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November 2009

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199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073

Phone: (201) 438-6421 and 1-(888) 440-DAWN • Fax: (201) 531-8333

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Visit the Dawn web page at: www.dawnbible.com

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SPAIN: El Alba, Via Dei Borboni 2, Contrada Cannatello, Agigento 92100, Italy

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Abounding Thankfulness

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”
—Colossians 2:6,7

THE OBSERVANCE OF A DAY

of thanksgiving each year in the United States originated with the early settlers of New England. Many of these people had made the hazardous journey across the Atlantic Ocean to a new world in America to escape bitter religious persecutions that were being practiced in many parts of Europe at that time. After their arrival it was also necessary for them to secure food, clothing, and shelter in a strange and faraway land. Having endured these difficult circumstances, it seemed appropriate that when they were later able to harvest their own crops and to lay away sufficient provisions, that they devote a day of special thanksgiving to God for taking care of them.

Great changes have taken place since those early settlers first conceived of the idea of setting aside a special Thanksgiving Day. The custom continues

until now in the United States, and it will be celebrated this year on Thursday, November 26th. This observance has provided many people living in this great country with the opportunity to at least once a year remember our loving Heavenly Father to whom they owe their very existence. For this, we may truly be thankful.

THANKSGIVING EVERY DAY

Those who have devoted their lives to the doing of God's will and have accepted our Lord Jesus as their head, consider every day as one of thanksgiving. To these, every experience of life, whether it be joy or sorrow, is an occasion for thanksgiving. They know that they are constantly under the shadow of the Lord's loving providences, all of which are designed by him for their highest and eternal good. These thank God not only for the sunshine and the rain, but also for the experiences of sorrow and pain. They have come to realize that under divine guidance the deepest shades of sorrow often yield the richest fruitage of peace and joy in the Lord.

Sorrow and trials may generate a larger degree of thankfulness. This may be true especially with the consecrated child of God. Some who have been bedridden for years and have suffered untold agonies are often more appreciative of divine grace than those whom the Lord permits to serve him under more normal circumstances. Their experiences have caused them to depend more fully upon our loving Heavenly Father, and they have learned to live closer to him, being ever conscious of their continuing need of his help.

THANKFUL HEARTS

Many faithful servants of God in the past were men who endured much hardship, yet their hearts were filled with thankfulness. This was true of the Apostle Paul. Few followers of the Master have suffered more than he did, yet we find no word of complaint in all of his writings. His suffering was brought about mostly by his faithfulness in serving our Heavenly Father, and this was in keeping with the message, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."—Acts 9:16

Paul accepted his commission and zealously devoted himself to a course of faithfulness in the service of God, which brought upon him nearly continuous suffering and trial. Yet, he continued unwaveringly in the narrow way of sacrifice and suffering, and with a heart filled with thankfulness. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—II Cor. 4:17

RICHES OF GRACE

The apostle's faithfulness to the divine call enabled him to suffer and die with Christ, and led to his imprisonment at Rome where he wrote the exhortation to thankfulness contained in our featured text. (Col. 2:6,7) His epistle to the church at Colosse was written with the spirit of love and thankfulness to the Lord for the riches of divine grace which had been bestowed upon him. He did not mention his own trying circumstances as a prisoner at Rome, but only asked "Remember my bonds."—chap. 4:18

Paul was more concerned for the spiritual welfare of the brethren at Colosse than with his own trials. He had never visited these brethren and was not acquainted with them, but in his letter he wrote, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."—chap. 1:9

He also prayed for their spiritual growth and understanding. "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."—vss. 10-13

SELFLESS THANKFULNESS

The Apostle Paul's selfless thankfulness is thus shown in his desires on behalf of the brethren at Colosse, and helps give weight to his words. His own spirit of thankfulness is reflected by the fact that he admonishes those to whom he writes that they should give thanks to God for having delivered them from the 'power of darkness,' and this has been made manifest in their hearts by the Gospel of Truth.

It was his faithfulness to the Gospel of Christ that had taken him to prison in Rome. Someone

with less faith and vision might have reasoned that however true the Gospel might be, it was not worth the cost. However, Paul had full assurance of faith and understood well the implications of the Truth, and he could look back over the years and recall his experiences of suffering and yet praise the way the Lord had led him.

STEADFAST IN TRUTH

Paul desired that the brethren at Colosse remain steadfast in the Truth. Failure to properly appreciate the Truth of the Gospel is one of the major causes of instability in the Truth. This was true in Paul's day and it is still true today. If we truly appreciate the Truth and give thanks to God for it daily, we will not become restless.

The history of the professed followers of the Master throughout this present Gospel Age has often been one of apostasy and of falling away from the faith. Paul foretold this in his letter to the Thessalonians. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."—II Thess. 2:3,4

He warned that after his death there would come a great 'falling away' from the faith, and this occurred during the time of the Dark Ages. During the Protestant Reformation, each reformer made a bold stand for truth as he understood it, but these new concepts of truth were not readily or steadfastly upheld by their followers.

TESTS OF FAITH

The same test of faith is now upon the Lord's people at the end of this present Gospel Age. While we all want to grow in grace and in knowledge, one of the tests upon us is to remain steadfast in what we have already learned to be the Truth. Thankfulness for the Lord's goodness in revealing to us the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is essential to steadfastness. We must be truly thankful for the Truth, and to not forget the darkness from which we have been delivered.

LIFTED UP

The Psalmist David spoke of this darkness and said, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit [a pit of noise, *Marginal Translation*], out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." (Ps. 40:2) 'Noise' is used in the Scriptures to symbolize confusion. The confusion of our hearts and minds with which we were surrounded in the world before we learned the Truth, was very horrible. In this pit was also found 'miry clay.' We had no firm foundation upon which to stand, but the Lord lifted us up and set our 'feet upon a rock.' Instead of the miry clay and sinking sand of human imperfection which could not give us a proper standing before the Lord, our feet were placed upon the sure foundation of Christ.

The psalmist also said that the Lord establishes our goings. (vs. 1) In the pit of confusion, we had no definite objective in life, and we were aimlessly drifting along with the world. But the Lord lifted us out of our confusion and revealed to us a real objective. He has also given us a way in which to

walk in order that we might attain that objective. The Lord established the Apostle Paul's goings as he wrote, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 3:14

ESTABLISHED IN FAITH

A hope was set before us of which Paul also writes, "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." (Col. 1:5) No longer is our life confusing and uncertain. As the Apostle Paul stated in our featured scripture, we are now, "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Col. 2:7) If we are thus established, our thanksgiving is sure to abound. However, if we cease to be thankful for the wonderful things the Lord has done in lifting us out of the pit of noise and setting our feet upon a rock, there will be the danger of our falling away from the faith.

A NEW SONG

David proclaimed that when the Lord established our goings, he also put a "new song" in our mouths, even praise unto our God. (Ps. 40:3) This 'new song' was given to us in order that we might show forth the praises of our God. It is important for us to continue singing it, that his name may be glorified. This new song is the Truth of the divine plan, and no man can learn it except the select few who are being called during this present Gospel Age. (Rev. 14:3) This is in keeping with the realization that the human mind is incapable except by divine grace of understanding the mysteries of the

kingdom of God. David declared that the Lord puts this song in our mouths. It is God-given through the wonderful working power of the Holy Spirit, and it cannot be discovered or learned by any others who may desire to pry into the secrets of the divine plan.

If we have learned this new song there is surely much cause for abounding therein with thanksgiving, for it means that the great God of the universe has taken us into his confidence and has revealed to us some of the hidden things of his glorious plan of the ages. He has dispelled the darkness with which we were once surrounded, and has brought us out of confusion. The many unanswered questions which may test our faith at times, have now been clarified. Through his Word we see his glory displayed by his infinite wisdom, almighty power, unswerving justice, and abounding love. For this, we give much thanks.

The song which God put in our mouths grows more melodious as we continue to sing it to one another and, as we have opportunity, to others of the fallen human family. It is a new song, and yet at the same time it is also the old, old story which seems each time we tell it to be more wonderfully sweet. We trust that this has been our experience during the past year, and that this song is more precious to us today than it was on Thanksgiving Day a year ago. May we be more established in the Truth now than we were last year at this time. During the past year, many of the Lord's people have been richly blessed by opportunities to sing the new song. All, however, should be the most thankful people in all the world.

GOD'S CONTINUING PROVIDENCE

Perhaps our individual experiences throughout this past year have, in many instances, been different than in other years, but the same loving God has been watching over all his people during that time. We may not always have been able to recognize the wisdom of his dealings with us, but have been assured of his providence always. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—Rom. 8:28

Every opportunity we have to do anything in the service of our God, along whatever line it may be, is an occasion for grateful thanksgiving. The more we bear testimony to the Truth, and the more we labor and sacrifice in order that others may have an opportunity of hearing the message of Truth, the greater will be our own appreciation to God for having called us "out of darkness into his marvellous light." (I Pet. 2:9) Therefore, every day will be one of thanksgiving in proportion to our continued faithfulness in proclaiming the glad tidings. This will be true only if, first of all, we have been emptied of self, and have permitted the Truth and its inspiring spirit to fill and to control our lives.

A PROPER HEART CONDITION

Paul expressed the proper attitude of heart when he wrote to the brethren at Corinth. He said, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries,

and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”—I Cor. 13:1-3

To be established in the Truth implies not only an adherence to the doctrines of the divine plan, but also to possess the spirit of the Truth, and to have it fill and control our lives. It is only under these conditions that we will find ourselves abounding therein with thanksgiving. The Greek word here translated ‘abounding,’ means to superabound, or to be in excess. If we are abounding in the Truth with much thanksgiving, we will be filled to overflowing with its spirit. It will enlarge our hearts and lives, and in our thankfulness we will be singing aloud the praises of our God and telling the whole world these blessed tidings.

The same word ‘abounding’ was used again by the apostle in his first letter to the church at Corinth, encouraging them to greater faithfulness. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”—I Cor. 15:58

This is another cause for thankfulness—that our ‘labour’ will not be in vain. We may not always see the result of our efforts in proclaiming the Truth. If we are unselfishly seeking to know and to do God’s will in our every thought, word, and action by yielding ourselves completely to the molding and guiding influence of his Holy Spirit, we may be sure that our labors will not be in vain.

BE YE THANKFUL

To whatever extent the American people may offer their thanks to our loving Heavenly Father during this year's Thanksgiving holiday, our hope is that many will express their true thankfulness for their well-being, and the freedom they continue to enjoy by living in this great nation.

The Lord's people also receive and appreciate these very same blessings. May they too reflect on God's goodness and providence toward them, not only at this special season of the year, but every day throughout their consecrated walk in newness of life. Let us therefore esteem every day as a special time for giving thanks for our many blessings.

SPIRITUAL FOOD

Although we are thankful for the temporal food we receive, we are most thankful for the spiritual food that has been provided for us. This has been a special blessing during the closing years of this present Gospel Age, and it marks the promised return of our dear Lord Jesus. We are thus feeding upon the "meat in due season." (Matt. 24:45) "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."—John 6:27-29

Luke has recorded one of our Lord's wonderful parables, in which he points to the 'meat in due season.' In the parable, Jesus admonishes his followers

to patiently watch and wait for his promised return at the end of this present Gospel Age. When he comes, they will thus recognize his ‘knock,’ and will quickly open the door of their hearts to him. At that time, he will invite them to partake of the rich spiritual food that he has come to serve. (Luke 12:36,37) The revelator has also written in connection with our Lord feeding and supping with his people, saying, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”—Rev. 3:20

EXPRESSIONS OF THANKFULNESS

Let us remain steadfast in the faith, and may the Truth and its spirit overflow from our hearts to refresh and bless others. May this ‘abounding’ faith of which Paul spoke in our featured scripture continue to be an unselfish expression of our heartfelt thankfulness to our loving Heavenly Father. Let us be ever mindful of his having brought us up out of the horrible pit and from the miry clay, and for having set our feet upon a rock. May the fact that he has established our goings also be a continuous cause for thanksgiving, and may our thanksgiving be expressed by continuing to sing the new song which God has put into our mouths.

As the Psalmist David encourages us, “He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.” (Ps. 40:3) We do not always know the effect upon others who may hear us sing this wonderful song. Our privilege and joy is to sing aloud the praises of our God by making known the glorious

Truth regardless of the result. If we are faithful in doing this, perhaps some may learn to trust in the Lord and give thanks to him for having heard a strain of the new song and to appreciate some of its wonderful harmony. Let us be thankful for the opportunity we may have to lift up the voice of praise and thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father. ■

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 Betty Howe, Greenfield, OH—July 23. Age, 80

Brother Sisinando Rosauero, Manila, Philippines—September 22. Age, 76

Brother Edmond J. Demers, Vergennes, VT—October 7. Age, 78

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

NOVEMBER 5—“Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”—Hebrews 10:21,22 (Z, '00-170 Hymn 321)

NOVEMBER 12—“Be not faithless, but believing.”—John 20:27 (Z. '04-89 Hymn 263)

NOVEMBER 19—“Let us watch and be sober.”—I Thessalonians 5:6 (Z. '02-239 Hymn 272)

NOVEMBER 26—“And the LORD said unto Moses, What is that in thine hand?”—Exodus 4:2 (Z. '94-143, '01-348 Hymn 191)

How Happy Are We

*O how happy are we who in Jesus agree,
and expect soon his kingdom to share!
We will sit in his throne, and his glory make
known,
And his praises shall sound everywhere.*

*O how happy are we who in Jesus agree:
How happy, how happy, are we!*

*Now united to him, e'en on this side the stream
Of the Jordan that lieth between;
We rejoice in his grace, and the smile of his face,
While the glory and cross both are seen.*

*O how happy are we who in Jesus agree:
How happy, how happy, are we!*

*We remember the word of our crucified Lord,
When he went to prepare us a place—
“I will come in that day and will take you away,
And admit to the light of my face.”*

*O how happy are we who in Jesus agree:
How happy, how happy, are we!*

*Lo! our King from the skies! Hark! he bids us arise
To the mansions of glory above,
O! with joy we'll ascend, and eternity spend,
In proclaiming his wonderful love.*

*O how happy are we who in Jesus agree:
How happy, how happy, are we!*

—Hymns of Dawn

A Holy People

Key Verse: *“As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”*
—*I Peter 1:15,16*

Selected Scripture:
I Peter 1

to be associated with Christ in his kingdom to bless the human family. Such a prospect will have a stimulating effect upon all the saints as they realize the Heavenly Father’s providence, guidance, and protection relating to their lives.—*I Pet. 1:1-5*

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”—vss. 6,7

Peter then considers the present benefits of our relationship with the Lord, and although we cannot literally see him, through the eye of faith we experience his presence. Thus, we should have fullness of joy, armed with the conviction that he desires to bless and strengthen us in our walk.—vs. 8

IN THIS EPISTLE, PETER addresses the brethren who were scattered throughout various parts of the Roman Empire and, by extension, all of the Lord’s true followers throughout the present Gospel Age. Believers who have been sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit, if obedient to the will of God, have the great hope of obtaining a heavenly reward and

“Obtaining the issue of the faith, even your salvation.” (vs. 9, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) Although we actually will see Christ when our deliverance from this earthly sphere is complete, the ultimate purpose of our calling does not relate merely to the reward of the divine nature that will be given to faithful members of the body of Christ, but also to the work of restoring fallen humanity back to perfection and a relationship with God.—I Cor. 15:22,23

We are also assured that we may reverently and soberly approach the Father in prayer because we have been rescued from our previous sinful condition by Christ’s providing a ransom for us.—I Tim. 2:6

The Old Testament prophets searched the Scriptures concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow the completion of his church. “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:10,11

Our Key Verses underscore the need to live righteously, to put off the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:17-21), and to strive for holiness of thought, word, and deed, recognizing that the Lord will accept our serious efforts towards this goal. Because of our inherited weaknesses, we can not perform in a perfect manner.

If we have been called of God to a share in the Kingdom whereby we shall reign with Christ to bless the human family, we must be transformed daily by the renewing of our minds, by feeding upon scripture, walking in newness of life, meeting with fellow believers, praying for needed grace, and manifesting obedience to the principles of righteousness.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”—II Cor. 7:1 ■

A Chosen People

Key Verse: “*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*”
—*I Peter 2:9*

Selected Scripture:
I Peter 2:1-17

heart by their possessors. In order to make progress in the Christian graces, believers must apply biblical principles in their lives as they travel along the narrow way.

Initially, as babes, newly consecrated followers of Christ may require instruction in the basic truths found in the Bible, but eventually as they mature, they will be able to assimilate more advanced truths as their lives move towards conformity into the image of Jesus Christ.

In figurative language, Christ is depicted as the living (chief) stone in God’s building most precious, but although it seems incredible, he was rejected by men.

A HIGH MORAL STANDARD of conduct should be manifested in the lives of Christian believers.

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”—*I Pet. 2:1-3*

The sins enumerated in verse one above evidence deficiencies in love and purity of

Nevertheless, he was chosen by God as indispensable to his plan, and believers brought into union with Christ through the Holy Spirit become part of the spiritual house, or holy priesthood, who offer up sacrifices acceptable to God.—vss. 4,5; Luke 22:17; Isa. 53:3

At the time of Christ's First Advent, the people, especially the rulers, did not receive him and he was ultimately crucified. During this present Gospel Age, there are many individuals who refuse to accept Jesus as their Messiah, and as a result they stumble because of unbelief and disobedience.

Our Key Verse describes the Christian church as a royal priesthood and a holy nation whose responsibility is to proclaim the glory of God who has called us out of darkness, and proclaim the light of Truth as set forth in the Word of God.

Much of the rest of this chapter relates to the conduct that believers should ever keep in mind during their Christian walk. The apostle indicates that we are sojourners and pilgrims and should abstain from earthly lusts and gratifying earthly desires. This would not relate merely to avoiding sinful or immoral conduct which does not define sacrificing, but, it might include an attempt to amass material prosperity and seeking out worldly pleasures which hinder our spiritual growth and communion with God.—I Pet. 2:11

As evidence that the mind of Christ is growing within us, we will look for opportunities of laying down our lives on behalf of the brethren in any possible manner to promote their spiritual interests. There will be a glorious reward for all believers who view their Christian life in this manner.

“As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.”—I Cor. 2:9,10

A Suffering People

Key Verse:
“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”
—I Peter 4:19

Selected Scripture:
I Peter 4

appearance of impropriety. Such a transformation of character will be viewed by former associates as strange, and they will cease their desires to have worldly fellowship with us.—I Pet. 4:1-4

Peter exhorts believers to appreciate God’s dealings with them according to their spiritual life and endeavors, as opposed to mankind who make judgments about the church according to outside and fleshly appearances because they are unable to distinguish New Creatures from other individuals in the world. The consecrated are admonished to sobriety and watchfulness with regard to their conduct, especially since present arrangements under the dominion of Satan will soon give way to the establishment of a righteous Kingdom.

Peter also stresses the need for believers to manifest such character traits as love, forgiveness, hospitality,

and service towards others. The duties of Christian citizenship should focus upon glorifying our Heavenly Father through obedience to his principles set forth in scripture.—vss. 6-11

An important understanding for believers is the realization that suffering for Christ's sake should be considered as a normal experience, and we should not expect to have better treatment than the Master received during his earthly sojourn.—vs. 12

Properly understood, suffering for righteousness should be a cause of joy for the followers of Christ and taken as evidence of our obedience and faithfulness to his cause. Christians should never be guilty of wrong doing or take pleasure in being persecuted because of folly on their part. "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."—vs. 15

Not only is suffering for Christ's sake deemed to be anything for which we should be ashamed, but it is a requirement for all who will comprise the body of Christ. "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."—I Pet. 2:21

When we consider the example Christ left for us as his footstep followers to emulate his course of faithfulness in the face of all opposition, we should not expect to enter into the kingdom glories on flowery beds of ease. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."—I Pet. 4:16

Our Key Verse assures us that suffering endured according to the will of God is the pathway for the believer's eternal glory. "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."—II Tim. 2:10-12 ■

A Faithful People

Key Verse:
***“According as his
divine power hath
given unto us all
things that pertain
unto life and
godliness, through
the knowledge of
him that hath
called us to glory
and virtue:”***
—II Peter 1:3

Selected Scripture:
II Peter 1:3-15

Our Key Verse assures us that through the power of God provision is made for our successful Christian walk and the attainment of a life of holiness.

As an important element in our development as New Creatures, the Heavenly Father has supplied spiritual nourishment in his Word that, if considered wisely, will ultimately result in our partaking of the divine nature and becoming joint-heirs with our Master during his kingdom.

Since this epistle is addressed to Christians, Peter acknowledges that his audience already possesses faith, and he continues by describing seven supplementary attributes that would be necessary to bring the New Creature to completeness.—vss. 5-7

Thus, to our faith there should be added goodness, or

FAITH IN THE EFFICACY OF
Christ’s sacrifice for our sins is a foundation doctrine upon which New Creatures may develop a character pleasing to God. As we note increasing evidences of divine favor after consecrating our lives to do the Heavenly Father’s will, ‘grace and peace’ should be ‘multiplied’ in our hearts as we progress along the narrow way.—II Pet. 1:1,2

Our Key Verse assures us that through the power of God

strength of character grounded in righteousness, that will separate us from the world and its spirit. In addition to being truthful in all our dealings, we must overcome the evil tendencies associated with our fallen flesh, such as evil speaking or evil surmising.

We are to add to goodness, knowledge. This grace implies a deeper understanding of God as revealed in his Word. The more we study the Bible, the more his character will be revealed to us and thus we will seek to emulate it.

Self-control is the next element of character mentioned that we must add. We must master our flesh by subduing works, such as anger, malice, hatred, and strife in our hearts. Perseverance is the next quality to be added and implies constancy, or endurance of affliction, in full acquiescence to the divine will.

Godliness as the next addition is virtually self-explanatory. It reflects godlikeness and embodies reverence, and cheerful, loving conformity to the doing of the Heavenly Father's will. It also epitomizes holiness at the highest level. Brotherly kindness also is to be added to the list of graces the Christian must develop. Here is an exhortation that speaks to this trait. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."—Eph. 4:32

The final quality we must add is *agape* love which would prompt us to do good to all as we have opportunity, even our enemies. (Matt. 5:44) Believers who have true faith in God will be obedient to his Word and demonstrate their worthiness to receive the highest possible reward attainable. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—II Pet. 1:10,11 ■

A Hopeful People

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

Selected Scripture:
II Peter 3

At that time, “scoffers” would deny evidences of the Lord’s return with an attitude that showed disdain for scriptural revelation. “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.”—vss. 3-6

IN THIS FINAL EXHORTATION from Peter, he admonishes believers to recall various truths they had been given as an aid to their own steadfastness. He reminds his hearers that the source of the doctrine they had received came from the writings of the inspired Old Testament prophets, as well as the instruction from the apostles, which they had received from Jesus Christ.—II Pet. 3:1,2

The prophetic nature of the chapter is underscored by Peter’s reference to the “last

In verse 4, the word ‘coming’ translated from the Greek *parousia* should be rendered “presence” as noted in *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Rotherham and *Young’s Literal English Translation*. Thus, the scoffing referred to in verse 4 occurs during a period when some believers assert that Christ would be present, whereas others would deny such a claim.

This chapter is also highly symbolic since it refers to the heavens and the earth being reserved for fire until the day of judgment. (vs. 7) Unless the Bible contradicts itself (in which case we could have no faith that it is actually the Word of God), it would be difficult to think of this planet being destroyed by fire. “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.”—Eccles. 1:4

Our Key Verse contains an element of hope despite the ominous tone conveyed in this chapter. God is desirous of providing an opportunity for life for all who desire to learn of him and his plan of salvation.

After describing the need for removing the evil conditions that presently afflict mankind, a glorious outcome is promised. “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”—II Pet. 3:10-13

During his earthly ministry, Jesus frequently spoke in parables which he explained to his disciples, but the other hearers did not understand what he meant. (Matt. 13:15) He then told his followers how privileged they were to understand his sayings. “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”—vs. 16

How blessed are we to understand about the wonderful tomorrow that God has in store for all the human family after this present reign of sin and death comes to an end. Let us be ever mindful of God’s glorious plan, and heed Peter’s words, “Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”—II Pet. 3:14 ■

The Master's Return and End of the Age

*“As he sat upon the
mount of Olives,
the disciples came
unto him privately,
saying, Tell us,
when shall these
things be? and
what shall be the
sign of thy coming,
and of the end of
the world?”*

—*Matthew 24:3*

ONE OF THE CLOSING scenes of our Lord's earthly ministry has been recorded in this scripture. Jesus' disciples were asking him about his return, his later ministry and the events that would take place at that future time. They were especially anxious to know what he meant about the destruction of the Temple, and whether

there would be any indication as to when this great event was to take place.—vss. 1,2

LAST MESSAGE TO THE JEWS

In his last public ministry at Jerusalem, Jesus had told the Jews that because of disobedience and lack of appreciation for God's wonderful providence over them as a nation, their house would be

left desolate. “Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matt. 23:36-38) He also revealed the fact that he would soon be leaving them, “I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”—vs. 39

THE FAREWELL ADDRESS

In Jesus’ farewell discourse to his disciples in the upper room, he spoke more specifically about his future return. He said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”—John 14:1-3

Again he said, “Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world [Satan, II Cor. 4:4] cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”—vss. 28-31

FROM THAT TIME FORTH

When the Son of God began his earthly ministry, the Apostle Peter recognized him and understood who he was. At that very time, he started to prepare his disciples with the certain knowledge that his Heavenly Father had sent him into the world for a very special purpose. He explained to them that it was necessary for him to die for the world, and then he would be resurrected and highly exalted. From the scriptural record, we read, “He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. 16:15-17

Then we read, “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”—vs. 21

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The disciples of Jesus were given glimpses of the ultimate purpose of his ministry from time to time, and no doubt they often thought about the kingdom that he had so often spoken of. However, their understanding remained sketchy and very limited until they received the power of the Holy Spirit.

After Jesus died, had been resurrected, and was preparing to ascend into heaven to be reunited with his Heavenly Father, his disciples were not yet clear what was really happening. “When they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord,

is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’ And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”—Acts 1:6-9, *New American Standard Bible*

When the disciples came to witness this marvelous scene, they were joined by two other men who also came to be with Jesus at this very special time in his earthly ministry. Their glistening white clothing suggests they were angels who had been sent forth by God. The disciples were the only ones who saw Jesus ascend and disappear into the clouds above. The two angels proclaimed that he would return in the same way at the end of this present Gospel Age. Thus we are informed that the manner in which we were to expect our Lord to return would be in an invisible state as a spiritual being.—vss. 10,11

The disciples were only beginning to appreciate the true meaning of the marvelous events that had taken place, but they would understand more clearly when they received the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit of Truth from their loving Heavenly Father. Of that special time and place, we read, “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.”—Acts 2:1-4, *NASB*

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

When Jesus was resurrected, he came upon two of his disciples who were making their way toward Emmaus. The three of them then continued together on their journey, the disciples not realizing that their companion was the resurrected Jesus, until they later broke bread together. As they were conversing along the way Cleopas (Luke 24:18) and Peter (vs. 34) spoke about the recent and tragic death of their Master Jesus at the hand of the chief priests and rulers of Israel. Their companion then reminded the two disciples that the Scriptures and prophecies, those of which he himself had perhaps taught them during his ministry, clearly foretold his death. He said, “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”—Luke 24:26,27

THE APOSTLE’S WARNING

During the time that the Master was to be absent, Satan, the Devil, would be allowed to severely test the Lord’s people and draw them away, if it were possible, from the Truth and the wonderful invitation of the heavenly calling. In his letter to the church at Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul warned the brethren to be aware of Satan, and wrote, “Now

we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 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. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”—II Thess. 2:1-3

Even at that time in the history of the Early Church, the apostle could see visible evidences of the impending falling away, when he warned them, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”—vs. 7

THE DISCIPLES’ QUESTION

When the disciples were inquiring about the time that Jesus would return (Matt. 24:1-3), they did so by using the word [*parousia*, Greek] which really means ‘to be present’ rather than ‘coming’ as the word has been translated in our featured scripture. In addition, they spoke about the end of the world, and used the word [*aion*, Greek] which means ‘age’ instead of world.

Their choice of words was no doubt divinely overruled to reveal much greater meaning and deeper significance, because they pointed forward many centuries to the time of our Lord’s invisible Second Presence. This very special time would also mark one of the closing features of this present Gospel Age during which the heavenly call was to be extended to the faithful followers of Christ. After that calling has been completed he would then establish his kingdom of *(Continued on page 35)*

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(Continued from page 31) righteousness over all the earth.

During the intervening period of time, Jesus ascended to the presence of his Heavenly Father, and there he offered him the merit of his sacrificial life which would first be given on behalf of his true followers. This was explained by the Apostle Paul when he wrote, "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."—Heb. 9:24

THE WATCHERS

Jesus' disciples could not have known that his Second Presence was not to occur for another two thousand years, although he had promised to be with them in spirit throughout the long intervening centuries of this present Gospel Age. (Matt. 28:20) However, that great event would mark in a very special way a new era in the spiritual life and experiences of his faithful followers. They would be blessed by greater light and understanding of the Scriptures, and would share in increased activity to spread the unlocked secrets of Truth to those who would have an ear to hear.

At that wonderful juncture of time in the history of the world, only the watchers would recognize the momentous events that would mark the closing years of this Gospel Age. We have Jesus' own recorded words, when he said, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For 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.”—Mark 13:32-34

Jesus’ admonition was that all of his people were to ‘watch,’ but especially those who would be living at the end of the foretold age. “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, 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

This admonition meant that his followers were to be alert and be ready to recognize the signs of the times. They were encouraged to study the prophetic events that would transpire in the world around them. Again, we read Jesus’ words in Luke’s gospel, “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”—Luke 21:34-36

THE LAODICEAN CHURCH

The message to the Laodicean church was the last of seven messages given to God’s people during this present Gospel Age. It pointed to our Lord Jesus’ return, and to the foretold time that the scriptural treasures were to be unlocked and made known to the ‘watchers.’ The revelator wrote, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my

voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” (Rev. 3:20) This was a very special promise to the consecrated followers of Jesus that the time had arrived for them to receive the riches of hidden Truth that were to be unlocked and revealed to them.

The admonition to the watchers was that they were to have their loins girded about them, and their lights burning. They should also prepare themselves for their Lord’s return so that when he had arrived and knocked, they would open the door to him without any hesitation. A rich blessing would lay in store for his people, because our invisible returned Lord would be present with them and serve them with abundant spiritual food.—Luke 12:35-37

This blessing was the promised ‘meat’ in due season that was to be given to the church, and of which the Prophet Daniel had written many centuries before. “Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” (Dan. 12:4) Daniel would like to have known the meaning of what he had written, “I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”—vss. 8,9

UNLOCKED SECRETS

Faithful brethren were on hand at the appointed ‘time of the end’ who were diligent students of the Heavenly Father’s wonderful word of Truth. They were also ready and willing to labor in his vineyard and to share in the sending forth of precious Truths

that had been locked up and kept secret from the worldly-wise for centuries. The message was therefore made known, and sent forth by word of mouth and by the printed page to those who had an ear to hear the words of Truth.

The significance of our Lord Jesus' Second Presence, and other important end-time prophecies began to be studied with greater interest and clarity. There was increased anticipation to the revealed fact that Christ Jesus was to soon set up a glorious kingdom of righteousness and peace over all the earth. Furthermore, those who had faithfully walked in the narrow way of sacrifice would be privileged to share with the Master as members of the Christ in dispensing life-giving blessings to the poor groaning human creation. The watchers realized that the time was drawing near for our Lord Jesus' long foretold kingdom to be established.

RANSOM, RESURRECTION AND RESTITUTION

There was a fresh study of the basic and fundamental doctrines of Truth, with special attention given to the scriptural teachings in connection with the ransom, resurrection and restitution. With the advancing and clearer light of Christ's presence, it was seen that our Lord's ransom sacrifice was given on behalf of the whole world of mankind, and not just for a select few. Consideration was given to Paul's letter to Timothy, where he wrote, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”—I Tim. 2:3-6

A resurrection for all who are in their graves is a major feature of Christ’s glorious future kingdom as he had promised. “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.” (John 5:25-27, *NASB*) This wonderful work will be accomplished under the administration of the Christ. “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”—vss. 28,29, *NASB*

Restitution blessings will be available to all of the willingly obedient under the righteous rule of Christ’s kingdom. (Acts 3:19-21) This great work is shown under the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant, where it is stated, “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.”—Gen. 22:17,18

THE SEED OF PROMISE

Jesus was the antitypical seed of promise, as explained by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the brethren at Galatia. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to

seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” (Gal. 3:16) Those who are being called during this present age of sacrifice and will have proven faithful to their heavenly calling are promised to have a share in the seed of blessing during the time of Christ’s future kingdom. This point was emphasized by Paul, when he said, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (vs. 29) For further clarification, he said, “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”—Gal. 4:7

THE SIN OFFERING

Having learned to rightly divide the Word of Truth, the doctrine of the two salvations was seen with greater clarity. The first salvation indicated a spiritual reward for those who would respond to the heavenly calling during this present Gospel Age. The second salvation points to the sin-sick and dying human family who are to be blessed under Christ’s future kingdom of righteousness here on the earth.

In addition, the watchers were enlightened with a clearer understanding of the doctrine of the church’s share in the sin offering. They began to study the Levitical types in more detail, where it is shown that the sacrifice of the bullock represents Jesus (Lev. 16:14), and the goat pictures the church class. (vs. 15) The Apostle Paul’s words in reference to this took on added meaning. Speaking of his own sacrificial life, he pointed out that he was also sharing in the Master’s sufferings. “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not

moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.”—Col. 1:23,24

In this connection, the apostle also explained, “The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”—Heb. 13:11-13

THE COVENANTS

Better understanding concerning the basic doctrines of the covenants was also a special blessing to the watchers. We have noted the wonderful Seed of promise that will ultimately provide rescue for the entire sin-sick and dying human family. (Gen. 22:17,18) God's Law was given to the Israelites through Moses in the inauguration of the Law Covenant at Mount Horeb (Exod. 19:16-19), and it was validated by the blood of bulls and goats. The Apostle Paul confirms this in his letter to the Hebrews.—Heb. 12:18-21

The Prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-34) foretold God's provision for a New Covenant for the human family, and the Apostle Paul spoke about it in his letter to the Hebrew brethren. (Heb. 8:6-13) The old Law Covenant was merely typical of a new and better covenant arrangement that would be established

and mediated under the administration of Christ's future kingdom. At that time, the Christ will have the authority and power of office to give life to the people who learn obedience. Instead of the blood of typical animals of sacrifice, the New Covenant will have as its foundation the precious and saving blood of our Lord Jesus.

THE COMPLETED CHRIST

For nearly two thousand years the heavenly call has gone out to those Christians who have willingly accepted the invitation. Together with our glorified Lord Jesus they will share in the great work of blessing the human family under the establishment of Christ's future kingdom. The Heavenly Father has set aside a thousand years to provide reconciliation to the human family's obedient, including all who are yet in their graves. When this glorious work has been completed under the mediatorship of Christ's kingdom, all will be delivered back to the Heavenly Father as explained by the Apostle Paul.

“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”—I Cor. 15:24-26 ■

“Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”—Isaiah 32:16,17

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Our Life of Consecration

*“My son, give me
thine heart.”* **CONSECRATION, AS A GEN-**
—Proverbs 23:26 **eral** concept, is not difficult
to define. It means simply
the full and complete dedication of one’s life to the
doing of God’s will and his service. It has been, and
always will be, proper for all of God’s intelligent
creatures, on whatever plane of existence they may
live, to be so dedicated, consecrated, to their Cre-
ator. The holy angels have, since their creation,
been thus consecrated. The Ancient Worthies, like-
wise, were so dedicated to God. Jesus, as the pre-
human *Logos*, as the man Jesus, and as the glori-
fied Christ, has always been thoroughly consecrated
to his Heavenly Father. Mankind also, at the end of
Christ’s kingdom, after they are fully brought back
into harmony with God and pass the test of obedi-
ence, will be fully dedicated and consecrated to
God—to his will, and his service.

There is something unique, however, about con-
secration as it pertains to the followers of God since
Pentecost, even to the present time. This unique
aspect of consecration began with Jesus when, at

the age of thirty, he presented himself to John the Baptist at the river Jordan. Although he was consecrated to God in a general way as the man Jesus long before the age of thirty, a new and special meaning to his consecration came into being at Jordan, centered along three lines. 1) It was then that he voluntarily offered himself up in sacrifice, giving up any earthly hopes he might otherwise have had, shown symbolically in his water immersion by John the Baptist. 2) Having thus offered himself up in sacrifice, he was now considered by God as a New Creature, with a heavenly hope of life, to be proven, trained, and developed for a great future purpose of being man's High Priest in the kingdom, to bring them back from the bondage of sin and death. 3) To assist in accomplishing both the sacrificial aspect of laying down his human life as well as his development as a New Creature, and begotten by God's Holy Spirit and righteous power and influence to be personally directed toward his development and maturity. It is these special aspects of consecration and sacrifice—the development of New Creatures and Spirit begetting—that were opened to the followers of Jesus starting at Pentecost. This unique opportunity of consecration, offered only during this present Gospel Age is still open today.

CONSECRATION IMPLIES STEWARDSHIP

When one gives themselves to the Lord in consecration, they accept the invitation given in our theme text, 'My son, give me thine heart.' The heart, as the seat of our very deepest affections and motivations, when given to God, embodies

giving to him everything that we have—our all. All such have given over their life to God, that he might make them his. Amazingly, though, God does not make us his by miraculously transforming us into a perfect Christian. He, rather, has done something that might at first be considered odd. He gives back to us everything we gave him, but with one vitally important difference. God says, as it were, “I have accepted what you have given me as your all. It now belongs to me. I am the owner of you and everything concerning your life. I am giving evidence of this ownership in that I have now imputed the merit of my son’s sacrifice on your behalf and have justified you in my sight. You have been bought with a price. Now, though I am giving back to you what you gave me, it still belongs to me, but I am making you guardians over these things which you have given me. You now have a stewardship to which you must prove your faithfulness.

“I am giving back to you your job. Perform it the best you can, as if you were working for me. Be careful, though, remembering that it can also become a burden, and can take away valuable time from me if you allow it to become too great a part of your life. I am giving back to you your talents and abilities. I want you to bend their use more toward spiritual things. Use them to serve me and your brethren as much as possible. Use your abilities to spread the comforting message of the Gospel to others. Beware of temptations to use your talents along lines which might foster pride or self-conceit. Remember that, at best, you are but a servant of my son Jesus, and he is your master.

“I am also giving back to you your time and energy. I know you must use a certain amount of these things to supply your temporal needs, but beyond that I encourage you to redeem the time—use the extra minutes or hours you may have day by day to study my Word, engage in meditation and prayer, attend meetings with your brethren, serve and assist them, and involve yourself in some way with the spreading of the wonderful message of the Gospel of the kingdom. Resist the flesh’s tendency to waste inordinate amounts of time on worldly pursuits and interests, even those that would be considered good and wholesome. These are but the pastimes of an hour. I am giving back to you your mind and your character. I want you to work on their development. I want you to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. To do this, you must cultivate the fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. At the same time, I want you, to the best of your ability, to rid yourself of the sinful tendencies you have by nature.

“I am even giving back to you your heart, the very essence of what you gave me in consecration. Yes, I have accepted it, and it belongs to me, but I want you to take it back, guard it carefully, to be sure that it remains pure. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it will be the issues of life. I want you to use the acceptable heart desires that you gave me in consecration to motivate you in every aspect of your life. Your heart can be a great source of help to you as you daily fulfill the vows you have made. This is because, even when you may stumble and fail in word or in action to serve

me as you should, your properly conditioned and motivated heart will be counted as making up, in large measure, for your unintentional mistakes and stumblings of word and deed.

“I am giving these things, and everything else you have given me as your all, back to you to be stewards over. In addition, though, I am giving you one more very special and important item. This is not anything you gave me that I am giving back. It is something that only comes directly from me. I am giving you the begettal of my Holy Spirit, my power and influence. It is this special gift that will help you to faithfully carry out your stewardship over all those things I have given back to you. By using this Holy Spirit and submitting to its guiding influence, you will be able to accomplish all things necessary to make your calling and election sure. Without it, the influences of the world, your fallen flesh, and the Adversary will prevent you from being a faithful steward. Continually be filled with my Spirit, though, and you will not fail.”

This stewardship that the Heavenly Father has given all who have dedicated their lives to him embodies in particular the three unique aspects of consecration previously mentioned—sacrifice, the development of the New Creature, and spirit begettal.

SACRIFICE

The first of these, sacrifice, is vitally important from two particular standpoints. First, when one approaches God in consecration, they do so with the understanding that they are giving up, or sacrificing, the earthly life rights they would have otherwise

had under the mediatorial kingdom arrangement which will eventually bless all mankind. These, instead, desire to run for the prize of the High Calling. The Scriptures speak of this as a baptism into the death of Jesus. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death. . . . For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:4,5) This burial into the death of Jesus is shown in symbol by water baptism. When one is baptized and lowered into the water by the immerser, it symbolizes their sacrificial death as a human being.

Just as water baptism is only a symbol, so one's baptism into Jesus' death is only a beginning. It must be followed up by the constant putting away of the tendencies and desires of the fallen flesh. As Paul continues in Romans 6, verses 6 and 12, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. . . . Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." All who have been baptized into Jesus' death must continually fight against earthly ambition, aims, hopes, and pleasures, realizing that they have given up these things.

Another important aspect of sacrifice is that which has to do with our development as sympathetic high priests. If faithful, we will have the tremendous privilege of sharing in the work of helping mankind up the highway of holiness in the kingdom. To do this, we need to have gone through the same types of experiences, trials, sufferings, and even sorrows, which are common to man. Only

thus will we truly be touched, as Jesus was, with a feeling of the world's infirmities. We should expect, then, to have experiences which try and test our resolve to the Lord. We should rejoice in such experiences, as they are being permitted to develop us into a vessel of special use to him. "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have [its] perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."—James 1:2-4, *New American Standard Bible*

The Apostle Paul sums up our consecration to sacrifice in the familiar and beautiful words of Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Our sacrifice is a 'reasonable service' if we truly love the Lord and desire to be sharers with him in the uplifting of all the families of the earth. What more worthy cause could there be for sacrifice than the opportunity it will bring of assisting God's crowning creation—man—back to the perfection in which he was first created. It is God's plan to do this very thing. How we should rejoice at the prospect of having a part in this and realize that our sacrifice is such a reasonable service.

NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST

The second special aspect of consecration during this present Gospel Age is centered on our development as a New Creature. Paul states, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old

things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (II Cor. 5:17) To be a New Creature first requires that we continue the work, as stated earlier, of putting away the things of the flesh. If one puts away the things of the flesh, its tendencies, desires, actions, words, and thoughts will most likely be replaced with that which is spiritually-centered. Additionally, to the extent one puts aside worldly ambitions, aims, and goals, they will most likely put in their stead heavenly aspirations and desires. In fact, the habit of focusing on heavenly things—in thoughts, words, and actions—will itself help to put down the earthly and fleshly tendencies.

Referring back to Paul’s words in Romans 6, he says in verses 4 and 13, “We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. . . . Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” This newness of life, or New Creature, is also shown in the symbol of water baptism. Just as baptism into water shows, as stated earlier, the true baptism into Jesus’ sacrificial death, being lifted out of the water by the one baptizing shows newness of life as New Creatures in Christ. Paul speaks of this newness and its process of development in the very next verse following the one quoted earlier concerning our sacrifice being a reasonable service. He says, as recorded in Romans 12:2, “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.” This ‘renewing of your mind’ is in reality the development of the New Creature—the newness of life spoken of in Romans 6.

In short, those who have made such a consecration have covenanted to develop a Christlike character. That is truly what the New Creature is—the character likeness of our Lord Jesus—which, of course, is the character of God himself. That is what Paul meant when he said to be transformed—take the character that formerly identified itself with us, and transform it, change it, renew it, and rebuild it from scratch, if necessary, into a character which is as fully as possible in harmony with that of our master Jesus. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 2:5

TREASURES IN HEAVEN

One of the best scriptures we can think upon as we consider both our sacrifice of earthly things, and our replacing of them with spiritual hopes, aims, and goals—the development of the New Creature—are these words spoken by our Lord, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt. 6:19-21, *New International Version*) We have the opportunity to store up heavenly treasures in lots of ways: study of God’s Word, prayer and meditation, attending meetings and

assembling with others of 'like precious faith,' being a witness of God's Word to others, being an example of character to those around us, giving a word of comfort and encouragement to those that need it, being of service to our brethren, standing up for the principles of righteousness even at the cost of ridicule and criticism, suffering for righteousness, and many other ways that continually manifest themselves in our experiences. All of these are laid up as heavenly treasures.

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FROM GOD

But, one might say, "This is a narrow way, it is not easy to sacrifice, it is a challenge to develop as a new creature and attain to the character of Christ. I cannot do this on my own." This is absolutely correct. We cannot do any of this without help. The third unique aspect of consecration during this present Gospel Age is identified with the special help and assistance God has provided to make it possible for us to be successful, both as to our sacrifice, and as to our development as a New Creature. God, in accepting our consecration, gives us this special assistance through his begetting us with his Holy Spirit. This is nothing less than God's almighty power and influence, which he has bestowed upon his consecrated people, to guide them, help them, and assist them each step of their narrow-way experience.

A COMFORTER PROMISED

Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as a comforter when he explained to his disciples that it would not be possible for him to be personally with them, to guide them, to comfort them, during their narrow-way

experiences, as he had done for three and one-half years before his death. He said, though, that he would send them another comforter—the Holy Spirit. “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he [it] may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . . But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he[it] shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”—John 14:16-18,26

What a fitting description of the Holy Spirit—comforter. It is God’s holy power, his Spirit, which by its guiding and helpful influence, indeed brings us comfort, regardless of the experiences we may go through. It is this same guidance, help, power, influence, and resulting comfort and peace that all the Lord’s truly consecrated have been begotten with during this present Gospel Age. However, for us to truly benefit from the Holy Spirit and receive the resulting comfort and peace, there is one requirement we must follow—we must submit ourselves to the Spirit’s guiding power in our life. To do so will require that we be meek, teachable, and humble, just as Jesus was. Notice these words, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matt. 11:28-30

VICTORY THROUGH MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY

As we meekly and humbly submit to the Holy Spirit's influence in our lives, we will gain the necessary victories both in sacrifice as well as in the development of the New Creature. Doing so, we will thus demonstrate our faithfulness to the stewardship that God gave us when we first gave our all to him in consecration, and if faithful in doing so, even unto death, we will receive the reward of glory, honor, and immortality. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."—Rom. 8:14-17

A MOST WONDERFUL DECISION

The most wonderful and best decision any human being can make is that of giving their heart to God in consecration. If we are of those having done so now in this present Gospel Age, we are walking in the narrow way. We are being tested and tried in this way to prove our faithfulness. We also are receiving many blessings from God's hand. We have the wonderful privilege of prayer to the Heavenly Father, and a vast network of brethren, near and far, to whom we can turn for help and support, and from whom we can learn many needed lessons from their examples and experiences which have perhaps preceded ours.

As we continue to walk in the narrow way, God is looking for two primary things as we seek to prove our faithfulness to him. First, he wants our best efforts. He knows we cannot do each and every thing we might desire to do in his service, nor that we can complete every task we set out to do in as full a manner as we would like, but he does require that we put forth our best possible efforts—work hard, work diligently, and not grow weary in well doing. He will count such efforts as complete in his sight with any lack being made up for by the boundless supply of his grace. Secondly, God wants our will, our intent, to think, speak, and act righteously uppermost in our heart through each and every experience. He understands that we are not perfect, and will not be able to bring every thought, word, and deed into full compliance with his perfect standards. God does expect, though, that just as we have given ourselves to him in consecration, thus vowing to give up our will for his, we will continue throughout our life to have our will, our intent, such as Paul expressed in Romans 7:22, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man,” regardless of the mistakes we may make along the way.

CONSECRATION MADE COMPLETE

With hearts thus motivated to put forth our best and most sincere efforts, and as those efforts are directed by a will, a desire, to be faithful unto death, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the privilege of prayer, and the support of our brethren throughout the earth, our consecration can and will be made complete, and the work God has begun in us will have a glorious outcome. As Paul promised,

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 1:6, *NIV*

God’s great love toward his consecrated children is well exemplified in the prayer which Moses offered on behalf of his beloved fellow brethren of Israel. He loved them very much, and was exceedingly patient and long-suffering with them. He desired greatly that they be faithful to their covenant with God, and expressed his great love toward them in this very short, but beautiful, prayer, “The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” (Num. 6:24-26) May these same sentiments be continually felt by all those who have given their hearts, their all, to God in consecration. ■

“Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of.”—Matthew 6:8

Our petitions, our requests, our cries to the Lord, therefore, should be for the holiness of heart, for the filling of his Spirit, for the spiritual food, refreshment, strength; and as for the natural things, he knoweth the way we take and what would be to our best interests as New Creatures. We are to leave this to him: he would not be pleased to see us importuning him for things which he did not give us, for to do so would not be an exemplification of faith in him, but the reverse—an exemplification of doubt, a manifestation of fear that he was forgetting or neglecting his promise to give us the things needful.

—Daily Heavenly Manna, November 13

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

QUESTION: Please explain this scripture—“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”—John 8:58

ANSWER: Jesus was speaking of his prehuman existence, as recorded in Proverbs, saying, “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

“When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.”—Prov. 8:22-31

The Apostle Paul also spoke concerning Jesus, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things

were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”—Col. 1:15-17

The Apostle John referred to Jesus in his prehuman existence as the Word [Greek, *Logos*]. The literal translation of the Greek text reads, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was [a] God. The same was in the beginning with [the] God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”—John 1:1-3

The relationship between Jesus as the ‘Word’ and his Heavenly Father is also indicated in the scriptural record of creation by the use of the pronouns ‘us’ and ‘our.’ The account reads, “God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”—Gen. 1:26

These scriptures show that Jesus—the Word—was the first and only direct creation of God. He was associated with the Father in all of the wonderful works of creation—“the beginning of the creation of God.”—Rev. 3:14 ■

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ENCOURAGING LETTERS

HOPE BOOKLET IN CHINESE

Dear Brethren in Christ: A sister asked us to print the *Hope* booklet for her in Chinese for a Chinese friend of hers who lost a beloved relative a short time ago. We're so thankful to our Lord that you are doing this wonderful work, and it helps us in whatever country we come from to give the wonderful and joyful message to others again through you!

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DawnBible: I enjoyed your sight, also how well it is put together. I have been looking for something like this for a long time.

I have been a Christian since I was 9 years old and now I am 70 years old. I have been trying to teach people about our Lord. I believe this might help me to clear things up when they

read them. God bless your work.—AZ

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Dear Dawn: A blessed day to you. Just a note to say "Thank you" for the *Hope* booklets. They're a great blessing to us and the families which the Lord blesses us to serve. Please remember us in prayer.—Funeral Home Director

PEOPLE OF THE BIBLE

DawnBible: My sincere gratitude for sending me this book, *People of the Bible*. It has helped me so much in understanding the Old Testament, not just reading it. Thank you.—NM

SEARCHING FOR TRUTH

DawnBible: I have been searching for the Truth and have done some study with JW's, that I found closer to the Truth, but not completely.

I am excited about coming across your website and believe I have been led there

for the Truth I am seeking. I look forward to further study of the Scriptures with you. Thank you.—TN

STANDING FIRM IN FAITH

DawnBible: These studies are the lifeline for anyone. They help us to stand firmly in the faith. Thank you. God bless.—INDIA

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Dear Dawn: Recently I enjoyed a little book of yours that someone loaned me.

I copied your address from a card inside to order another book, called *Peace Through Christ's Kingdom*. Would you send me that little book? Thank you very much.—IL

CORRESPONDENCE IN SPANISH

DawnBible[Spanish]: Before anything else, God bless you all and may your ministry prosper. I would like to receive correspondence in Spanish.

I am shepherding a work with my wife, and the Word of the Lord is the best, I like the healthy and

direct doctrine, in the way Christ preached to be able to attain salvation. Sincerely.—PUERTO RICO

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A GOLD MINE

DawnBible: I've just found your website and it is like striking a gold mine. I am glad to discover *The Dawn*, a spiritually edifying publication. The Lord bless his work in your hands.—NIGERIA

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M. J. Balko

St. Petersburg, FL November 8

R. Carnegie

San Diego, CA November 26-29

R. Goodman

Louisville, AL November 8
Jersey City, NJ 22

L. Griehs

New Haven, CT November 1
San Diego, CA 26-29

K. Humphreys

San Diego, CA
November 26-29

H. Montague

San Diego, CA
November 26-29

M. Nekora

San Diego, CA
November 26-29

J. Parkinson

San Diego, CA
November 26-29

T. Ruggirello

San Diego, CA
November 26-29

*“By love serve one another.”
—Galatians 5:13*

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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.

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 1—Westwoods Italian-American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact A. Suraci, 171 Johnson Road, Hamden, CT 06518. Phone: (203) 248-3793

JERSEY CITY CONVENTION, November 22—The Loyalty Lodge, 1912 Morris Avenue, Union, NJ 07083. Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (718) 961-4437 or (917) 554-2348

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 26-29—Alliant University, 10455 Pomerado Road, San Diego, CA 92131. For hotel reservations (2 miles west), contact Best Western (858) 578-6600. Specify “San Diego Bible Students” for best rate. For on-campus college dorm, contact B. Bach (619) 445-4879. Other information, contact R. Rice, 13084 Treecrest Street, Poway, CA 92064. Phone: (858) 486-0381

CHICAGO NEW YEAR’S CONVENTION, January 1-3—Ramada Inn & Suites, 780 North Avenue, Glendale Heights, IL 60139. Phone: (630) 942-9500. Contact J. Farrell, 310 S. Lambert Road, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137. Phone: (630) 469-9511

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, January 31—Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. Contact R. Wojcik, 12807 Elkwood Street, North Hollywood, CA 91605. Phone: (818) 982-7253

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 12-14—Capitol City Hotel, 2600 Auburn Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact J. Freer. Phone: (916) 967-0635

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 6,7,8—Clarion Hotel, 230 West State Road 436, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714. Phone: (407) 862-4455. Specify “Florida Bible Students.” Deadline for special rates is February 24. For other information, contact E. Blicharz, 320 Raven Rock Lane, Longwood, FL 32750. Phone: (407) 260-8083

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*We are pilgrims of Zion,
tho trials we must bear,
which all are blessings in disguise;
Tho the cross may be heavy,
the crown we soon shall wear
in heaven, where pleasures never die.*

*When we walk thru the valley
and shadow of the tomb,
dear Savior, thou wilt be our guide;
And thy smile like a sunbeam
will light beyond the gloom,
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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD —peculiarly “his workmanship;” that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age—ever since Christ became the world’s Redeemer and the chief “corner stone” of this temple, through which, when finished, God’s blessings shall come “to all people,” and they find access to him.—I Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING, AND POLISHING of the consecrated believers in Christ’s atonement for sin progresses, and when the last of these “living stones,” “elect and precious,” shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD lies in the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God “tasted death for every man,” “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” “in due time.”—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5,6

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH is that she may be like her Lord, “see him as he is,” be a “partaker of the divine nature,” and share his glory as his joint-heir.—I John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; II Pet. 1:4

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God’s witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests in the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6, 20:6

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35