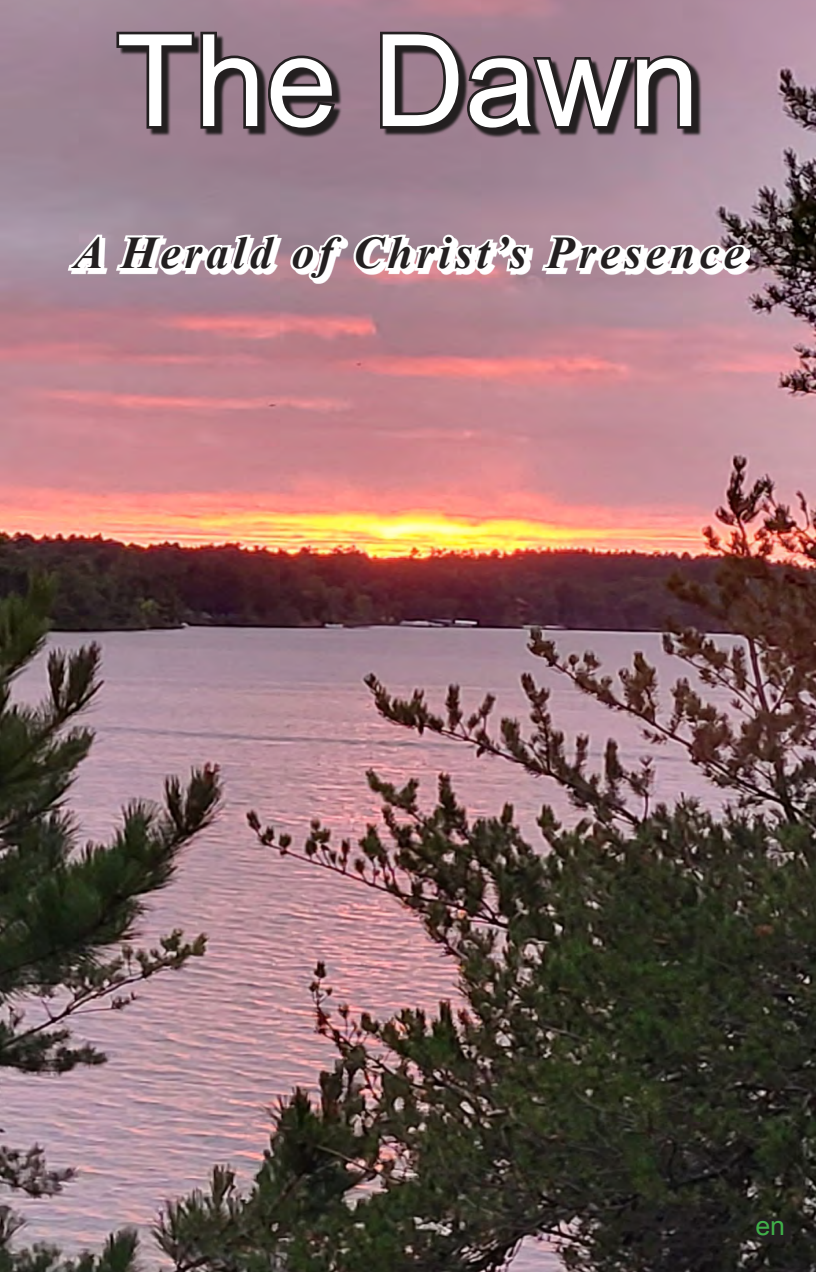
The Dawn

A Herald of Christ's Presence



en

The DAWN

VOLUME NO. XCIV, Number 12
(USPS 149-380), December 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

Christ Is Born 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

A Living Hope 16

Called to Be Holy 18

Emmanuel—God with Us 20

A Holy Priesthood 22

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

The Creator Reveals Himself 24

The Ministry of Angels 35

The Christian's Invisible Enemy 48

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 15

TALKING THINGS OVER 61

OBITUARIES 60

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 63

CONVENTIONS 63

Published monthly by The Dawn Bible Students Association, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167. $12.00 a year.

ARGENTINA: estudiantesdelabibliargentina@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA: Australian Bible Students, 62A Mullum Mullum Road, Ringwood, Victoria 3134

BRAZIL: A Aurora, Caixa Postal 50088, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, CEP 20050-971

BRITISH ISLES: Associated Bible Students, Brook House, Whitchurch Road, Prees, Whitchurch Shropshire, SY13 3JZ UK

CANADA: P.O. Box 1565, Vernon, British Columbia, V1T 8C2

FRANCE: L'Aurore, 39A rue des Bois, 68540 Feldkirch

GERMANY: Tagesanbruch Bibel-studien-Vereinigung e. V., Postfach 1115, 64355 MühlTal

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167 USA

INDIA: P. Kumar/E. Rashmi Manu Residency, #1-N-32-2717/8(2), Near Vigneshwara wood Industries Ashoknagar, Mangalore: 575006

SPAIN/ITALY: El Alba/Aurora, Associazione Studenti Biblici, Via Ferrara 42, 59100 Prato—Italia

Christ Is Born

"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."
—Luke 2:11

More than two thousand years ago this angelic announcement to a group of shepherds watching their flocks by night signaled a crucial step forward in the outworking of God's plan of salvation. The full context of our theme text reads, "The angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."—Luke 2:9-14

The Promise

Previous to this, the coming of a Savior was in the realm of promises, so one of the very important aspects of this message of good news was the fact

that the Savior had now been born. The word "Gospel" means good news. Paul informs us that the Gospel was preached centuries earlier to Abraham when God promised this ancient friend that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gal. 3:8; Gen. 12:3; 22:18) Paul identifies Jesus in this connection as the promised "seed." (Gal. 3:16) It was good news to Abraham that his progeny—Jesus as the seed of promise—would be the means of blessing to all mankind. However, this was good news that was based merely upon a promise. This promise was confirmed by God's oath.—Gen. 22:16-18; Heb. 6:13-17

This same promise was reaffirmed to Isaac and to Jacob. Shortly before his death, when pronouncing blessings upon his twelve sons, Jacob prophesied that out of the loins of his son Judah there would come one who would be called Shiloh, a peaceful one, and that unto him would the "gathering of the people be." (Gen. 49:9,10) This was another promise of the coming of a Savior, or Messiah, one to whom the people would be gathered and through whom they would receive the blessings of peace.

Moses, in his day, also embraced these wonderful promises that the God of Israel would send a great one, a Messiah, to bring deliverance to his people and a blessing to all mankind. Evidently, the mother of Moses, while caring for her child in the court of Pharaoh, told him of the promise to Abraham and what it implied. We read that when he was come to years he "refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, because he preferred being mistreated with God's people to enjoying the pleasures of sin for a short time. He thought that being

insulted for the sake of the Messiah was of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward."—Heb. 11:24-26, *International Standard Version*

The Greek word Christ is the New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah. Moses evidently understood God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to mean that he would send a Messiah. He gladly cast in his lot with the people of God to whom these promises had been made. Later, after the Law had been given to Israel at the hand of Moses, he was instructed to say to this people that the Lord would raise up unto them a prophet like unto himself and that all would be called upon to hear and obey that prophet. (Deut. 18:18,19) In the New Testament, this prophecy is applied to Jesus during his thousand year kingdom rule.—Acts 3:20,22,23

Many Prophecies

Isaiah prophesied that "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isa. 7:14) Another of Isaiah's prophecies reads, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."—Isa. 9:6,7

Isaiah further prophesied concerning the coming Messiah: "There shall come forth a rod out of

the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear [reverence] of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding: … and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."—Isa. 11:1-5

In Daniel 9:25, there is another assurance of the coming of the Messiah. In this prophecy, a time measurement is given indicating when he would come. The prophecy reads, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks." At the time Jesus appeared as the Messiah, many were in expectation of him. This expectation was no doubt based, in part at least, upon this prophecy recorded by Daniel.—Luke 3:15

In Micah 5:2, there is a prophecy that identifies the place where the promised one would be born. The text reads, "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

These and other promises and prophecies relative to the coming Messiah served as a great inspiration

to the devout of Israel. Yet, the majority of the people did not realize that they would not all be fulfilled at once. They failed to grasp the meaning of certain prophecies that told of the Messiah's suffering and death as the Redeemer of Israel and of the world. They did not know that he would be raised from the dead and return to heaven. They simply had in mind the many assurances of God that a Messiah would come, that Israel and all the families of the earth would be blessed.

The Israelites were well aware that God had promised to send a Messiah. As noted in the foregoing scriptures, many names and titles of this great one were mentioned in the prophecies, including Immanuel and Shiloh. He was the promised seed and a prophet greater than Moses. The Messiah was also to be a "rod out of the stem of Jesse," and a "Branch" was to grow out of his roots. He was to be the "Prince of Peace."

Throughout all the long centuries, Israel waited in hope for the fulfillment of the promised Messianic feature of God's plan. At last, the time came for those promises to begin to be translated into reality, so the angel announced, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Now these promises began to take on substance: Christ, the Messiah, was born.

Nine months earlier Mary had been given the assurance that she was to be the mother of the one who would become the great Messiah and deliverer of Israel and the world. "The angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."—Luke 1:30-33

In this announcement by the angel, we are reminded of Isaiah's prophecy quoted earlier in which he foretold that the Messiah would sit "upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." The kingdom of David had fallen about six hundred years earlier. Because David was so greatly beloved by God, he arranged that the future Messianic kingdom should be looked upon as the rebuilt kingdom of David, a man after God's own heart. (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) Thus Jesus is the greater David, and through his mother he was an actual descendant of David.

Humble Circumstances

From the announcement made to her by the angel Gabriel, Mary knew that she was to be the mother of the promised one. God had permitted her holy child to be born in a stable. While Jesus' birthplace was humble, and his mother was a comparatively unknown person in Israel, his birth was announced by the angels. This was appropriate. God had used angels on many occasions to convey to the ancients his plan to send a Messiah. Now that the time had come to fulfill those promises, it was fitting that both the conception and birth of this great one would also be announced by angels.

The birth of Jesus was a turning point in the outworking of the divine arrangement. It meant

that God's plan had moved out of the promise stage and into the era of performance. Through his New Testament servants, God continued to make promises, but now the central figure both of the Old and New Testament promises and prophecies had come, and his birth in Bethlehem had been announced by the angels.

The shepherds to whom this announcement was made must have been awed, and at the same time made glad. Their first thought was to go to Bethlehem and verify what they had heard. We read, "It came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."—Luke 2:15,16

The shepherds were thoroughly convinced. "When they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds." (vss. 17,18) The shepherds' desire to tell as many as they could about the good news that had been given to them was natural and praiseworthy. We should have the same desire today. At this time, the Lord's people are privileged to understand God's plan even more fully than did the shepherds. The good tidings of the birth of Jesus, and all that it means in connection with the divine plan and purpose as a whole, should motivate us to do all we can to tell out this message of the Gospel far and wide and by every means at our disposal.—Matt. 24:14; Rom. 10:15; I Cor. 9:16

Not Yet the Messiah

The birth of Jesus was truly important as an advancing step in the plan of God. As a babe, however, he was not the Messiah. The word "Messiah" means anointed, or "the anointed one." The significance of the word derives from the Law given to Israel of anointing kings and priests to office. The anointing was the official designation to office. (Exod. 28:41; I Sam. 9:16,17; 16:13) These pointed forward to the anointing of the Holy Spirit that came upon Jesus at the time of his baptism. (Heb. 1:8,9; Acts 10:38) This anointing also came upon the church at Pentecost.—I John 2:27; II Cor. 1:21,22

At the time of Jesus' baptism, he heard his Heavenly Father speaking to him from heaven, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22) Jesus' birth was announced by the angels, but as a babe he would not yet know about or appreciate his earthly purpose. At the age of twelve, he was found in the Temple with doctors of the Law endeavoring to learn what he could about his mission. (Luke 2:41-47) It was not until he came to Jordan at the age of thirty, when he dedicated himself to the doing of his Father's will and to then begin the public phase of his ministry, that he received this blessed assurance of his sonship. It was then that he learned that his Heavenly Father was well pleased with him. Now he was the Messiah of promise.

By this time, perhaps the shepherds to whom his birth had been announced had died. Certainly many to whom they had conveyed the good news had passed off the scene. Whatever the reason, no mention is made of an angelic announcement after

Jesus began his ministry. It could well be that God wanted to emphasize that future events—the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus were now the important considerations. Jesus' birth was necessary as the means to that end, but the Heavenly Father does not want us particularly to adore the babe Jesus. Rather, we are to take up our cross daily and follow the anointed Jesus in his steps of suffering and death.—Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23

God's Gift

The promises pertaining to the coming of the Messiah emphasized that he would be one sent by God. This thought is carried over into the New Testament. In John 3:16, Jesus is referred to as God's gift. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Words are wholly inadequate to describe this gracious and costly gift that our Heavenly Father gave to us and to the whole world of mankind.

Since the first evidence of this gift was manifested in the birth of Jesus, it is appropriate that this feature of God's plan should beget in us the desire unselfishly to give of ourselves. First of all, when we come to know of God's great gift of love for us, we should willingly give our all in consecration to him. He has invited us to give him our hearts. (Prov. 23:26) When we respond to this invitation it means that everything we have, and life itself, is surrendered to him, with the understanding that he can use it in whatever way may be pleasing to him. Such a consecration involves presenting our

bodies as a "living sacrifice," as mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1.

A Savior

When the angel announced to the shepherds that the Messiah was born, he referred to him as a Savior. To the shepherds, this possibly meant no more than being saved from the Roman yoke of bondage under which the nation of Israel was living at the time. To us it implies much more. It means that, through his death as man's Redeemer, Jesus would provide an opportunity of salvation from death for all people. The Heavenly Father knew that in giving his Son for the salvation of mankind, it meant giving him up to suffer and to die. What a costly gift this was. To emulate the Father's love in giving, true Christians must be willing to suffer and to die even as Jesus did. Although our sacrifice does not have the redemptive value that Jesus' death had, our faithfulness will result in the opportunity to participate with him in fulfilling the promise of blessing "all the families of the earth" in his coming kingdom.—Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11,12

After the one angel announced the birth of Jesus, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:13,14) Surely all who love the Lord and rejoice in his great plan of salvation will likewise give glory to God and praise him for the gift of his Son.

We know that the birth of Jesus will yet lead to worldwide peace. Over two thousand years have passed since this glory song of the angels was heard

and still there is no peace on earth. This does not mean that the divine purpose has failed. It simply means that a further preparatory feature of God's great plan has been in the course of development. This feature is the calling out from the world those who are invited to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, serving, suffering, and dying with him, that they might live and reign with him. There is every reason now to believe that this work is nearing completion. This means that soon Messiah's kingdom will bring peace to the nations, and that Jesus will be recognized by the people of all nations as truly "The Prince of Peace."—Isa. 9:6

Jesus also will, in this kingdom, serve as peacemaker between God and the estranged human family. There can be no lasting peace between the nations unless the people are at peace with God. Our first parents chose a course contrary to God's law and brought upon themselves the sentence of death. By heredity, their entire progeny has been born in sin and "shapen in iniquity." (Ps. 51:5) The whole unbelieving world is thus alienated from God and under condemnation to death. Jesus gave himself in death as a substitute for Adam and his race. (Rom. 5:12,19; I Cor. 15:21,22) This opens the way to mankind for a return from death and a reinstatement of the human race into the favor of God to all who are obedient to the righteous laws of Christ's coming kingdom on earth. (Matt. 6:10) This glorious provision will become effective during the Messianic kingdom through the arrangement of the New Covenant, as promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Jesus will then be "The everlasting Father." (Isa. 9:6) That is, he will give everlasting life to all those

who, through belief and obedience, will prove worthy of it. How glorious is this prospect! It will mean the end of sickness, pain, and death. How true was the angel's announcement that the son born to Mary would be a "Savior." As we contemplate the birth of Jesus, we should not overlook this glorious outcome of the divine plan of salvation.—Acts 5:31; I John 4:14

"Good Will Toward Men"

In the song of the angels, they used the expression, "good will toward men." Many who do not know the plan of God for human salvation think of this as meaning good will "among" men. This viewpoint places a great strain upon their faith because they know that there has been no more good will among men since Jesus was born than there was before. They have striven in vain to convert the world to Christ and his teachings, and thus bring about a state of good will among men, believing that to be God's current purpose. We rejoice to realize that only in God's due time, during the Messianic kingdom, the world will be converted. Then the Lord's Spirit will be poured out "upon all flesh." (Joel 2:28) Under its enlightening influence, the people will be led away from selfishness and will learn to love and serve one another.

God's good will toward men was expressed through the birth of his Son, whom he sent into the world to be the Redeemer and Savior of mankind. God's good will was thus expressed toward men because he loved them. Even though the human family was alienated from God through wicked works, he still loved the people. He loved them so

much that he gave his Son to serve as Redeemer and Mediator to restore them to life and to harmony with him.—John 3:16,17; I Tim. 2:5,6; I John 4:9

Jesus' death and resurrection were further evidences of God's good will toward men. The selection of the faithful followers of the Master to share in the kingdom rule with Jesus is also an evidence of God's good will toward the Adamic race. The return of Christ to establish his kingdom likewise manifests God's good will toward the people. Indeed, God's good will is expressed in every detail of his loving plan for the blessing of all the families of the earth. In view of this, how appropriate that we join with the angels in singing, "Glory to God in the Highest!"

It was a marvelous experience for the shepherds to be told by angels that the one whom the God of Israel had been promising for so long had at last been born. It is even more wonderful to be living now and to have the assurance that Christ will soon establish his kingdom through which peace and health and life will be assured to all people. (Rev. 21:4,5) To the distressed and troubled world, it seems incredible that we are living at the threshold of such a golden age of peace, security, health, and life. No doubt many disbelieved the report of the shepherds concerning the birth of the Messiah. Likewise, the people for the most part will ignore our message today. However, it is our privilege to proclaim the good tidings, and in doing so to show our joy and enthusiasm for the message of the angels to the shepherds in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago. May this glorious message always be most precious in our lives. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

DECEMBER 3—"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."—Revelation 3:10 (Z. '01-118 Hymn 310)

DECEMBER 10—"Them that honour me, I will honour."—I Samuel 2:30 (Z. '01-318 Hymn 210)

DECEMBER 17—"Beloved, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."—Philippians 2:12,13 (Z. '97-147 Hymn 114)

DECEMBER 24—"Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."—Matthew 1:21 (Z. '00-8 Hymn 16)

DECEMBER 31—"What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD, now, in the presence of all his people."—Psalm 116:12-14 (Z. '99-286 Hymn 336)

Prayer of the Consecrated

As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright;
So most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to thee.

Holy Savior, every day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds thy glory hide.
—Hymns of Dawn

A Living Hope

Key Verse: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." —I Peter 1:8

Selected Scripture: I Peter 1:1-12

As an apostle, Peter first described his intended readers as "elect," which means that they are chosen by God in a particular and unique sense. (I Pet. 1:1,2) This wording was designed to strengthen and encourage them in their afflictions. Since he was divinely inspired, this portion has served to comfort all the Lord's consecrated followers from the time of the Early Church through the present.

Such comfort is in view of our reliance upon the efficacy of Christ's ransom sacrifice and our acceptance of sonship to the Heavenly Father. This is all based upon the hope that is within us to become joint-heirs with our Savior and ultimately, if faithful, live and reign with him to bless all the families of the earth.—Rev. 20:4; Gen. 12:3; 22:18

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."—I Pet. 1:3-5

We especially rejoice in God's keeping power when we are beset by various trials, knowing that he will be with us as our faith is tested. "In this you greatly rejoice," Peter says, "though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials." (vs. 6, *New King James Version*) Sometimes it is thought that a strong Christian will never be grieved in a trial. Yet Peter here tells us that there is a "need be" not only for the various trials, but more especially for being grieved itself. God has a purpose not only for the trial but also for the heavy anguish we may feel in the experience.

Our Key Verse affirms that although we have never literally seen Christ nor God, we love them abundantly. We do so because we realize they are with us and are waiting expectantly for us to complete our sacrificial course so that this night of sin will end. Then the promised blessings will ensue to mankind as predicted by all the holy prophets of the Old Testament.—Acts 3:21

Our standing before God furnishes us the opportunities of sacrifice and service as we participate in the sufferings of Christ. The fact that there are opportunities for suffering "for his body's sake" implies that it was the divine intention to give the church a share in the experiences that would enable them to serve as part of the royal priesthood in providing blessings to mankind during the kingdom. (Col. 1:24) In particular, the laying down of our lives on behalf of the brethren in the service of the Truth will prove the sincerity of the presentation of our bodies in sacrifice. —Rom. 12:1

The Lord credits faithfulness in bearing reproach, dishonor, exhaustion, and everything connected with sacrifice as our being a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel." (II Tim. 1:8) This is true provided such afflictions are the result of voluntary activity in his name and in the furtherance of his cause. What a privilege! ■

Called to Be Holy

Key Verses: "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 1:13-21

In this lesson, Apostle Peter reminds Christians to "gird up the loins of your mind." (I Pet. 1:13) The idea in this phrase is to prepare for action. The apostle says we must also "be sober," which denotes the ability to take a serious look at life. This describes a condition free from every form of mental and spiritual loss of self-control; it is an attitude of self-discipline that avoids being extreme in one direction or another.

If we prove to be obedient followers of Christ, we will receive the needed experiences that will make us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. 1:12) Thus we shall be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we "may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." In other words, we will fashion ourselves according to the divine instructions.—Rom. 12:2

Our Key Verses indicate absolute holiness is the standard that we should fully endorse. This is despite the fact that because of human frailties, we cannot attain it in the flesh. Nevertheless, we are to copy the divine pattern as much as possible, especially as it pertains to our will and minds.

"If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass

the time of your sojourning here in [reverential] fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." (I Pet. 1:17-20) These words of our lesson provide a humble reminder that our redemption has been made possible only through the sacrifice of Christ.

One evidence we have passed from death unto life is that we love the brethren. As Christ laid down his life for us, we should lay down our lives for one another. (I John 3:14,16) That is, we should do whatever we can to help them make their calling and election sure. In the prayer of our Lord recorded in John 17, his concerns were primarily for the twelve who were to be his special ambassadors in the earth and for those who would hearken unto their teachings after he had ascended to heaven following his resurrection. (vss. 11-20) What a legacy of promises and comfort to assist us that we have received if we would follow in Christ's footsteps. If taken to heart it will result in our being faithful unto death and ultimate participants in his glory.—Rev. 2:10

Our Lord is ever solicitous of our welfare and sanctification. If we heed the instructions relating to his care over us by abiding in him throughout our earthly sojourn, then we may apply unto ourselves the following words: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. … Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, … be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." —Jude 1:21,24,25 ■

Emmanuel—God with Us

Key Verse: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." —Matthew 1:23

Selected Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew does not tell us about the birth of Jesus in detail as does Luke. Instead, he recounts the events through the eyes of Joseph. It was he to whom Mary was engaged. Prior to the consummation of their marriage, she was found to be expecting a child. Joseph, not willing to make of her a public example, was inclined to put her away quietly. However, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him not to fear in taking Mary as his wife because the conception occurred through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.—Matt. 1:18-20

The angel continued, saying, "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet."—vss. 21,22

Our Key Verse illustrates the fulfillment of that which was spoken by God through the Prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 7:13,14, the prophet foretells Jesus' birth, saying that "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," and that these things would be a sign to the

"house of David." How marvelous is God's overruling that his divinely inspired Word from the Old Testament and New Testament can be relied upon as a harmonious basis for our faith in all the promises of the Scriptures.

"Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife." (Matt. 1:24) The Bible does not give many details about Joseph, but he was evidently a remarkable individual. He was told by a messenger to take Mary as his wife under what seemed very unusual circumstances, yet he did it without question.

There are surely lessons as consecrated followers of Christ that we might reflect upon because of Joseph's example. What about ourselves? Do we promptly do what the Lord wants us to do when we have ascertained his will? Thinking about our life after having commenced our course in the narrow way, do we ever fail to do what we have pledged to do? We understand that God does not speak to us now through angels, but if he did, would we not be sure to follow their instructions? If, on the other hand, God were to use human instrumentalities to give us needed counsel, might we reject such help, thinking that it is none of anyone else's business, and the matter is between ourselves and God?

At times, we may be near-sighted with regard to certain of our actions that are manifested to others. To the extent that we need counsel along one line or another, the Lord might raise up a brother or sister in Christ to direct our attention toward a more proper course in a patient, kindly, gentle manner. If we are rightly exercised, we will make the necessary adjustments and improvements in our lives so that we can be more pleasing to the Lord. The following passage may well be one we should meditate upon for this purpose. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word."—Ps. 119:67 ■

A Holy Priesthood

Key Verse: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." —I Peter 2:5

Selected Scripture: I Peter 2:1-10

At the outset of our lesson, Peter admonishes that all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking are forbidden among the consecrated. In light of this exhortation, we should receive the Scriptures with an innocent, childlike heart. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (I Pet. 2:1,2) From the divine standpoint, a babe is equally considered a member of Christ's body as the more well-developed Christian. The "milk of the word" then becomes a foundation for imbibing stronger food that is essential towards growing to spiritual maturity in Christ.—Eph. 4:14-16

"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." (I Pet. 2:3,4) Our Key Verse then asserts the completed church, made up of these "living stones," will constitute a "spiritual house" and a "holy priesthood," the means by which mankind will be taught and blessed when the coming earthly kingdom is in operation.—Matt. 6:10

As we look at present conditions in the world, it appears that soon the saints will be united with Christ in glory as suggested by the following Old Testament reference. "Who art thou, O great mountain [present

kingdom of Satan]? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone [Christ] thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."—Zech. 4:7

As we continue our earthly sojourn prior to the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness, there are some reminders in the Bible that God's standard for his chosen "priesthood" people has always been one of holiness, as cited in our Key Verse, though none but Jesus was able to manifest this in the flesh perfectly. One example of priestly misconduct and unholy behavior that incurred God's great displeasure was manifested by Phinehas and Hophni, the sons of Eli, Israel's high priest. In their service as under priests they forcibly took from the people more than their share of the peace offerings. Additionally, they committed immorality with women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.—I Sam. 2:12-17,22

Eli's sons were unfaithful in performing their duties as under priests. As the Lord's servants they should have been instructors by word and example in righteousness and in demonstrating reverence for the Heavenly Father. Ultimately, however, they were slain while bearing the Ark of the Covenant as the Israelites battled the Philistines. (I Sam. 4:11) This was a clear fulfillment of an earlier verse, where Eli asks: "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them."—I Sam. 2:25

There are many lessons from the Old Testament regarding the sanctification and holiness required of Israel's priesthood. When we probe these matters further, they will reflect the importance of Paul's words: "Now these things happened to them as an example and warning to us; they were written for our instruction to admonish and equip us, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." (I Cor. 10:11, *Amplified Bible*) Let us strive for holiness. ■

The Creator Reveals Himself

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork."
—Psalm 19:1

As another year draws to a close, rather than reexamine the many disturbing and distressing events that have taken place during the past twelve months, we believe it will be refreshing and profitable to review just a sampling of the wondrous works of God, our Creator. In doing so, we begin with the very first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Gen. 1:1) Happy are they who, by faith, based on reason, are able to accept this plain testimony of the Scriptures. Beyond this simple statement, however, its testimony is everywhere displayed throughout the earth, in the air, the seas, and the skies.

The Creator himself calls attention to this in a revealing dialogue with the Prophet Job. "The LORD answered Job, … and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me." (Job 38:1-3) This was

but the beginning of a long series of questions that God asked Job. Taken together, these bring out many points that, because human wisdom does not know the answers, should help even the most skeptical to realize the truthfulness of David's words, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Ps. 14:1) The truly wise know that belief in the existence of an intelligent Creator leads to the only reasonable and satisfactory answers.

"Where wast thou," God asked Job, "when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7) Job was a wise man. He knew that everything made by man required planning and skill. This was true of buildings. In our day it is true of intricate machinery, means of transportation, computers, and other modern marvels. These things do not just happen.

The earth, the home of all humanity, had been created without Job or any others of mankind having anything to do with it. Job was not present when the "foundations" were laid. He had no part in the architectural design and measurements. Nevertheless, he knew that the earth existed. This marvelous display of wisdom and design should help us, as doubtless it did Job, to realize that there must have been a divine Architect and Builder with intelligence and power far superior to that possessed by man.

Then the Lord reminded Job of some of the details connected with the creation of the earth. He asked:

"Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it, … and set bars and doors, And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?"—Job 38:8-11

Marvels of the Sea

How seldom we think of the miracle-working power of God in connection with the ebb and flow of the ocean's tides. Indeed, we know how to explain it. The tides, we say, are controlled largely by the gravitational pull of the moon; but what does that mean? What is gravitation? Sir Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravitation, but who framed that law and implemented it? There are times when locally the winds increase the height of the tides a number of feet, and those living near the shore must temporarily seek higher ground; but seldom do people realize that ordinarily they can dwell safely by the sea only because God has decreed, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

Next Job was asked: "Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place?" (Job 38:12) Seemingly Job was a prominent man in his community and one who exercised considerable authority, but he had no control over the rising of the sun. Job knew that from the earliest days of his recollection the sun had risen and set without his having anything to do with it. He realized also that this was true of the generations before him. He knew that at no time had

man ever had any control over the movements of the sun, the moon, the stars, or the earth. This was far beyond the ability of man. This was the work of God.

The Gates of Death

"Have the gates of death been opened unto thee?" Job was asked, "or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" (Job 38:17) Men and women of all ages have endeavored to peer beyond death, to know what lies beyond the grave. Apart from the revelation given to us in the Word of God, which assures us of a resurrection of the dead, no one has obtained any satisfactory information. Just as the mystery of creation is explainable only in the light of the fact that there is a supreme intelligent Creator, so the desire for life after death becomes a genuine hope only because the one who created life has promised to restore the dead to life.—John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:22

Further Questions

Here is another intriguing question: "Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof? Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great?" (Job 38:19-21) What causes light and darkness? From observation we know that the light of day replaces the darkness of night, and the absence of light produces darkness. Scientists additionally know that light is formed from electromagnetic radiation, but do not know when, where, or by what means, this began to take place in the past eons of time. God knows,

however, for he created both the darkness and the light. It was the Creator who said, "Let there be light: and there was light."—Gen. 1:3

The Lord continued to question Job, asking him about a number of things described by many as simply works of nature—things that, even to those who believe in God, are frequently overlooked as proofs of his existence. We quote: "Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; To satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?"—Job 38:25-29

The obvious and only answer to all these questions is that there must be a supreme, intelligent Creator who designed and created water and who also planned the means by which it would reach the ground and give life to vegetation. Most of us have witnessed with pleasure the revival of plants, or of grass, when water is provided. However, do we realize that the process that accomplishes this is miraculous, made possible because all the elements involved were designed and made by God, who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth?

How marvelous is the arrangement by which the water created by God reaches the "dry places." (Ps. 105:41) As we know, it is by the evaporation of the water of oceans and lakes, the moisture ascending to form clouds that are distributed over the land and which, by changes of temperature in the air

currents, are caused to release their refreshing waters in the form of rain and snow. Reaching the earth, the water finds its way back into the oceans and lakes to continue the marvelous cycle. Scientists of today tell us how all this happens, but the real power, or forces, that contribute to make it possible are still unexplainable except as we attribute it to divine intelligence.

The Heavenly Bodies

Shifting the focus of his questions to heavenly bodies, God asked Job: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"—Job 38:31-33

The lesson implied in these questions is more striking today than it was to Job. Job was a wise man for his time, but in his day the knowledge of astronomy had not advanced to its present degree. Calculations now made possible by powerful telescopes have revealed the minute accuracy of time and distance involved in the movement of the heavenly bodies, giving evidence that they are held in their orbits, and at constant speeds, by the power and design of an intelligence inexplicable by man.

Without going into detail as to the particular references to Pleiades, Orion, Mazzaroth, and Arcturus, the main point of the lesson is that neither Job nor we can possibly change the course of a single planet, sun, star, or galaxy. We do not understand the governing forces that control "the ordinances of heaven," or the manner in which their influences

are felt in the earth. God knows, however, for he created both the earth and everything in the vast realm of heaven, designing their exact relationships to each other.

In God's Image

One of the most difficult questions that God asked Job was, "Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?" (Job 38:36) The lower animal creations are governed largely by what we call instinct. From the time of their birth they seem naturally to follow a certain pattern, and while many of them can be trained to obey to a certain degree the directives of their human masters, there is no evidence that they really understand why. As implied in the question asked Job, the lower animals do not possess a heart knowledge, or mental appreciation, of their existence or of their course of action.

With mankind it is different. Human beings are able to reason to a considerable degree. They know that some things are right and other things are wrong, even if they often choose to do the wrong. Most have a conscience that is pricked when they do wrong and affords peace and contentment of mind when they do right. Many have advanced theories concerning the alleged ascent of man from protoplasm to his present state. They have attempted to explain what has brought about the various changes in the anatomy of animals in the evolutionary process that has led to man. Nevertheless, no one can answer the question put to Job concerning man, "Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?"

There is only one answer to this question. It is God's answer, recorded in his own inspired Word for our instruction and encouragement. It is found in the very first chapter of the Bible, Genesis 1:27,28. Here we are informed that man, as constituted, is far superior to even the highest forms of lower animals, capable of reasoning, of planning, of inventing, of knowing right from wrong, because he was created "in the image of God." When evolutionists find a reasonable, valid, provable explanation of how this difference between man and his alleged nearest of kin among the animal creation came about, they will be more worthy of a serious hearing than at present.

Wisdom of the Creator Displayed

Throughout chapter 39 of the Book of Job, a number of other questions are recorded, the answers to which must also be negative as far as human wisdom is concerned. These questions pertain to the marvelous instincts displayed by various animals and birds. The chapter begins with these questions: "Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? Canst thou number the months that they fulfill? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them."—vss. 1-4

Then the Lord calls attention to the different characteristics of other animals—"Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? Whose house I have made the

wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. Will the unicorn [wild ox] be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the [wild ox] with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?"—Job 39:5-12

There are what we speak of as domestic animals that, with little effort, can be trained to serve man. However, here God called Job's attention to other varieties of animals that are wild and refuse to submit to human training. Who is responsible for these differences?

Neither Job nor we are wise enough to understand the creative processes that brought about the almost endless varieties of creation. There is a poem by Joyce Kilmer entitled "Trees," that states that "only God can make a tree." This fact is even more striking when we consider the thousands of varieties of trees, plants, and flowers, as well as the immense variety found in the animal kingdom. Only a supreme, intelligent Creator could produce this endless array of created things, with each in its own wonderful way displaying the wisdom and power of its Maker.

Additional Questions

In the closing verses of chapter 39, another convincing thought is brought to our attention. Job is asked: "Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch

her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she."—vss. 26-30

In calling our attention to the habits of the hawk and the eagle, the Lord reminds us again of the numberless peculiarities that exist in the life habits of the bird and animal kingdoms. There are the migratory birds that move from north to south and from south to north with the changing seasons. There are the swimming birds and the singing birds, the screech owls and talking parrots, the gorgeously handsome birds and the drab, colorless ones.

Why stop with birds? The same variety exists among land animals, trees, flowers, and insects. There is only one thing common to them all, which is that they have life. Unbelieving human wisdom, in its folly, contends that all these myriad forms of plant and animal life just happened to develop as they did. The origin of life is unknown, apart from the explanation given to us in the Scriptures that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Accepting this fact, as the many otherwise unanswerable questions God asked Job impel us to do, then we know the answer to them all. It is a simple answer—that the infinite wisdom and almighty power of a personal God and Creator is responsible for the awe-inspiring works of creation that are so marvelously displayed in the heavens, on the earth, and in the sea.

The Creator's Grand Design

Job reached the conclusion that the only answer to all the mysteries of creation is that they are the work of an intelligent divine Creator. For Job, this was also the answer to the problem of human suffering, which he personally had experienced in so many forms. How could he question the wisdom of the great Creator in permitting him to suffer for a while? Surely the infinite wisdom Job saw displayed in all the creative works of God showed him that the Creator knew also what was best for him. Should we not all reach that same conclusion? It should be especially so if we would know the meaning of our existence and be inspired with hope as we contemplate the eternal destiny that the Creator has designed for his human creation.

Job said to God, "I know that thou canst do every thing," (Job 42:2) If we believe this, then we have a foundation of faith upon which we can build a true knowledge of God and of his infinitely wise and loving design in man's creation. If we believe that he can do everything, no explanation of his plans and purposes that he has given in his Word will be disbelieved. No instruction will go unheeded or disobeyed. No promise he has made, regardless of how far-reaching or seemingly impossible of accomplishment, will be doubted.

The wisdom and power of God are wonderfully displayed in his created works with which we are surrounded. Indeed, it is the revelation of his grand design for his human creation found in the Bible that stamps this marvelous book as the Word of God, his revelation to his servants here on earth. ■

The Ministry of Angels

"The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear [reverence] him, and delivereth them."
—Psalm 34:7

Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions." (John 14:2) We know from other disclosures of God's Word that there are different orders of living beings on the spirit plane of existence. (Eph. 1:21, Col. 1:16) There is a wideness in the vast domain of God that is comparable only to the wideness of his loving mercy. He has seen fit to employ certain spirit messengers in his dealings with mankind, and we have come to know something about them.

We believe that the Heavenly Father governs mankind in part through these messengers who, as royal ministers from him, come directly from the courts of heaven. They are invested with adequate power to bless, instruct, guide, protect, and deliver the true children of God throughout their earthly lives.

These messengers are spoken of in the Bible as having participated in the general rejoicing that followed the creation of man near the close of the

sixth creative day. Job 38, verses 4 and 7 read, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? … When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

The angelic sons of God had long been witnesses of the great creative work that had been carried out under the direct supervision of Jesus in his prehuman existence. The Bible states that he was the "word" [Greek: *logos*] of God and that "all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:1-4) Evidently this heavenly angelic host had been appointed to positions of responsible service. They thus shared to some extent in the accomplishments of the different creative days.

The angels were committed to duties that they performed in obedience to divine command. They possessed perfectly developed, intellectual minds. They could well understand that in the creation of perfect human beings with powers of procreation, this new order of intelligent life constituted a complete departure from likeness to any previously existing angelic being.

We know from God's Word that the holy angels are special servants of God. They are imbued with the fullness of desire to hold to the divine purpose in all the issues of truth and grace. As such, they carefully watch the unfolding of God's infinite wisdom and love, and they are radiant with holy delight in the mighty trusts to which they are appointed.

A Shadow Cast

When Jehovah unveiled to their sight the splendor of his finished work of Creation, all their glorious

ranks broke forth in shouts of joy, as previously noted from Job 38:7. While from then until now they have continued to perform high ministries between heaven and earth, a dark cloud of sin, and the effect of selfish desire translated into sinful action, was soon to cast a terrible shadow over the joys of the creative work in Eden. There was a brilliant, beautiful, and powerful angelic being, Lucifer, who said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: … I will be like the most High." Of him it is recorded, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"—Isa. 14:13,14,12

Thus arose the first rebellion in the universe of God recorded in the Scriptures. Others of the angelic host fell later from their high estate. (Gen. 6:1-4; Jude 1:6) Legions of holy angels, however, have remained true to their sacred trusts, and they have special interest in the uplift of mankind. It was by an apostate from their own ranks that the pure, fair creatures of paradise in Eden were seduced.

The terrible curse of sin and death was wrought by the malicious scheme of angelic envy. As the holy angels survey the sorrows of our world, they must feel humiliating sadness that some who were once pure and loyal as themselves should have been the betrayers of mankind.

Such knowledge has heightened the holy angels' interest in our race as the objects of the Savior's love and redemptive work. They are bound to Christ by profound affection. They love and adore him as the only begotten Son of God. They see in him the promised and certain victor over evil, and the rightful and mighty ruler in God's due time of

our present alien world. They share in Christ's love for mankind.

Ministering Spirits

As allies of Christ, the holy angels are the "ministering spirits" of the saints, sent forth to serve the "heirs of salvation." (Heb. 1:14) These loyal angels are spoken of in the Scriptures by terms implying their number is so great that it baffles the human mind to give expression to it. Jesus said he could in an instant call to his aid more than twelve legions of angels. (Matt. 26:53) A single one of these angels of the Lord smote one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians in one night. (II Kings 19:35) The Bible declares that they "excel in strength."—Ps. 103:20

Familiar with the works of God, how vast must be the angels' understanding of natural and spiritual forces. They are the guardians of the good of the earth, also the sleepless watchers over our lives and destinies, and as sentinels at the gates of danger. Though they salute us with no audible voices and cheer us without visible signs, their presence and their ministries are as real as when they gave announcement of the birth of Jesus with song and great glory.—Luke 2:8-14

The ministry of angels occurred frequently in Old Testament times. Their service was recorded in Israel's affairs. The patriarchs knew of them and were familiar with their visitations. It has been asserted as highly probable that in all the instances narrated in the first fifteen chapters of Genesis, in which the Lord is said to have spoken to Noah, Lot, and Abraham, the audible voice was

that of an angel—Jehovah speaking by his commissioned messengers.

In the Bible record, God most often spoke to man by his holy angels, except when he has spoken by the prophets, by his Son, or by the Apostles. (Heb. 1:1,2; Jude 1:17) As Hebrews 2:2 records, "The word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward."

Early cases of angelic intervention involved Hagar on two occasions. In the second instance she was in the desert, alone with her ill and starving son, the bread and water exhausted. She sat apart from him and sent forth into the heavens her cry of despair. An "angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink." (Gen. 21:17-19) This record of Hagar's experience can be taken by us as a lesson, that when there is no earthly ear to hear, nor heart to pity, the penitent and imploring prayer of a righteous person will be heard.—James 5:16

Angels Visit the Patriarchs

When Abraham was ninety-nine years of age, sitting at midday in the opening of his tent, he was surprised by the approach of three strangers with royal bearing, to whom he responded by advancing and bowing himself to the ground before them, and by offering them ample hospitality. (Gen. 18:1-10)

These strangers were angelic messengers, having materialized in human form for the purpose of their visit. They had come to announce to Sarah and Abraham that a child of divine intention should be born to them in their extreme old age.

Notwithstanding the teachings of science and the laws of nature, this strange angelic announcement stood fast. Never has any angel gone forth from the presence of the Most High to any nation, people, or person with uncertain tidings. The "word spoken by angels" is as sure as the utterance of the lips of God; and though thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers conspire to thwart its accomplishment, not one jot or tittle shall fail.—Heb. 2:2

This angelic group, however, was on a double mission. When their visit to Abraham and Sarah was ended, they went their way toward the doomed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. At eventide two angels, not three, entered the gates and stood before Lot, the only righteous man in all the city of Sodom.

At the break of the following day, those ministers of wrath to Sodom and Gomorrah, hastened to lead forth Lot and his family to be saved out of the two doomed cities. When they entered Zoar, several miles distant, there burst forth torrents of brimstone and fire; and the smoke of their swift destructive force rose over the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and all the surrounding plain.—Gen. 19:1-25

Another angelic manifestation to be found in the Scriptures involved Jacob fleeing from the wrath of Esau, his brother. It was at the close of day that Jacob, a weary and lonely fugitive in the midst of an open field with darkness only for a curtain and the

stars for his sentinels, came to a place, later called Bethel, to get some sleep.—Gen. 28:11

In his sleep he saw a ladder, reaching from earth to heaven, thronged with angels on errands of peace and blessing, serving between God's footstool and his throne. (Gen. 28:12) These messengers were not sent to a glamorous court, but to a lone wanderer. Here in picture and prophecy are depicted angel vigils over the weary and exposed pilgrims of earth. Again is brought to our minds the comforting assurance of our opening text that the "angel of the LORD encampeth round about them" that reverence him.—Ps. 34:7

Source of Comfort

These words of the psalmist are a source of comfort to the true Israel of God. Jesus said in Matthew 18:10, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Truly the angel of the Lord surrounds those that reverence him. They do not come and go simply in great and dire perils. They are never absent, but always on duty, fully armed and vigilant, ministering to the needs of God's people.

The angels formed a cloud of darkness between Israel and Pharaoh's pursuing hosts, acting as a wall of protection to God's people as they crossed the Red Sea. (Exod. 14:19,20) Concerning spiritual Israel, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14) The apostle also gave these words of warning to the Hebrews, "If the word spoken by angels was stedfast,

and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."—Heb. 2:2,3

In the light of these, and many correlative scriptures, it is a lack of trust to question or dispute that to the holy angels are committed important ministerial trusts. Their ministry is connected with bringing about salvation for the church, and restitution for the world spoken of by all of the Old Testament prophets, and by Christ and the apostles as well.

Daniel's Ministry

The inspired revelation of Daniel is quite interesting. His prophecies cover all the great governments of the world and include Jesus' First Advent, his crucifixion, and resurrection. Also included are the return of Christ at his Second Advent, the raising of the dead, the destruction of all that is evil, and the establishment of an everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace on the earth.

Much of Daniel's instruction came to him through an angel. Concerning a considerable portion of that which the prophet foresaw and made prophetic predictions, the angel Gabriel was his authority. (Dan. 8:16; 9:21) We have been given to know that the words spoken by angels to the prophets have stood, are standing, and will continue to stand fast until their fulfillment.

Daniel was a captive in a foreign land, but he was true to his people and to the God of his fathers. He resisted the fascinations and corruptions of court life, and challenged the admiration of his enemies

by the exalted purity and dignity of his character and conduct. God honored him as few men have been honored.—Dan. 10:10-14

The honors, however, bestowed upon Daniel by the Babylonian and Median kings awakened in the hearts of certain subordinate officials of the government the most cruel jealousy. By a wicked plot he was cast into a den of ferocious lions. A miracle was wrought on his behalf. Standing by Daniel's side throughout the night was a holy angel.

Then the voice of Darius the king was heard, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Then Daniel answered, "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me."—Dan. 6:20-22

Birth of John the Baptist

Angels played important roles in preparing for the birth of our Lord, and in the events of the Christ child. An angel was sent to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. Zacharias was overcome with fear at the presence of the angel visitor; but the angel said, "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."—Luke 1:13

Zacharias, however, knowing that both he and his wife Elisabeth were "well stricken in years" could scarcely accept such joyful tidings, though they came from the lips of an angel; and he said, "Whereby shall I know this?" (vs. 18) and the angel answered and said unto him, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak

unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed." (Luke 1:19,20) Instantly, Zacharias' priestly lips were sealed, and he remained speechless until the birth of John the Baptist and his circumcision at eight days old.—vss. 57-64

Ministry of Angels Toward Jesus

Likewise, the first announcement of the Savior's birth was made by an angel. The First Advent sermon was preached by an angel. The first redemption song ever sung to mortal ears burst in wondrous melody from a multitude of angel voices.—Luke 2:13-15

Later the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, who was told: "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word." (Matt. 2:13-15) Accordingly Joseph and Mary, in instant obedience to the divine command, took the child Jesus and set forth to go to Egypt.

Their heavenly guardian did not forget his trust. At the proper time, the angel again visited Joseph and Mary in Egypt at divine command, telling them to return to the land of Israel. (vss. 19-23) Thus the holy angels kept watch over the child Jesus. In this, how beautifully we see a fulfillment of these words, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands."—Ps. 91:11,12

At the age of thirty, the scene of the resistance by Jesus to the snares of the great Adversary was in the wilderness, away from the sight and sympathy of men. He was alone in the sense that up to then

he had no selected and announced ministry, no human companions, or followers. Yet he was not alone, for the guardian angels of heaven were close about him, subject to call as his holy bodyguard, his allies, swift and powerful ministers from the Father to his beloved Son. (Matt. 4:11) Throughout all of his earthly career they attended him day and night. Even after his death, it was an angel from heaven that rolled away the stone from the tomb of our Lord, signifying his resurrection by the mighty power of God.—Matt. 28:2

Upon the explanations and instructions given by an angel depends, largely, our hope of the Savior's return, the resurrection of the dead, and the reign of the Son of God on the throne of David. How certain it is that the same holy, powerful beings who gave attendance to the Savior all through his earthly career, and ministered to him in all his trials and sufferings, also constantly attend all his saints, even the poorest and weakest. They still serve as God's messengers of love and power to all who look with faith for his divine guidance and protection.

The angels guard the steps of God's people from danger, delivering them from the "snare of the fowler." (Ps. 91:3) These ministering spirits defend them against the assaults of demons; and assuage their sorrows. They provide for their necessities, and strengthen them for all of their toils and labors of love. Truly, the angel of the Lord encamps round about all those that reverence him.

Ministry to the Apostles

Angelic power, under divine command, is superior to physical law. Untouched, Peter's chains fell

off, and the huge iron gate seemingly opened of its own accord at the angel's approach. (Acts 12:6,7,10) Wherever God's presence is, angels are there to be found. If our Heavenly Father trusts them to manage weighty affairs of divine ministration, ought we not to accept with confidence the inspired assurance that all these are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" —Heb. 1:14

Apostle John was sent to Patmos for banishment and solitude. (Rev. 1:9) The Lord turned the exile of this faithful servant into an occasion for a most remarkable revelation of the divine purpose. Events covering the rise and fall of nations, and the progress and experience of the church thenceforth to its glorification and kingdom honors, were unfolded and seen by John through the ministry of angels. These revelations were intended for the enlightenment of the saints through the centuries to follow, including the last phases of human history under the order of the "present evil world," and the opening of the new order—the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."—Gal. 1:4; II Pet. 3:13

Angels Given Charge Over Us

We believe that God has been pleased to give his angels charge over us. (Ps. 91:11) This is not only for our protection from such evils as might otherwise befall us, but that God may endear us and them to each other, with greater resulting joy when we later meet in the kingdom of our Father. Meantime, while we may not worship angels, we may "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."—Col. 2:18; I Thess. 5:13; Rev. 19:10; 22:8,9

The time will come when "the voice of many angels round about the throne … and every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, … and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."—Rev. 5:11,13 ■

While Shepherds Watched

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shown around, And glory shown around.

"Fear not," said he; for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind,
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
To you and all mankind, To you and all mankind.

"To you, in David's town, this day
Is born, of David's line,
The Savior, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign, And this shall be the sign.

"The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid, and in a manger laid."

"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Goodwill henceforth from heaven to men
Begin, and never cease, Begin, and never cease!"

—Hymns of Dawn

The Christian's Invisible Enemy

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."
—I Peter 5:8,9

Is there a personal Devil, an enemy of God and of man? If so, who created him, and why does an all-powerful God of righteousness and love permit such a being to exist? Throughout the ages these questions have been pondered by sincere and thoughtful people. Many answers have been given. On the one hand, there is the view that the Devil is a hideous looking creature with cloven hoofs and a spiked tail whose chief business is to preside over the alleged torture of the unsaved dead. On the other hand, the claim is made that the Devil of the Bible is merely an evil principle, widespread and powerful in its opposition to God and to righteousness, but not a personality.

The Scriptures teach that there is a personal Devil, that he is of a higher order of creation than

man, and invisible to man. This powerful being was created perfect. God, through the Prophet Isaiah, refers to him as "Lucifer, son of the morning." (Isa. 14:12) He fell from his perfection and from his loyalty to the Creator when pride and ambition developed in his heart. Isaiah wrote further concerning him: "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."—vss. 13,14

Various names and titles are given to this fallen Lucifer in the Bible. He is referred to as "that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan." (Rev. 20:2) In John 12:31 he is described as "the prince of this world," and he is also thus depicted in John 14:30 and 16:11. In Ephesians 2:2 Satan is described as "the prince of the power of the air," and in II Corinthians 4:4 as "the god of this world." Our opening text refers to him as "your adversary the devil."

Through the various references given to us in the Bible concerning him we are able to gain a fairly comprehensive understanding of his many methods of attack against God's people. The first activity of Satan described in the Bible is recorded in Genesis 3:1-5. This is the account of the manner in which he deceived mother Eve. He asked Eve, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" She answered, "Of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, … lest ye die." However, Satan's reply was: "Ye shall not surely die."

God's Word Attacked

Here was an assault on the integrity of God's Word. This has been one of Satan's methods of attack against God and his people throughout the ages. In this first instance Eve was deceived, although Adam was not, yet he also sinned. (I Tim. 2:14) Since that time many have been deceived by Satan's lies, while a few in every age have remained steadfastly loyal to the Word of God. The importance of this on the part of God's people is emphasized in Isaiah 8:20, which reads: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, … there is no light in them."

It was not until the giving of the Law to the Israelites at Mount Sinai that the Word of God began to be made available in written form. Aside from this, however, in ancient times God spoke to his people largely through one or another of his holy angels. This continued until the First Advent of Jesus, when an angel announced his birth and declared it to be glad tidings of great joy to all people. (Luke 2:10,11) Meanwhile, the prophetic writings prior to Jesus' earthly ministry were added to the books of the Law. These inspired writings became a part of the written Word of God, that part which we now refer to as the Old Testament.

Throughout these "books" of the Old Testament rings the harmonious theme song of the Bible. This theme centers around the great kingdom plan of God to redeem and restore mankind to life—the life that was forfeited and "lost" when our first parents disobeyed divine law in the Garden of Eden. (Luke 19:10) In this melody of divine love there is presented the hope of a coming Messiah,

the Christ. It was this Christ whose birth was announced by the angel. By his birth, the plan of God had taken a step forward in development.

The New Testament Born

Without much delay the teachings of Jesus were recorded in the four Gospels. In due time there came also the historical book of Acts and the epistles of Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John, as well as the book of Revelation. Thus, the New Testament was added to the Old Testament to give us the complete Word of God. It is this vast storehouse of Truth that our Heavenly Father has used throughout the present age since Pentecost to nourish and strengthen his people as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. (II Cor. 5:17) How wonderfully the precious realities of God's plan refresh us as day by day we feed upon them.

Satan has always been on the alert to disparage the Word of God and to render it ineffective in the hearts and lives of those who receive it. A reference is made to one aspect of this effort in the Parable of the Sower, in which we are told that the seed sown is "the word of God." This refers not only to the Bible, but also to the glorious Gospel message of "the word of the kingdom" that is the main theme of the Bible. Concerning the seed sown by the wayside, we read, "Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."—Luke 8:11,12; Matt. 13:19

Here we find the Devil endeavoring to prevent the Word of God from taking root in the lives of people. Perhaps many of us have wondered why it is that so often, when we see someone beginning to

take a keen interest in the beauties of God's Word, that interest so quickly wanes. Jesus has given us the answer. In the case of Eve, Satan insisted that God's Word was not true, and now in the parable we see him snatching the Word from the hearts of the newly interested.

The Larger Picture

Satan, however, was not satisfied with the harm he could do by taking away the Word of God from the hearts of individuals who might be getting interested in it. As time went on, a much more ambitious scheme unfolded. Paul foretold that there would come a great "falling away" [Greek: defection] from the faith, and this started soon after the apostles died. (II Thess. 2:3) The "most holy faith" of the Scriptures was kept during the time of the apostles by their encouragement to adhere strictly to the Word of God. (Jude 1:20) Paul complimented the Bereans because they "searched the scriptures daily" to see if what he was telling them was true. (Acts 17:11) The insistence on scriptural support for every item of teaching was one of the basic safeguards of the Early Church.

Following the death of the apostles this situation began to change. The Bible was available then only in manuscript form, and copies were scarce. Many of the believers would have to depend on the knowledge that a few favored ones who possessed the Bible could impart to them. The idea soon developed that loyalty to the Word of God really meant loyalty to someone else's understanding of its teachings. This natural consequence of circumstances was quickly taken advantage of by Satan. As time

went on the tradition developed that while the Bible was the supreme authority, it could be interpreted properly only by the church and its leaders. This viewpoint is widely held even to this day.

Satan undoubtedly had much to do with this subtle setting aside of the real authority of the Scriptures over the beliefs and lives of God's professed people. The result was that human traditions and superstitions began slowly to replace the beautiful and inspiring teachings of the Bible. The Bible declares that "the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23) However, the church-appointed interpreters of the Bible said, "No; the wages of sin is eternal torment." The Bible says there is "one God." (I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 2:5) Yet, many Bible interpreters declared that there are three gods, and these three are one.

The Bible teaches that the future judgment "day" of the world will be "a thousand years" of blessed opportunity to accept Christ, to obey the laws of the Millennial kingdom and live forever. (Acts 17:31; II Pet. 3:8; Rev. 20:4,6) Some interpreters of the Bible say that the judgment day will be one of doom, that it will be twenty-four hours in length, and all who have died in unbelief will be consigned to a place of eternal torture in a fiery hell.

We could go on and discover that essentially every precious doctrine of God's plan became distorted by interpreters of the Bible. Yet it was so subtly accomplished that the majority supposed they were in harmony with the Scriptures. This did not matter to Satan, since his ruse had plucked from the hearts of professed Christians the glorious kingdom hope set forth in the inspired Word of God.

The Messianic Kingdom

The clear and unmistakable teachings of the Bible are that the promised kingdom of the Messiah would not be established until after his return at his Second Advent. (Luke 17:20; 19:11,12,15; II Thess. 2:1-3) Satan went to work on this scriptural teaching also. Playing upon the ambitions of the human heart, he succeeded in getting many believers to accept the notion that the kingdom of Christ did not have to wait for Christ's return, but was set up and functioning through a powerful church-state system that lasted for centuries.

Satan had tried something similar to this in one of his temptations of Jesus. He told the Master that if he would fall down and worship him, he would give him all the kingdoms of this world. Jesus met this temptation in the proper manner, quoting a Scripture: "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."—Matt. 4:8-10; Exod. 20:1-5; Deut. 6:13,14

While Satan failed with Jesus, he succeeded later with many of Jesus' professed followers. They saw the glamour of power and authority among men and sensed the lure of high-sounding titles. They gave up waiting for Christ to return to establish his kingdom and undertook to do it themselves. That which they reared up in their grasp for power they called "Christendom"—Christ's kingdom.

The fact that in this Christendom arrangement there was almost continuous war, persecution, and evil of every kind—all so contrary to the joyful conditions of Christ's true kingdom as presented to us in the Word of God—seemed to count for little or nothing in their claims to kingdom authority. They

chose to ignore the facts. While there were no real evidences of Christ's true kingdom having been established, they continued to be guided by the false interpretations of the Bible by which they were being deceived.

Kingdom Hope Lost

The substitution of Christendom for the true Messianic kingdom, in addition to reflecting a disregard for the teachings of the Word of God, also took away the hope of God's professed people for the real kingdom of promise. Once the church-state systems were established, the preaching of the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment at that time of the kingdom of promise almost entirely ceased. Thus, with this one master stroke Satan snatched from the hearts of most believers the great kingdom theme of the Scriptures. He did it by substituting misinterpretations of the Bible for the Bible itself.

The Bible teaches that the followers of the Master should look to each other for mutual help in their study of the Word. (I Thess. 4:18; 5:11) It would be a mistake to suppose that we, by deliberately isolating ourselves from others, could expect the Lord to specially guide us in the understanding of his Word. God has placed various servants, not to be considered "lords," in his church such as pastors, teachers, evangelists, and elders. (Eph. 4:11,12; I Pet. 5:1-3) He expects all of us to help one another as much as we can. However, in following this arrangement we should keep in mind that the Bible itself is the final word of authority. Even reasonable conclusions should be rejected

unless they are in harmony with the plain statements of the inspired Word of God.

Discouragement

Another method used by Satan to oppose God's people is discouragement. In II Corinthians 12:7-10 Paul speaks of one of his infirmities—often regarded as his poor eyesight—and says that it was a "messenger of Satan to buffet" him. Whether this infirmity was poor eyesight or something else, the important thing was Paul's recognition of the manner in which Satan was making use of it in an attempt to discourage him. Paul asked the Lord three times to remove this "thorn in the flesh," but the Lord replied, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Satan did not succeed in discouraging Paul, who testified, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasures in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Our theme text is related to this method of attack. The Devil, Peter says, goes about as a "roaring lion" seeking whom he may devour. The apostle says that we should resist this by being "stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." The lesson here seems clear. All of the Lord's people have afflictions of one sort or another, just as the world does—illnesses, deaths in the family, economic reverses, misunderstandings, and other burdens. Satan often endeavors to have us believe

that if we were truly the Lord's people, God would take care of us and prevent these situations from coming about. The Adversary tries to instill fear that perhaps we have been unfaithful, and because of this the Lord has withdrawn his favor from us.

Our defenses against this sort of attack are the many scriptures that reveal that the followers of the Master are a sacrificing and suffering people. There is no assurance that the Lord will protect us from the trials and difficulties that are experienced by mankind in general. Our attitude in these situations should be to cast all our care upon the Lord knowing that he cares for us, not according to the flesh, but as New Creatures in Christ Jesus.—Rom. 12:1; I Pet. 4:12,13; 5:7; I Cor. 10:13, *New English Translation*

Pride

James wrote, "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:5-7) Here James indicates that one of Satan's methods of attack is to engender pride and ambition in the hearts of the Lord's people. We are to resist this urge by humbling ourselves "under the mighty hand of God," knowing that our promised exaltation will come "in due time." (I Pet. 5:6) Genuine promotion that is in harmony with the divine will comes from God and is not self-planned.—Ps. 75:5-7

We could properly say that Satan is directly or indirectly associated with all influences that tend

to divert the Lord's people from their course of true faithfulness in serving the divine cause. We often speak of our enemies as being the world, the flesh, and the Devil, but it seems evident that Satan is at the head of this list. It is he who works to our spiritual disadvantage through the world and through our fallen flesh. How important it is therefore that we keep alert to detect his every approach. We should be prepared to resist him through a sincere use of the Word of God, through prayer, and by wearing all of the spiritual armor that has been provided to us.—Eph. 6:10-18

Enmity

Shortly after the fall of our first parents, God said to Satan: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15) Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees of his day, "Ye are of your father the devil." (John 8:44) Here, at least, was a part of the serpent's "seed." The seed of the woman is Christ and his footstep followers. (Gal. 3:16,27-29) The foretold enmity of the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman was manifested in the bitter persecution inflicted upon Jesus by the religious rulers of his day. This enmity has continued against his followers with varying degrees of intensity ever since.—John 15:20; II Tim. 3:12

However, we know that through it all, Christ, the seed of promise, will be victorious. We are not ignorant of Satan's devices. (II Cor. 2:11) We know that if we follow the Lord's instructions in our "good fight of faith" and rely always on him to guide and

strengthen us, we will neither be overcome nor foiled by the wiles of the Devil. (I Tim. 6:12) We have the promise of ultimate victory, for Paul wrote, "The God of peace shall bruise [Greek: crush completely] Satan under your feet shortly."—Rom. 16:20

This will be the promised bruising of the head of the serpent. The word "shortly" here used by Paul is an interesting one. He used it nearly two thousand years ago, and the serpent's head has not yet been crushed. He is still going about "as a roaring lion, … seeking whom he may devour." He and his ministers are still "transformed [Greek: disguised] into an angel of light" and "ministers of righteousness" to deceive and mislead. To resist them we still need to hold firmly to all the great fundamental teachings of the divine plan of the ages, as found in the Bible.—I Pet. 5:8; II Cor. 11:14,15; II Tim. 3:16,17, *The Emphatic Diaglott*

We have the plain and understandable teachings of the "gospel of Christ," which is the "power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1:16) Let us study these and bind them upon our hearts. (Prov. 7:1-3) Let us make sure that our understanding of the Scriptures is in harmony with the facts with which we are surrounded. Those in the Dark Ages who accepted the teaching that the union of church and state represented the established kingdom of Christ did not consider the facts. They did not consider that in the real kingdom of Christ wars and sickness of all kinds, as well as death, will be destroyed. (Isa. 25:6-9; Micah 4:1-4; Rev. 21:1-5) They did not consider the fact that the bitter persecution of fellow Christians was incompatible with God's portrait of the Messianic kingdom.

A faithful servant of the Lord admonished that we should not allow our expectations to weigh anything against the facts. This is indeed wholesome advice. We all want to see the Messianic kingdom in operation, but our desires alone will not make it so. The Scriptures are clear that if we want to be in that kingdom, living and reigning with Christ, we must continue to suffer with him faithfully even unto death. (Rev. 2:10) This is one of the great fundamentals of the plan of God. Let us be encouraged by it to remain in the narrow way of sacrifice until the end is reached in death. Thus will we be worthy by and by—and "shortly"—of bruising Satan under our feet, and together with Christ, of bringing eternal blessings to all the families and nations of the earth.—Gen. 22:18; 26:4; Acts 3:25 ■

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 Stanisława Kwiecińska, Warsaw, Poland—October 19. Age, 89

Sister Linda Peddemors, Sidney, OH—October 28. Age, 68

Sister Jadwiga Siedleczka, Krosno, Poland—October 29. Age, 86

Brother Lawrence Kirkham, Seattle, WA—November 1. Age, 96

"I Wish I Knew What To Do!"

How often we hear this statement made by those who are zealous for making known the glad tidings of the kingdom. May we suggest one thing that practically all can do is to send one or more *Dawn* gift subscriptions to their friends. Just think, one gift subscription means that *The Dawn* magazine enters the home twelve times during the year as your messenger of Truth. Isn't this something worthwhile doing? Each subscription is only $12.00, and you can have three names entered for just $30.00! It is simple to do when you use the coupon(s) below, and on the next page.

DAWN BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

PO Box 521167, Longwood, Florida 32752-1167

Dear Friends: I appreciate the privilege of proclaiming the Truth through *The Dawn* magazine. Please enter the following subscription, to begin with the January issue:

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

☐ New Subscription ☐ Renewal