some archeologists cite this method of identifying a city as an indication that Moses, in compiling these chapters of Genesis, simply followed records that had been inscribed by contemporaries of the incidents recorded; and that, when coming upon the name of a city which he knew would be unfamiliar to the Hebrew people of his day, simply added a parenthetical explanation of the current name of the city. Moses added explanatory notes where he thought it was necessary.

VERSES 3-20 "And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,

"I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

"And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

"Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

"And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.

"And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,

“That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you.

“And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying,

“Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead.

“And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.

“And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.

“And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,

“My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.

“And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.

“And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about. were made sure


“Unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.

“And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

“And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a buryingplace by the sons of Heth.”

The remainder of this chapter simply deals with Abraham's arrangements for the burial of Sarah. The sons of Heth were those otherwise known as Hittites. Ephron, the one from whom he bought the field containing the sepulchre in which Sarah was buried, was a Hittite. These Hittites seemed to be very friendly toward Abraham, speaking of him as a prince who dwelt among them.

Ephron wanted to give his sepulchre to Abraham, but Abraham countered with a suggestion that he buy the entire field in which the sepulchre was located. Abraham seems to have been a prudent business man, and probably reasoned that it would be much better to establish a legal ownership of the field and sepulchre through purchase, than to accept it as a gift. Perhaps the customs of the times were such that that which was given away could be taken back if the giver changed his mind. Abraham had bought the field, however, and the account says that ‘the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying place by the sons of Heth’. This particular spot of the land was known as the ‘field of Machpelah’.



JUSTICE, THE FOUNDATION OF GOD'S THRONE

***"Justice and judgment are the habitation of
thy throne: mercy and truth shall go
before thy face."—Psalm 89:14***

THE TESTIMONY OF the Scriptures concerning God's character is that "God is love." (I John 4: 16) This is a marvelous statement! Some say that since love is a principle, God is a principle too. But the Bible speaks of God as a personality. A demonstration of the way the principle of love is used by the personality of God is found in John 3:16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The question that is asked by many is, "How could God manifest his love by sacrificing his Son on the cross?" Since another feature of God's character is justice, another question asked is, "Could God in justice sacrifice his Son?"

Such questions ignore the personality of Jesus and his willingness to cooperate with the Fa-

executing his plan. When Father Adam sinned and caused all his progeny to become victims of sin and death, the laws of justice required that a perfect human life be used to offset the forfeited perfect human life of Adam. God did not compel anyone to do this. "The Word" who was with God, or "*Logos*" (John 1:1-3), our Lord Jesus in his prehuman existence, is portrayed in Isaiah 6:8 as willing to go to earth and to put down the rebellion. "Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

This is confirmed by the Apostle Paul when he writes: "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." (Eph. 5:2) In these words we see how Jesus offered himself to God. We read in our Lord's own words, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."—John 10:17,18

GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

When we speak of God's attributes of justice, love, wisdom, and power, we may think that the first to be exercised is justice, though all four work together in harmony. This is illustrated well by the most important piece of furniture in Israel's Tabernacle, namely, the Ark of the Covenant residing in the Most Holy. The Ark was a golden chest made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. There are several pictures that can be represented by this chest. In one picture, this chest represented God's wisdom. The lid for this chest was made of solid gold and represented God's justice. As an integral part of

this lid were two cherubim facing each other. These represented God's power and love ready to be exercised when justice is satisfied. Justice also can be represented by a pair of evenly poised balances, and sometimes by the compass, or the square. Justice cannot be compromised nor can it tolerate deviation from a righteous course. It expects good weight and measure. In justice there is no characteristic of grace, love, sympathy, or favor. It is the exact measure of truth and righteousness. When justice has been rendered, generally no thanks are due those who mete it out. As it is expected, this firm principle is an attribute of God, and is the very foundation of God's throne. It underlies all of God's dealings with his creatures. The firmness that God employs in adhering to this principle is manifest to everyone acquainted with the plan of salvation. The first step of this plan was to satisfy the claims of justice by providing a corresponding price for the man, Adam, who disobeyed God in Eden. This was accomplished when he sent his only begotten and well beloved Son, Jesus, to die on Calvary as this corresponding price.

If strict justice were practiced in the world today it would be a better world. Justice is not to be demanded, but given. In our society where true justice is rare, we may claim justice, but there should be no obligation to demand it ourselves. Although we may suffer injustice uncomplainingly, yet, as Christ's disciples, we must be ready to be always just.

JUSTICE AND LOVE

Another principle involving justice is found in Romans 11:22, which says: "Behold therefore the goodness [love] and severity [justice] of God: on them which fell [Israel], severity; but toward thee [Gentiles] goodness if thou continue in his goodness."

otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." God cut off Israel because of unfaithfulness; as a result, they were deprived from receiving the chief blessing. Later God called the Gentiles to take their place, manifesting his love in this manner. At the same time Israel was punished for having robbed God, as Malachi asked, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."—Mal. 3:8,9

In those days of the Jewish Age, the Israelites were required to offer animals without blemish, but instead of giving the LORD the very best, they often gave him the weak, the lame, and the poor, while they kept the best for themselves. What was God's reaction to this behavior of Israel? He advised them: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. 3:10) He reminded them that he had "led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them." (Hos. 11:4, *NIV*) Love is the keynote of the Bible.

Love cannot be exercised without justice. God tells us in his Word: "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice." (Prov. 21:3) The Prophet Samuel said the same to King Saul when he had disobeyed God's commandment: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (I Sam. 15:22) Saul was offering as sacrifices spoils taken from the Amalekites when there should not have been any spoils

seized. Saul was rapidly losing favor with the LORD. He had lost sight of God's justice and love.

This can also be true with the LORD's people. We must always keep our minds focused on the wonderful attributes of God in order to faithfully walk in the footsteps of Jesus. We receive tests from God continually to see if the qualities of faith and humility are being developed. His Word counsels us, "My son, forget not my Law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart." (Prov. 3:1-3) By faithfully following this advice we become living epistles with God's words written on our hearts. "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."—II Cor. 3:3

THE LAW OF ISRAEL

God's Law given to Moses was inscribed on tables of stone. These perfect laws could not be kept by imperfect men, yet God said to Israel, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."—Deut. 30:19

This was equivalent to saying, Obey and live. Israel, as imperfect men, could not do this because God's Law for Israel was strict justice, beyond imperfect man's capability to keep. It was necessary for the Heavenly Father to provide another way for man to receive life again, and this was by giving his Son to be man's Redeemer—an expression of his

love. (John 3:16) It was likewise an expression of the love of Jesus who willingly cooperated with his Father to become a ransom for all.—John 10:17,18

During the present Gospel Age, God is calling those who are willing to follow Jesus and to share in his sufferings because of love for God, Jesus, and man-kind. He is selecting them as a special people for his name, as it is written: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."—I Pet. 2:9

GOD'S PURPOSES ACCOMPLISHED

God's purposes will be accomplished, even as he has said through his prophets: "Thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else." (Isa. 45:18) Again he says, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isa. 46:9,10) This is confirmed by the Apostle Paul, who writes: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."—Eph. 1:10

God's purposes will be accomplished concerning his people as well. He has promised to give each one the necessary assistance, fulfilling such Scriptures as these written by the Apostle Paul: "We

know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. 8:28), and, "My God shall supply all your need." (Phil. 4:19) Certainly we will not lack, because the LORD will provide. However, we must do our part as Paul admonishes: "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." —Rom. 12:2

GOD'S REQUIREMENTS

Those called of God during the Gospel Age are to work out their "own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:12,13) "We then, as workers together with him [God], beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." (II Cor. 6:1) Paul reminds us that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." (Rom. 13:12) If we perform these things faithfully the promise is: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. 3:21) The foundation of God's throne is justice. Therefore, those who will be seated with the Father and Jesus on their throne must have a keen appreciation of justice. The LORD has instructed us in Micah 6:8: "What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

These are very reasonable requirements, as will be conceded by all. God could not require less from those whom he is educating for the future work of judging the world. This is evident; and yet all three of these qualities specified through the

prophet, are comprehended in the one word, Love. Love requires that we deal justly with our neighbors, with the brethren, with our families, and with ourselves; that we shall seek to cultivate our appreciation of the rights of others—their moral and intellectual rights, and their liberties. Appreciating these, we shall in no sense of the word seek to abridge or deny them.

The attitude that we must have in working for the LORD is brought out well in the experience of King David. David had sinned in disobeying God by numbering the people. Therefore God caused a plague to come upon Israel, and many died. The Prophet Gad then told David to erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite. So David went to Araunah and told him that he wanted to buy his threshing floor to make an offering to the LORD. Araunah was very cooperative and offered his threshing floor without charge—oxen, wood, and all that would be necessary for the sacrifice. But David declined this kind offer, saying: "Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver, and built there the altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. "The LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel."—II Sam. 24:24,25

We too must sacrifice that which belongs to us, and not to others. In our dedication and consecration to the LORD we give our time, influence, talents, and our possessions, using all of these wisely and well in his service.

While justice is the first feature of the commandment of love, and is also the foundation of God's throne, these are not the end of its requirements. It requires that—going beyond strict justice—our love shall prompt us to exercise mercy and forgiveness. In thus exercising mercy, we are again copying Divine love. Hence in our dealings with others, who like ourselves are fallen and imperfect, we are to remember this feature: we must not only be just toward them, but, additionally, to be merciful, generous, kind, even to the unthankful, that thus we may be children of our Father in heaven.—Luke 6:35,36 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MAY 7—"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."—I Corinthians 9:16 (Z. '03-174 Hymn 261)

MAY 14—"Speaking the truth in love, . . . grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."—Ephesians 4:15 (Z. '03-200 Hymn 109)

MAY 21—"All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—II Timothy 3:16,17 (Z. '97-170 Hymn 22)

MAY 28—"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body [so long as we feel entirely contented with present conditions—ourselves and our surroundings], we are absent from the LORD."—II Corinthians 5:6 (Z. '07-205 Hymn 170)

DIVINE HELP FOR THE HUMBLE

"The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all."

Psalms 34:18,19

SOLOMON SAYS THAT "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." (Prov. 24:16) From this we gather that an unjust man is one who falls but does not attempt to arise and make amends for his shortcomings. There is no virtue in making mistakes; but there is virtue in acknowledging them, and seeking Divine grace to help us overcome our weaknesses.

If we are truly brokenhearted over our shortcomings, then the LORD will be nigh to help us; but he resisteth the proud, and giveth grace only to the humble. The LORD has not promised to prevent us from making mistakes because he knows that we need such afflictions to break our hearts, and to make us contrite. For the same reason God permits afflictions of other kinds—he knows they are good for us as New Creatures in Christ—for they are among the "all things" (Rom. 8:28-30) which are

bound, under his overruling, to work together for our best interests as Christians.

What God has promised to do is to save, or deliver us, from our various afflictions when he sees that it is for our best interests and there are some needed lessons for us to learn. Sometimes it may require a lifetime to learn these lessons. The Apostle Paul had a great affliction, a “thorn in the flesh” (II Cor. 12:7-10), from which he earnestly sought deliverance; but God did not deliver him. Instead Paul received the assurance of Divine grace to help him bear the constant goading of that ‘thorn’—“My grace is sufficient for thee.”—vs. 9

So it is with us. We may have a blemish of some kind, perhaps a physical weakness, which we feel is interfering with our service and if freed from it, we imagine we could serve the LORD so much better. Perhaps our ‘thorn in the flesh’ is some weakness of character that causes us to err repeatedly along some particular line. The LORD may permit us to fall seven times, or even seventy times seven, yet he picks us up each time, graciously delivering and forgiving us.

The secret of obtaining God’s blessings through all our afflictions is to have a humble heart, a contrite spirit. He may permit us to fall in order that we may be kept humble. He may permit other afflictions for the same purpose; but when we humbly cry to him in our distress, he will deliver us. Upon this we can depend! In this assurance we can go on in the narrow way toward the kingdom.

May we all learn to glory in our infirmities, knowing that in them Divine strength is made perfect!—II Cor. 12:9 ■

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

RELEVANT TO OUR DAILY LIVES

Dear "Frank & Ernest": Greetings! I'd like to congratulate you for your broadcast on DZAM, with such informative and entertaining radio programs. They are great! We can find lessons that are relevant to our daily lives. I can help my friends with their problems by letting them listen to your broadcast. Keep up the good work. Sincerely yours.—*Philippines*

TIRED OF DARKNESS!

Dear Servants: I have just finished reading, "*The Divine Plan of the Ages*." I have been drawn close to this message, which I pray is guidance through God's grace. I am 36 years old, and I need to know the truth. That is all I ask and pray for. I am tired of all the darkness!—*MO*

TRUTHS OF GREAT VALUE

Sirs: Please send me the booklet, "*Peace through Christ's Kingdom*." I am learning truths that are of great value. Thank you very much.—*GA*

CONCERNED ABOUT EARTH AND ITS INHABITANTS

Dear Friends: I will appreciate very, very much if you will please send to me the booklet offered after your radio broadcast. I am looking forward very anxiously for it, knowing it must surely provide the avenue to increased knowledge and understanding of God's purpose for this earth and its many inhabitants. Warmest regards.—*WI*

SUBSCRIBING FOR FRIENDS

Dear Dawn Brethren: I am enclosing an order for one-year subscriptions for three women who have expressed an

interest in *The Dawn*. Two of them had picked up the magazine at a doctor's office, and the third lady's parents were Bible Students. Her father was an elder in a Polish Bible Students Ecclesia. She herself, as a young person, used to go to meetings. I hope by reading the beautiful articles in *The Dawn* her interest in the truth will be rekindled.

Please enclose the booklet, "Three Keys to the Bible," with each subscription. For this I thank you. God bless all of you in the work you are doing in this Harvest period. Much Christian love.—NJ

WORDS OF INSPIRATION

Dear "Frank and Ernest": Your words of inspiration never cease to touch and enrich us! We thank you for the time you spend to reach out to so many people. We just hope and pray that you also receive

continuous grace and blessings from our Lord. Remember us, your listeners, in all your prayers, just as we include you in our prayers. God bless us all. Yours sincerely.—PA

FULFILLED BY TRUTHS

I received the booklet, "*Archeology Proves the Bible*." I am pleased and even more fulfilled by its truths. Because of it I understand and enjoy the Bible even more than I did. I will always have this booklet for a reference as well as enjoyment.

Ironically, I received your booklet on my birthday! It was a present from the Father, through you, so to speak! I found your ad in an old *Readers' Digest*—ten years old! And you came through for me!

Thanks again. I will be sending for more books later on for myself and others. I pray for you too.—CA ■

TALKING THINGS OVER

General Convention Bulletin **July 25–30, 1998—Johnstown, Pennsylvania**

THE SITE OF this year's General Convention, the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, is in close proximity to where the Harvest work had its beginning over a century ago. As a reflection of this setting, and of our privilege to share in the Lord's work at this time, a portion of Exodus 4:2 has been selected as the convention theme text: "What is that in thine hand?" Other portions of the convention program will examine additional features of this general theme.

The rooms in one facility (called the Living/Learning Center and abbreviated LLC here) all have private bathrooms, small refrigerator, and microwave.

Rooms in Laurel Hall are more like what we have had before. Two bedrooms share one bathroom. The rooms in the LLC are air conditioned; all other rooms are not. The rooms in the LLC are more expensive than the rooms in Laurel.

Once again, half the price for those who are 6 through 17 years old will be refunded if the person attends at least 75% of the Bible classes while at the convention.

Those who stay for the entire week now have the option of selecting a package price with or without breakfast.

The cost of room and meals for those who are 5 years old or younger will be paid by the convention.

Here is a summary of the prices:

	ages 18 and up	13-17	6-12
Breakfast	\$4.00	\$3.00	\$3.00
Lunch	6.00	5.00	4.00
Dinner	<u>8.00</u>	<u>7.00</u>	<u>5.00</u>
Total, three meals	18.00	\$15.00	\$12.00
Lodging (per night)			
dbl occ (LLC)	\$16.00	\$13.00	\$8.00
dbl occupancy (Laurel)	\$14.00	\$11.00	\$6.00
single occ (LLC)	\$30.00	n/a	n/a
single occupancy (Laurel)	\$19.00	n/a	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals			
dbl occ (LLC)	\$198	\$164	\$114
dbl occupancy (Laurel)	\$184	\$150	\$100
single occ (LLC)	\$296	n/a	n/a
single occupancy (Laurel)	\$219	n/a	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 12 meals			
dbl no brkfst (LLC)	\$174	\$146	\$96
dbl. no brkfst (Laurel)	\$160	\$132	\$82
sngl no brkfst (LLC)	\$272	n/a	n/a
sngl no brkfst (Laurel)	\$195	n/a	n/a

A van service between Pittsburgh and Johnstown will be provided at a cost of \$10 per person in each direction. Let us know your flight arrival information if you want to take advantage of this service.

General Convention Registration

1425 Lachman Lane --- Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

E-mail to Nekora@aol.com (310) 454-5248

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Lodging
Friday, July 24, '98				
Saturday, 25th				
Sunday, 26th				
Monday, 27th				
Tuesday, 28th				
Wednesday, 29th				
Thursday, 30th				

Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals ☐

-or- 7 nights, six lunches and six dinners only ☐

Check: ☐ private bath (LLC) ☐ Laurel

☐ Double occupancy ☐ Single occupancy

Names and Ecclesia name (age if under 18)

Address:

--

Telephone number [evenings]: area code ()

Flight info into Pittsburgh, PA., if you want to be picked up:

SATURDAY, JULY 25

Chairman: Bro. Michael J. Balko

Orlando, FL

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Orientation by College Charles Salem

Director, Conference Services

10:00 Welcome Address Bro. Mike Balko

Dawn Pilgrim

10:45 Intermission

11:15 Discourse Bro. Stephen Suraci

New Haven, CT

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse Bro. Carlton Chandler

Portland, OR

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Bro. Ray Rawson

St. Petersburg, FL

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Bro. James Parkinson

San Gabriel Valley, CA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Early Work of the Harvest: 1874–1916**

Bro. Leo Post

New York, NY

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

SUNDAY, JULY 26

Chairman: Bro. Len Griehs

Delaware Valley, PA

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse Bro. Homer Montague

Highland Park, NY

10:30 Intermission

11:15 **Theme Discourse** Bro. Stephen Jeuck

Orlando, FL

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony

Bro. George Balko, Jr.

West Newton, PA

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Bro. Raymond Luke

Jersey City, NJ

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Bro. Byron Keith

Seattle, WA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 Panel Discussion: **The Harvest Work Today**

Bro. Robert Gorecki, *The Dawn*, (Moderator)

Bro. George Tabac, *Chicago, IL*

Bro. Emile Herrscher, *Phoenix, AZ*

8:00 Vesper Service

8:30 Songs in the Night

MONDAY, JULY 27

Chairman: Bro. Michael Nekora

Los Angeles, CA

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse

Bro. Daniel Mlynek

France

10:30 Intermission

11:15 Discourse

Bro. Timothy Thomassen,

Albuquerque, NM

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Bro. Paul Mali

New London, CT

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony

Bro. John Trzeciak

Grand Rapids, MI

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Bro. George Passios

New York, NY

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **The Servant of Matthew 24**

One: Bro. Geo. Eldridge, *Delaware Valley, PA*

Several: Bro. David Rice, *San Diego, CA*

(With discussion among the speakers)

8:00 Songs in the Night

8:15 Elders Meeting

TUESDAY, JULY 28

Chairman: Bro. Edmund Blicharz

Orlando, FL

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 **Baptismal Discourse** Bro. David Bruce

Seattle, WA

Immerser: Bro. George Tivador

Grand Rapids, MI

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Special Testimonies:

"Witnessing Experiences"

Bro. Charles Martig

Pittsburgh, PA

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse

Bro. Sid Jones

Dawn Pilgrim

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Bro. J. Burton Brown

Los Angeles, CA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

Chairman: Bro. Allan Allers

Boise, ID

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Convention Business Meeting

Bro. Walter Blicharz

Detroit, MI

10:30 Short Recess

10:45 Convention Business Meeting (*Continues*)

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Bro. Carl Hagensick

Chicago, IL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony

Bro. Jonathon Freer

Sacramento, CA

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Bro. Richard Suraci

New Haven, CT

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **The Lord's Second Presence**

Bro. Timothy Krupa

Portland, OR

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

THURSDAY, JULY 30

Chairman: Bro. Ernie Kuenzli

Orlando, FL

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Praise and Testimony

Bro. Frank Nemesh

Detroit, MI

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **The Two Salvations**

Heavenly: Bro. E. Lankford, *Sacramento, CA*

Earthly: Bro. Ed Lamel, *Los Angeles, CA*

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Bro. Joseph Panucci

Groton, CT

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse

Bro. Robert Goodman

Orlando, FL

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Bro. Wade Austin

Los Angeles, CA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 Closing Discourse

Bro. Ken Fernets

Vernon, BC

7:45 Melodies of Praise

8:30 Love Feast

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

These speakers 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.

M. Balko		S. Jones	
Asilomar, CA	May 22-25	Duncan, B.C.	May 1-3
		Vancouver, B.C.	4
R. Gorecki		Vernon-Kelowna, B.C.	5-7
Asilomar, CA	May 22-25	Spokane, WA	10
Korbach, Germany	May 29-31	Asilomar, CA	22-25

The speakers listed below, in cooperation with the Dawn, are invited by individual classes, or their services have been arranged by their home classes:

A. Allers		A. Williams	
Asilomar, CA	May 22-25	Middletown, NY	May 17
W. Blicharz		E. Kuenzli	
Asilomar, CA	May 22-25	Louisville, AL	May 24
S. Jeuck			
St. Petersburg, FL	May 10		

CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So that 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

AGAWAM, MA, CONVENTION, May 16,17
—Harley Hotel, 1 Bright Meadow Blvd., Enfield, CT. Contact: Sophie Zielinski, 21 Silver St., Agawam, MA 01001
Phone: (413) 786-1216

GARY AREA, IN, CONVENTION, May 17—
Spa Banquet Center, 333 No. Mineral Springs Rd., Porter IN Contact: Tom

Trzeciak, 5002 Kellee La., Valparaiso, IN 46383
Phone: (219) 464-1478

WEST NEWTON, PA, CONVENTION, May 17—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West Newton. Contact: John Krasonic, Sr., 1106 State Route 136, Belle Vernon PA 15012

ASILOMAR CONVENTION, May 22-25—

Pacific Grove, CA. Registrar: Mark Blicharz, 1511 Cartagena Ave., Hayward, CA 94544

Phone: (510) 783-8831

CHICAGO, IL, CONVENTION, May 23-25

—Elk Grove High School, 500 W. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. Contact: Donna Whittaker, 28 W. 151 Belleau Dr., Winfield, IL 60190.

Phone: (630) 293-4810

WATERBURY, CT, CONVENTION, June 6,7

—New location. Write Mrs. Anthony Tsimonis, Secy. c/o Waterbury Bible Students, P.O. Box 1494, Waterbury, CT 06721-1494 for information.

ALLENTOWN, PA, CONVENTION, June 12,13,14

—New location: East Stroudsburg University, E. Stroudsburg, PA. Contact: Ms. Rachel Lounsbury, Allentown Bible Students, P.O. Box 3214, Allentown, PA 18106

Phone: (610) 280-7538

PORTLAND, OR, CONVENTION, June 26-29

—Collins Retreat Center, Eagle Creek. Reservations and information, contact Tim Krump, 1801

N.E. 201st Avenue, A3, Fairview, OR 97024

Phone: (503) 669-4191

LOS ANGELES, CA, July 3-5

—Claremon McKenna College, Claremont, CA. Contact: Robert Wagoner, 901 North Westwood, Santa Ana, CA 92703, or e-mail: RnR Wagoner@aol.com.

Phone: (714) 542-8466

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN BIBLE STUDENTS, July 3,4,5

—East Central School, Hwy. 302E., Prince Albert. Contact: Ann Michalyca, Box 1371, Melfort, Sask. SOE 1A0.

Phone: (306) 752-2197

OKANAGAN BIBLE STUDENTS CONVENTION, July 10-12

—Eagles Hall, 5101 25th Avenue, Vernon, B.C. V1B 3K8. For information or reservations, contact A. Fernets.

Phone: (250) 558-3055

1998 BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 25-30

—Johnstown, PA. See pages 54-62 for program and information.

1998 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 9,14

—Miskolc, Hungary