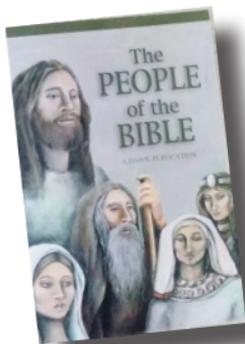


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Mankind's Destiny

“What is a human being, that you make so much of him; that you set your affections on him?”

—*Job 7:17,*

International

Standard Version

ALL OF THE CONFUSION, fear and perplexity found in the world today is good cause for many to ask numerous thought-provoking questions. What is man? Why is he here? What is his destiny? With the inability of many to obtain

satisfying answers to these questions, increasing numbers of people are reaching the conclusion that death is the end of human existence. They say, in effect, let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die, and that is the end. In addition, because of the breaking down of ethical and moral values, making merry today for many brings about ignoble and often tragic results.

In the words of our opening text, Job, a righteous man who revered God and turned away from evil, asked similar questions concerning man's purpose and destiny. He did so especially because of the fact that, although he had lived a righteous life, he experienced what seemed to be undeserved trials,

harm and loss. We could say that if anyone had a right to ask such questions, Job did.

“WHAT IS MAN?”

Later, the Psalmist David wrote, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.” (Ps. 8:3-6) Here David asked much the same questions as Job did, but with the additional knowledge imparted to him by God’s Holy Spirit, he provided the basics of the answer, which is key to our understanding of man’s eternal destiny.

David first acknowledges God as the Creator of all things, among these being the “heavens, ... the moon and the stars.” He then turns his attention to the creation of man, whom God made “a little lower than the angels.” We have only a limited knowledge concerning the angels, but the Bible assures us they exist, and that they are more intelligent and powerful than man, and in nearly every way superior to him. Even apart from scriptural evidence, it would be reasonable to suppose that man is not the highest order of being in all the Creator’s vast universe. To suppose otherwise would seem foolish to those who are not overburdened with the weight of their own importance. Imagine a human being, or even a scientist, peering through a telescope into the vast universe, which its powerful lenses bring within

the reach of one's breathtaking view, and then thinking, "I am the most intelligent, powerful and important of all beings that exist."

There is much discussion and debate among mankind's most knowledgeable scientists as to how the universe came into existence, and of the laws which govern the billions of heavenly bodies seen through their most powerful telescopes. Man continually updates his ideas as to how far the universe extends, and when its formation began. In his desire to pursue the answers to these questions, man has discovered that there are certain fixed laws which govern the universe, yet he does not know how or when these laws came into existence.

The scientist has learned that an atom is the smallest unit of ordinary matter that constitutes a chemical element, and that every solid, liquid and gas is composed of atoms. Man is even able to split the atom—but he cannot create one out of nothing. The fact that so many things exist of which we have little or no understanding, either as to how or when they were created, or how the laws which govern them were put into place, should be ample proof that somewhere in this universe there exists intelligence and power far superior to our own.

Starting from the foundation of belief in an all-knowing and powerful Creator, we find that David's answer to the question, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" is very revealing. "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and ... madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." Man was, in other words, created an earthly being, and given dominion over the earth, his home. David's answer is in agreement with the Bible account of

man's creation, in which we are told that man was commissioned to fill the earth, to subdue it, and to have dominion over everything upon it.—Gen. 1:27,28

The creative record also states that man was created in the image of God, and was thus set apart from the lower animals, having been given superior intelligence. (vs. 26) In view of this, one might well wonder why man today, despite his many attainments, has devolved into such a low state, and why he has so miserably failed in the governing of himself. The Bible also furnishes the answer to this question, for it reveals that man, early in his experience, disobeyed divine law and was condemned to death. Ever since that time man has been traveling over what the Scriptures describe as a “broad way” which leads to destruction. (Matt. 7:13) Throughout the ages, the end of each individual has been death, and now the possibility of destruction threatens the race as a whole.

However, while man indeed disobeyed the divine law, the Creator still loves him. In his love he has made a provision whereby the human race will be rescued from the terrible results of sin and selfishness. Millions have often quoted the beautiful words of John 3:16, but the story of God's loving purpose for man is not fully revealed unless we also include verse 17. This full statement of the Creator's eternal purpose reads, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”—John 3:16,17

Jesus, this only begotten son of the Heavenly Father, said that he would give his flesh, his humanity, for

the life of the world. (John 6:51) Paul speaks of this provision of divine love as a ransom, or corresponding price. He explains that Jesus gave himself “a ransom for all,” and assures us that this will be made known to all “in due time.” The apostle states in this same context that God desires “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”—I Tim. 2:3-6

Jesus took the sinner’s place in death, and thus provided a way of escape from condemnation and death. However, nearly two thousand years have passed since Jesus died to make it possible for the human race to live, and still death reigns throughout the earth. Paul reminds us of this situation, and quotes David’s statement that man was made a little lower than the angels, and given dominion over the earth. He then adds, “Now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”—Heb. 2:6-9

“We see Jesus.” That is, we see that he died as a part of God’s program for rescuing mankind from sin and death. This means that the divine plan of salvation is moving forward. However, the Bible reveals that before the “due time” would arrive for the benefits of the “ransom for all” to be fully testified to all people, another important feature of the divine purpose was to be carried out. This special aspect of God’s plan is the selection from the world of mankind of a “little flock” of those willing to follow Jesus in his footsteps of sacrifice, service and suffering, with the assurance that if they are faithful they will live and reign with him.—Luke 12:32; II Tim. 2:11,12

WORLD CONVERSION IN THE COMING KINGDOM

It has been believed by many Christians that when Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into all the world to preach the Gospel he wanted them to convert the world. The thought has been that this worldwide preaching would continue until the second coming of Christ, and that then all the unconverted would be consigned to either some form of eternal torment or, at a minimum, to eternal separation from God, and that the earth itself would then be burned up—ceasing to ever again exist. These suppositions have been based on the belief that it is only in this life that anyone has an opportunity to accept Christ, and through him gain life. The Bible, however, tells us that the conversion of the world will not be accomplished until the age of Christ's kingdom.—Acts 17:31; II Tim. 4:1

Jesus prophesied that in the age following his death and resurrection, the “gospel” would be preached worldwide as a witness, or testimony, to all people, but he did not indicate the purpose as being that of world conversion. (Matt. 24:14) During the present Gospel Age, the hearts of some have been reached by the message, and these have been called to sacrifice and suffer with Jesus. They are admonished to present themselves a “living sacrifice,” with the assurance that their sacrifice will be acceptable to God because of the cleansing power of Jesus' blood.—Rom. 12:1,2; I John 1:7

By faith these are invited to lay down their lives in sacrifice and service for the Lord. The world often sees no difference between their life and its associated experiences and that of others. However, the Heavenly Father knows the difference, and through

his Son has promised that those who are faithful in their present walk of sacrifice, even unto death, shall receive a “crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) These are also promised that they will be brought forth in “the first resurrection” to live and “reign with Christ.” (Rev. 20:4,6) Jesus encouraged all such, saying, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

Another misconception of the plan of God is that Christ established his kingdom at the beginning of the present age, and that with each new convert the kingdom expands. As we have just seen, the work of the present age has been the selection of those who will reign with Jesus when God’s kingdom, which millions continue to pray for, is established “in earth.” (Matt. 6:10) It will be through the reign of Christ that man, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, will be given a full opportunity to be restored to human life here on earth, and receive again that dominion which he also lost because of disobedience. As for the earth itself, the Bible assures us that “the earth abideth for ever,” and that God “created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited.”—Eccles. 1:4; Isa. 45:18

Thus, while Paul says, “we see not yet all things put under” man, we do see that the plan of God toward this end is progressing. We believe that the work of selecting those who will live and reign with Christ is nearing completion, because the chaotic conditions in the world today are undoubtedly those described in the Bible as taking place at the end of the age. (Zeph. 3:8,9; Matt. 24:21,22; II Pet. 3:11-13) This indicates that the Messianic kingdom is at the door, which in turn means that the

promised uplift of mankind from sin and death is soon to commence.

WORLD TO BE ENLIGHTENED

In a symbolic description of the kingdom, Micah wrote that “the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” (Micah 4:1-4) We understand that in this prophecy “Zion” symbolizes the heavenly phase of the Messianic kingdom, composed of Christ and his faithful followers exalted to heavenly glory. (Rev. 14:1) “Jerusalem” represents the visible, human phase of the kingdom, whose instructors and rulers will be made up of the ancient servants of God—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and many others—who proved their loyalty to him prior to the First Advent of Jesus.—Zech. 14:8,9,16-19; Ps. 45:16; Heb. 11:13,35-40

In Micah’s prophecy we are told that in Messiah’s kingdom the Lord “shall judge among many people.” This judgment will be based on full and accurate knowledge. In the New Testament we are informed that during this period of judgment the “books” of divine revelation will be opened for man’s learning. (Rev. 20:12) In Isaiah 26:9 we are informed that when the Lord’s judgments are in the earth, “the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness,” and in Psalm 96:13 we are told that God will judge the people with his truth. The result of this will be that the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth “as the waters cover the sea,” when all shall know the Lord, “from the least ... unto the greatest.”—Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:11

With the people fully enlightened concerning God and his will for them, they will have an unbiased and

fair opportunity to accept his loving provision through Christ, and upon this basis, continue to live. This great blessing of knowledge and opportunity will not be limited to the living generation when the work of judgment begins, for we are informed that then “the dead, small and great, [will] stand before God.” (Rev. 20:12) This does not mean that all the billions of the dead will be awakened from the sleep of death and be immediately judged at one moment in time, or in one literal twenty-four hour day. It is simply reminding us that throughout the thousand year “day” of the judgment and kingdom period, all who have ever lived upon the earth will come into remembrance before God, be brought back from the tomb, and that the books of divine instruction will be opened for all of them.

When those “books” are opened, mankind will learn that the great Creator of the universe is not a God of torment, nor that he has no interest in his human creation. They will learn, instead, that he is a God of love—a love so great that he gave his only begotten Son to die for them. They will then understand that they are receiving an opportunity of believing on him, obeying the laws of his kingdom, and upon the basis of this belief and obedience, of living forever on this fruitful and plenteous earth as perfect human beings.

Then the people will understand mankind’s destiny, and the answer to the questions raised by Job, David and so many others down through the ages. In the meantime, however, we see the manifestations of sin and selfishness throughout the earth more now than ever before. In Psalm 30:5 the whole period of sin and death is described as

a nighttime of weeping, but we are told that while “weeping may endure for a night, ... joy cometh in the morning.” The psalmist indicates that humanity’s nighttime of weeping has been due to the withdrawal of divine favor because of sin. This has caused a veil of darkness to settle down over the race which has blocked out human peace and happiness. The return of divine favor, however, will bring the promised joy “in the morning” of the kingdom day.

God will cause his face to shine once again upon mankind. This will dispel the darkness of the world’s night of weeping. The light of his countenance will refresh and bless all who accept the provisions of God’s grace in that daytime of divine favor, and who obey the righteous and just laws of the kingdom of Christ then operating throughout the earth.

Man has long groped through the darkness in an endeavor to find some words of comfort and assurance that out of all this confusion of uncertainty and affliction, sometime, somewhere, there will come a happy tomorrow. In so doing, many have laid hold upon the poisoned waters of error and superstition, the drinking of which, instead of refreshing their souls, has filled their minds with fear and foreboding which has often plagued them throughout their lives. Satan, the great deceiver, has always been ready to offer his noxious potions, but in the kingdom he will be bound and able to “deceive the nations no more.”—II Cor. 4:4; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 20:1-3

The return of God’s favor will result in what Peter described as “times of restitution of all things.” (Acts 3:20,21) The word “restitution” denotes restoration

to a former condition. During his earthly ministry Jesus said that he had come “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10) His First Advent prepared the way for actual restoration—the restitution which Peter said had been foretold by all God’s holy prophets. Each of the prophets contributes to the glorious melody of hope and inspiration which this divine purpose for man is bound to engender in the hearts of those who hear and believe. Summarized below is some of that prophetic testimony.

Moses recorded God’s promise to Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) David foretold the coming kingdom of righteousness and described the abundance of its blessings. (Ps. 72:1-20) Isaiah told of the time when death would be swallowed up in victory, and when God would wipe away tears from all faces. He also forecast that in the kingdom the people would build houses, and inhabit them, plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.—Isa. 25:6-9; 65:20-22

Jeremiah, another of God’s holy prophets, described the great change that will come about in human experience, assuring us that it no longer will be true that men and women will die because of inherited sins and weaknesses. He declared that the people will not then say, “The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” (Jer. 31:29) Ezekiel assured us that both Jews and Gentiles will be restored to life, returning to their former estate. (Ezek. 16:53-63) Daniel, likewise, emphasized the permanence of Christ’s kingdom, saying that those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.—Dan. 2:44; 12:2

The Prophet Hosea assured us that God will be a “plague” to death until its prisoners are released, and that death itself will be destroyed. (Hos. 13:14) Obadiah informed us that when the kingdom of God is operating in the earth, Saviors shall come up on mount Zion. (Obad. 1:21) Jesus is the great Savior of the people, and, as we have seen, associated with him will be those who have suffered and died with him during the present age.

In Malachi 4:2 we read that “the Sun of Righteousness” will rise with “healing in his wings.” What a beautiful illustration of the enlightening and healing powers of Christ’s kingdom! From the time these healing powers of “the Sun of Righteousness” begin to manifest themselves, those who respond will feel their restorative effects.

The work of the kingdom will continue for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:6) Not until the end of that age of healing sunshine will all the mists of darkness be scattered, and all the desert conditions of the past made fruitful and plenteous. (Isa. 35:1-10) It will require the entire “day” of Christ’s kingdom to enlighten, heal and bless all the previously dark corners of the earth and of human minds, hearts and bodies.

All who respond in belief and loving obedience will be blessed eternally as a result of the life-giving rays of “the Sun of Righteousness.” Then, the earth will have been cleansed from sin, and mankind’s eternal destiny will be to live in perfection forever upon this beautiful planet Earth. Thus it will be true again, as it was before sin entered the world, that God, our loving Creator and Heavenly Father, will “be all in all.”—I Cor. 15:22-28 ■

Seek First the Kingdom of God

Key Verse: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
—Matthew 6:33

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 6:25-34

AS WE CONSIDER TODAY’S lesson, we note that these words of Jesus were directed to his disciples, and not to the multitudes. Hence, they are especially for those who are striving to be followers of the Master. These have been called by the Heavenly Father, in harmony with the words found in Proverbs 23:26: “My son, give me thine heart, and

let thine eyes observe my ways.” Having made a vow of consecration, these called ones are instructed to daily seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, in response to his words, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”—Matt. 16:24

If we are striving to walk in the “narrow way” established by Jesus, following his example, it is of utmost importance that, as fully as possible, we realize what is implied in the words of our Key Verse, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God.” Here it is clearly indicated that by following the Master, we are also seeking to share with him in the glory, honor, and work of the coming kingdom of God, through which all mankind will be blessed and be given an opportunity to be recovered back to divine favor.

We seek “first” the kingdom of God by setting our primary

goals in life on eternal, heavenly things, and by putting aside to the greatest extent possible those of earthly matters. Paul states, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col. 3:2) The phrase “set your affection” in the original Greek text means to “exercise the mind.” Our minds, aims, and activities are to be transformed and set toward heavenly things, and “his righteousness.” “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”—Rom. 12:2

To set our affections chiefly upon earthly things, we may find great difficulty in avoiding the snares that go with them. However, this is not to be the mindset of those who desire with their whole heart to seek the Lord and his perfect will. This does not mean that we are not to love our spouse or children, or to appreciate the beauties of nature, but these can no longer be our chief treasure, and thus be in competition with our heavenly goals.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, ... But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” (Matt. 6:19,20) Delight, joy and comfort are all suggested by the thought of treasure. Our thoughts, hopes and plans will be centered to a large extent on where our “treasure” is. If centered in our Lord, our treasured joys and delights will be the incentive to energy, activity and perseverance in his service, and will inspire us to a daily way of life which is pleasing in his sight. As Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”—vs. 21

All who desire to seek God first in their lives do well to bear in mind that heavenly interests are to be given first priority; and that earthly matters, though certainly not to be ignored, are to be managed and controlled from the standpoint of one’s eternal spiritual welfare. May all such take to heart Jesus’ prayer on behalf of all his faithful followers: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”—John 17:15,16 ■

Jesus Calms a Storm

Key Verse: “*He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*”
—**Matthew 8:26**

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 8:23-27

concluded his teaching, Jesus directed that the boat be taken to the opposite shore. The twelve disciples accompanied him.—Matt. 8:18,23

As is the case even today, the Sea of Galilee is subject to sudden and intense storms and wind. As Jesus and his disciples made their way across the sea, a violent storm came upon them. Meanwhile, our Lord had been peacefully sleeping in the “hinder part of the ship.” (Mark 4:37,38; Matt. 8:24; Luke 8:22,23) Jesus was no doubt exhausted from the labors of his ministry during the preceding days. The storm continued to intensify, however, and the ship with its precious cargo began to sink. No wonder the disciples, many of whom were fishermen and very knowledgeable of the potential dangers associated with the Sea of Galilee, became very afraid. They rushed to Jesus, and “awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.”—Matt. 8:25

FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION of Jesus’ sermon on the mount, given especially for the benefit of his newly chosen apostles, the Master returned to Capernaum, which was located at the northwestern edge of the Sea of Galilee. In the afternoon of a busy day of performing miracles and teaching the multitudes, he entered a boat at the shore of the sea, continuing to preach. A while later, having

As noted in our Key Verse, Jesus arose, and after questioning the faith of the disciples, he commanded that the winds and sea be calm, and immediately the storm ceased. The disciples had witnessed many miracles which the Lord had performed during their time together, and had developed faith to some degree, but in this severe test, their faith wavered. Afterward, however, they marveled, and said, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”—Matt. 8:27

There is a precious lesson in this miracle for all of the Lord’s followers. We all have need of faith, but we must also have our faith tested. How suddenly the Adversary may cause a whirlwind of temptation, opposition or persecution to be brought against us. At times he may use the world as a source of these storms which test our faith, but they are really from him. (Eph. 2:2) On other occasions, Satan may use our own fleshly weaknesses to stir up within us storms of anger, passion or resentment.

Such experiences in the life of a Christian should not surprise us, for these are one of the chief means by which our faith is both tested and deepened. Thus, they are permitted for our eternal spiritual welfare. If, at times, we have been fearful and cried aloud, by and by we received comfort, with perhaps the gentle reprimand, “O ye of little faith.”

However, as lesson after lesson comes to us, the Master will expect—and we should expect of ourselves—greater faith, greater trust, greater peace, greater joy in the Lord, and greater confidence in his presence with us, and in his care over us. We learn to trust in him to deliver us from the wiles of the Adversary and from every evil thing, and to bring us eventually in safety to the port that we seek, which is the heavenly kingdom. (Rev. 3:12,21) How blessed are the words of the psalmist, who said concerning our Heavenly Father, “He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.”—Ps. 107:29

Two Miracles of Healing

Key Verse: *“Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.”*
—*Matthew 9:22*

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 9:18-26

mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.”—II Cor. 1:3; Eph. 2:4

Similar to our previous lesson, our present study illustrates the importance of faith, but adds to this the deep love and mercy of our pattern, Christ Jesus. Paul states that it is impossible to please God without faith, and in order to come to him, we must “believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb. 11:6) We must also have full belief and trust in his character, that he is “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”—James 1:17

Prior to the events that our Key Verse describes,

TRUE FAITH IN GOD consists of taking him at his word—that is, accepting and believing the revelation of his character and plan as provided in the Scriptures. Faith also includes implicit trust in the divine attributes of wisdom, justice, power and love. God’s love is often demonstrated in his great mercy. Paul wrote, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.” The apostle also spoke of “God, who is rich in

mention is made of a ruler of the synagogue, whose name was Jairus, who came to Jesus. (Matt. 9:18; Mark 5:22) Jairus' only daughter, who was twelve years old, was dying. (Luke 8:41,42) Although Jesus immediately arose, and followed him, Jairus' daughter died before they could reach his house.

Demonstrating great faith, however, Jairus said to Jesus, "My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." (Matt. 9:18) Jesus, along with his disciples, continued on toward the ruler's home. Upon their arrival, the Lord entered Jairus' house and told the people gathered there that the girl was not dead, "but sleepeth." He then "took her by the hand, and the maid arose." Jesus had awakened her out of the "sleep" of death, and Jairus' faith was rewarded. (vss. 19,23-26) This reference to death as a "sleep" points to a time when all who sleep in death shall be awakened. —Dan. 12:2; John 11:11-14,23-25; I Thess. 4:13,14

During the journey to Jairus' home, a woman who was diseased came behind Jesus and "touched the hem of his garment." She believed in his greatness and power to such an extent that she thought to herself, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." (Matt. 9:20,21) Upon feeling his garment, the thrill of life and strength immediately came into her body, and she was made whole "from that hour." Jesus turned to her and said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."—vs. 22

In the Luke account of this miracle, the record notes that when Jesus' garment was touched, he said, "Who touched me? ... for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." (Luke 8:45,46) This detail serves to illustrate the point which Paul later made, namely, that our Lord was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Heb. 4:15) As shown in the two miracles of our lesson, from Jordan to Calvary Jesus willingly and gladly responded to the needs of those about him, laying down his life in service and devotion to his Heavenly Father. ■

Walking upon the Water

Key Verse: *“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”*
—*Matthew 14:31*

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 14:22-33

OUR LESSON BEGINS WITH

Jesus instructing Peter and the other disciples to board a boat and cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee where he would meet them later. He had just fed the five thousand who followed him into the desert, and had sent them back to their homes. Now Jesus could be alone for a short while, and so he withdrew himself to a mountain to pray to his Heavenly Father. (Matt. 14:21-

23) Meanwhile, the boat in which the disciples were sailing was in the midst of the sea, and it was now dark. A strong wind had come up against them, and although they attempted to row to safety, they were unable to make progress.—vs. 24; John 6:18,19

As the night wore on, their difficulties continued. Then they saw a figure walking on the water toward them. They thought at first that it was a spirit, and they were full of fear, but Jesus then spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” (Matt. 14:26,27) Reassurance came to them through his words, so much so that Peter asked the Lord’s permission that he might walk to him on the water. Jesus granted the request, and Peter

left the boat, the record stating, “he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.”—vss. 28,29

Peter’s faith was stronger than the other disciples, and perhaps even stronger than ours might be today, given similar circumstances. Yet, as much faith as was required for Peter to even attempt to walk on the water, it was not strong enough. As he took his eyes off of Jesus, and caught a glimpse of the boisterous wind and the stormy sea, his faith wavered, and he began to sink. He cried out saying, “Lord, save me.” (vs. 30) The Master then caught him, and spoke the words from our Key Verse, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt.” The lesson having been given, Jesus and Peter entered the ship and joined the other disciples, and the wind immediately ceased. All of the disciples then offered the Lord their worship, realizing afresh that he was indeed the Son of God.—vss. 31-33

What lessons can we learn from this account, and what must be done to overcome a lack of faith as we go through the experiences of life, especially those that are of great difficulty? We answer first, that as the disciples of old requested of Jesus on one occasion, we should pray, “Lord, Increase our faith.” (Luke 17:5) Then, acting in harmony with such prayers, we should do our part in cultivating faith in our hearts, by regularly calling to mind the abundant precious promises of God as found in his Word.—Heb. 10:22,23; II Pet. 1:4; I John 2:24,25

Having made a covenant with the Heavenly Father, these promises are ours, and in our hearts and minds we should claim them in prayer and with thanksgiving. When trials, difficulties, perplexities, or the storms of life arise, we should think of, and hold fast to, God’s promises, remembering that they belong to those who love him and have given themselves in consecration to do his will. (Ps. 50:5; Mal. 3:17) Let us then resolve to trust the word of the Heavenly Father implicitly. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”—Rom. 8:28 ■

The Source of All Gifts

“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
—Romans 6:23

THE APOSTLE JAMES calls our attention to God being the great giver of gifts when he wrote, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is

from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17) Not only does every good and perfect gift come from the Heavenly Father, but all truly good things are from him. It is not a matter of receiving some of our blessings from God, and some from other sources. Paul wrote, “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” and on Mars’ hill he said that it is because of God that “we live, and move, and have our being.”—I Cor. 4:7; Acts 17:28

The material good things with which we are surrounded are gifts of God, as is the ability he has given us through our five senses to enjoy them. How wonderful is the daily portion of joys of which we are made conscious through the ability to touch, see, hear, taste and smell. Of little pleasure would be

the rose if we could neither see nor smell. The melodious harmony of music, whether produced by birds or by humans, would mean nothing if we could not hear. There would be only slight joy in eating if we could not taste.

Solomon wrote, "Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God." (Eccles. 5:19) It is noteworthy, that in making provision for our first parents in the Garden of Eden, Jehovah provided trees that not only would be good for food, but also "pleasant to the sight." (Gen. 2:9) It was God's desire that his human creatures enjoy his provisions for them, and thus he designed that every function of life should be a pleasure.

In Psalm 115:16 we read, "The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men." Despite man's rebellion against his Creator, he still receives bountifully from his hands. Jesus said that God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt. 5:45) The Heavenly Father is impartial in bestowing earthly blessings upon his creatures. It is man's sin and selfishness, as a result of Satan's evil influence, that have led to the inequalities and hardships which are everywhere apparent.

Christians who are walking in the way of sacrifice, following in the footsteps of Jesus, learn to accept with thankfulness what God provides along temporal lines, because they have faith to believe that divine wisdom knows what is best for them as New Creatures in Christ. (II Cor. 5:17) Paul wrote,

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: ... to be full and to be hungry.” (Phil. 4:11,12) If God permitted the great Apostle Paul to be hungry at times, we should not be surprised if he does not always make the bountiful earthly provision for us that we may think we need.

To Timothy, Paul wrote similar words, “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” (I Tim. 6:6,7) Job is an outstanding example of accepting the loss of earthly riches. In quick succession he lost his oxen, asses, sheep, camels, and his servants. Then word came to him that his sons and daughters were killed by a storm which demolished a house in which they were gathered. Job’s reply to these great calamities was, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:21) Blessed is the Christian who has faith to believe in times of temporal loss that God, for one’s best spiritual welfare, sometimes takes away as well as gives.

SPIRITUAL BOUNTIES

While we properly rejoice in, and are thankful for, all the good earthly gifts which come to us from the “Father of lights,” our chief interest should be in his spiritual gifts, which can be enjoyed only upon the basis of faith. Fundamental among these is the gift of salvation and the hope of eternal life. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the

gift of God,” and in our opening text he tells us that the “gift of God” is eternal life.

Salvation has been provided by God’s grace. It is his gift, as is the hope of eternal life. We accept these by faith. The gift of salvation was brought to man through Jesus, who said, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) Paul speaks of Jesus as God’s “unspeakable gift,” for which we should ever give thanks.—II Cor. 9:15

Jesus was given to be man’s Redeemer nearly two thousand years ago, yet comparatively few of earth’s billions since have really appreciated this gift. The vast majority do not yet know the full meaning of the angelic message, “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.”—Luke 2:10,11

If, through the understanding of God’s plan, we have grasped the depth of meaning contained in the angel’s announcement of Jesus’ birth, this too is the result of another gift from God. We read, “The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.” (Ps. 119:144) We may not have used these exact words, but it is certain that before our eyes were opened to see the beauties of God’s plan we prayed earnestly for understanding. The Lord heard our prayers and “inclined” unto us, as it is stated in Psalm 40:1.

We recall the case of Peter. Jesus had asked his disciples what the public thought of him—who did the people say he was? Some thought he was John the Baptist; some thought he was the promised

Elijah; others believed that he was Jeremiah raised from the dead, or one of the other prophets. “But whom say ye that I am?” Jesus asked his disciples. Peter replied, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Then Jesus said to Peter, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. 16:13-17

No amount of “flesh and blood”—that is, human reasoning—will enable us to understand the divine purposes. To his disciples Jesus said, “It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 13:11) Although “holy men” of old, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were recording many aspects of God’s plan as they centered in the Messiah, the Redeemer and Deliverer of mankind, neither they nor the angels were permitted to understand these truths. (Matt. 13:17; I Pet. 1:10-12; II Pet. 1:21) How grateful we should be for the gift of discernment that we have been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God!

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus said, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:13) God will give us of his Spirit—his holy influence—that we might be able to know and do his will! The ministry of the Holy Spirit which God gives to his consecrated people touches every aspect of our lives as New Creatures in Christ. It is a marvelous gift indeed!

By the Holy Spirit we are begotten to a new hope of life, even the divine nature. (II Pet. 1:4) God’s Spirit anoints, or authorizes, us to be ambassadors

for Christ, and, as ambassadors, to proclaim glad tidings to the meek and to bind up the broken-hearted. (Isa. 61:1) We are “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,” assured that if we remain faithful all our needs will be supplied, and that we will be given strength to remain faithful unto death, and thus receive the “crown of life.”—Eph. 1:13; Rev. 2:10

The Holy Spirit bears “witness” to us that we are the children of God, Paul wrote in Romans 8:16,17. This witness is given through the written Word which was “divinely inspired, ... so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work.” (II Tim. 3:16,17, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) “Thoroughly fitted”—how reassuring that through the gift of the Holy Spirit, everything we need as Christians is being supplied. We need only to be emptied of self that the Holy Spirit of God, in all its blessed ministrations, may fill and enrich our lives as we continue to set our affections on things above.—Col. 3:2

MINISTERING SPIRITS

The psalmist wrote, “He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” (Ps. 91:11) God is not limited in the number, or kind, of messengers he can use in the guidance, care and protection of his people. He can even make the “wrath of man” to praise him. (Ps. 76:10) Today the Heavenly Father may use a brother or a sister in Christ to impart to us a blessing we most need. Tomorrow, if we are willing and prepared, he may use us as a messenger to help someone else over a rough place in the narrow way.

We believe, also, that God uses the holy angels as “ministering spirits” to serve those “who shall be heirs of salvation.” (Heb. 1:13,14) These, also, are his gifts to us, and what precious gifts they are! Speaking of our guardian angels, Jesus said that they “always behold the face” of the Heavenly Father.—Matt. 18:10

David wrote, “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” (Ps. 34:7) How reassuring is the word “encampeth.” Our guardian angels do not just occasionally come near to see how we are getting along. Rather, they encamp around us. As they do, and as they “always behold the face” of our Heavenly Father, whenever a need arises they have immediate access to him, and from him have that need supplied. We cannot ask for more!

THE MINISTRY OF SORROW

We are not to suppose that these wonderful gifts of God imply that we will escape all trial and suffering. Quite to the contrary, for one of God’s gifts is the privilege of suffering with and for Christ. We read, “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” (Phil. 1:29) The value of this gift is at once recognized when we remember that it is only if we suffer with Christ that we will be counted worthy to reign with him.—Rom. 8:16,17; II Tim. 2:12

Suffering with Christ is quite different from the trials and burdens of life with which we were all more or less weighed down before coming to the Lord and being lavished upon with all his bounteous

gifts. This contrast is brought to our attention by Jesus, when he said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matt. 11:28-30

The Master has given us rest. The burden of care and worry with which we were once weighed down has been lifted. We have cast our burdens upon him, and he has given us peace in the assurance that God’s great plan of salvation is the solution for all the problems of the world. Our own perplexities, also, have been solved by accepting his will in place of our own imperfect and faltering plans. Jesus’ yoke and burden are light because he shares them with us. He with whom we have become yokefellows will never permit our burden to become too heavy, nor that we will ever be crushed under its weight. Since he is always near to help, we have the rest of faith in him.

We are not unaware of our enemies—the world, the flesh, and the Devil. When these enemies come in upon us “like a flood,” we would fear and quake before them, and probably fall, but for the realization that greater is he who is for us than all the forces which might be against us.—Isa. 59:19; Rom. 8:31

FUTURE GIFTS PROMISED

Not only have we been made rich by the bountiful gifts of God which now are our privilege to enjoy, but still there are more to follow. These future gifts will result in a fullness of joy quite beyond the ability of our finite minds to comprehend. It will be joint

participation with Christ in the joys which he attained when he was exalted to the presence and right hand of our Heavenly Father. Prophetically, the Master's anticipation of this future joy is described in Psalm 16:11, which reads, "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

This future gift was first bestowed upon Jesus by promise, and in prayer to his Father he said concerning his disciples, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them. ... Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."—John 17:22,24

After his resurrection and glorification, Jesus confirmed this hope of glory to his church in a series of promises recorded in Revelation, chapters two and three. This glory is so great, and involves so much, that no single symbolism or metaphor is adequate to convey to our minds the "things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (I Cor. 2:9) Indeed, even with the aid of all the illustrations and promises of God concerning our "hope of glory," we still can but partially comprehend, merely viewing them "through a glass, darkly."—Col. 1:27; I Cor. 13:12

Here are some of the promises to the faithful overcomers, those who gain the victory, not in their own strength, but through Christ. "Be thou faithful unto death," Jesus said, "and I will give thee a crown of life." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." "I will give him the

morning star.” “The same shall be clothed in white raiment.” “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.” “To him ... will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”—Rev. 2:10,17,26,28; 3:5,12,21

When Jesus was with his disciples, he knew of the Father’s plans for them to be associated with him in the future glory of the kingdom, so he made the promise, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32) Not only will the Heavenly Father bestow this gift of kingdom glory upon the overcomers, but it will be his “good pleasure” to do so. As we find joy in giving, so it will be a delight to God to give the kingdom to his faithful children. What will this gift of the kingdom mean? To Jesus, the Heavenly Father promised, “I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” (Ps. 2:8) As we have seen, Jesus promised the overcomers that they also would be given “power over the nations,” adding, “even as I received of my Father.”—Rev. 2:26,27

In another promise to the “little flock,” God said, “I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages: That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.” (Isa. 49:8,9) What a blessed prospect! Think what it will mean to be given the privilege, the authority, and the power to call forth the prisoners of death, and give them the opportunity of inheriting the lost dominion of earth, which was made desolate by sin and its penalty, death.

WHAT WE CAN GIVE

What can we do in return for all of God's gifts so lavishly bestowed upon us? In Proverbs 23:26, the Lord answers, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." From one standpoint it seems like a very simple thing to give our hearts, our affections, to God. However, that is all we have to give. Our bodies are imperfect and dying, and we could not give that which is under condemnation. All that we possess was given to us by the Lord in the first place.

We have been created with free will, however, and God will not commandeer our heart's desires and affections. He can have them and use them only if we willingly, and out of love, surrender them to him. The invitation, "Give me thine heart," is merely another way of expressing the thought of full surrender to God and the dedicating of ourselves to the doing of his will.

The temporal blessings of life are enjoyed by believers and unbelievers alike, but the spiritual gifts which are so precious to us become ours to enjoy only upon the basis of full surrender to the divine will. To give the Lord our hearts, while it begins with a definite commitment of consecration, requires a lifetime to complete. It means a daily surrendering to him of all that we hold dear. We may give our hearts to God today, and reserve them for ourselves or for others tomorrow. Consecration, however, is a daily laying down, and a daily giving up of our will.

In the foregoing verse, the Lord also says, "Let thine eyes observe my ways." Before we gave our hearts to God, we chose our own ways. We planned

our lives to suit our own best interests. Now, having given our hearts to the Lord, we are to observe his ways, and be guided by them. The Heavenly Father's ways are the ways of love, expressed in giving. He gives us food and clothing. He gives us his Holy Spirit. He gives us discernment. He gives us his Word. He gives us guardian angels. He gives us rest and peace. He gives us promises of coming glory and honor in the kingdom. He supplies all our needs, temporal and spiritual.—Phil. 4:19

The Father's crowning gift is his beloved Son, whom he gave to be the "propitiation [Greek: atonement] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (I John 2:1,2) This, and all of God's gifts, are made to those not in a position to repay. Nothing we can give to God would add to what he already possesses, nor by withholding can we make him poor. He gives, not for a reward, but because he loves. This is the great example set before us by the liberality of our God.

This is the way of God which we are bidden by him to observe. It is the way of unselfishness, the way of love. It is a love that impels to give, to lay down, to sacrifice, to serve, to bless, to comfort, and to cheer. It is in the doing of these things that God takes pleasure, and by observing and doing them ourselves we will find our greatest joys, and be most like God.

Paul quoted Jesus as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) It is more blessed because it is being like God. We are richly blessed by God's gifts to us, and by observing and practicing his ways of giving, his gifts become even more precious, because we share them with others.

None of God's gifts to us are meager. They are generous and bountiful, but the joy of receiving them is increased as we share them with those in need. This is particularly true with respect to the knowledge of God's plan which he has given us. If we keep this Truth to ourselves, it may become commonplace and lose its luster of importance. If we share it with others, however, its joy-inspiring power in our lives continually increases.

The world has its special occasions and seasons for giving. The giving that is inspired by these often brings the greatest blessing to the givers. Any occasion which prompts a manifestation of love toward another helps to keep burning the oftentimes low flickering light of love in human hearts. How much happier the world would be if the spirit of love and giving was the mainspring of life every day.

It is so with God. When his great plan of salvation is complete, and the whole world of mankind is fully restored to the sunshine of his love, the people will know that even during the dark night of sin and death God continued to give in order that they might eventually live. They will then know the real purpose of his greatest of all gifts, the gift of his beloved Son. If we observe his ways, we, too, will not limit our giving to any certain day, or days, but every day we will be gladly sharing with others the bounties of God's gifts to us. Thus will we continue to share in the pleasures of our generous and loving Heavenly Father, the source of all good and perfect gifts. ■

The Promised New Covenant

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins.”

—*Matthew 26:28,*
Revised Version

JESUS WAS IN THE “upper room” with his disciples the night before he was crucified when he asked them to drink of the “cup” which, he explained,

represented the “blood of the covenant,” spoken of in our opening text. (Mark 14:15) It was on this occasion also that he invited them to partake of the “bread,” saying that it symbolized his body, his flesh, which previously he had said he would give “for the life of the world.” (Matt. 26:26,27; John 6:51) The understanding of the “covenant” Jesus spoke of on this occasion, as well as other covenants detailed in the Bible, greatly enhances one’s appreciation of the divine purpose to reconcile the sin-cursed and dying human race to God.

The word covenant as used in our opening verse, and in many other places throughout the Bible, denotes an agreement or contract, of which God is the author. This meaning further suggests that a covenant has some connection to his eternal plans

and purposes for mankind—his creation. (Gen. 1:26,27) We need not look far to recognize that the human race has been out of “agreement” with God for thousands of years. In Hosea 6:7 (*Revised Version*) we read that mankind, like Adam, have “transgressed the covenant.” This indicates that a covenant existed between God and Adam—that they were in harmony with each other and would have continued so if Adam had not transgressed that covenant.

However, Adam did transgress. He broke the terms of that covenant, including the bond of friendship and fellowship which existed between himself and his Creator. God then invoked the penalty associated with breaking that covenant, which was death. “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen. 2:17) Alienated from God by reason of his sin, with the dying process commencing to work in him, Adam’s children were born imperfect. Thus, because of their imperfection they, too, came under condemnation. Not having God’s favor they could not continue to live, so, as Paul explained, all “in Adam” of necessity die.—I Cor. 15:22

Although death has continued to reign, God has indicated to some of the fallen race whom he has chosen to serve him that he has a plan to change the situation. He entered into a covenant with Abraham, promising that through his “seed” all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 22:16-18) This indicated that God had not abandoned his human creation. He implied that in his own due time they would be reconciled to him through this “seed” which he promised to Abraham would bless the people.

In the New Testament Paul calls our attention to a limiting factor in the downward course of the human race, saying that “death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” (Rom. 5:14) This is most revealing. Adam’s transgression was willful. He could have elected not to eat the forbidden fruit, but he chose the course of disobedience. However, the situation was not the same with his offspring. They were born in sin, hence under condemnation, without their being willfully responsible for their own position. Paul explained, death continued to reign, even though all were not, as Adam was, willful sinners.

THE LAW COVENANT

This universal and unchecked reign of sin continued only until Moses. Then there was a change. It was not a change sufficiently effective to prevent even a single member of the fallen race from dying. Nevertheless, by God’s design a deterrent against the ravages of sin was provided for the one small nation of Israel. It was a “law, and commandments,” which became the basis of a covenant into which Jehovah entered with that nation, with Moses serving as a mediator.—Exod. 24:12; Gal. 3:19

Israel’s covenant was an embodiment of God’s law, and therefore a standard of righteousness required by him on the part of all who would enjoy his favor, and who would desire to be at peace with him. Paul wrote that the Law was “spiritual,” meaning simply, that it came from God. (Rom. 7:12,14) It was ordained to be “unto life,” but, as the apostle explained, it was “found to be unto death.”—Rom. 7:10, *RV*

Under the leadership of faithful servants of God, the nation of Israel at times was fairly enthusiastic in their effort to keep the Law Covenant and enjoy the blessings which it provided. Doubtless in every generation there were individuals who endeavored earnestly to maintain their covenant relationship with God upon the basis of keeping the Law's requirements, but none could do so perfectly.

To keep the Law was beyond the ability of any member of the fallen race. God knew this, but he wanted the Israelites to try, for he wanted to demonstrate the need for the atoning blood of the Redeemer. Paul explained that the Law was therefore a "schoolmaster," to teach the necessity of looking to Christ and to the provision of his shed blood to provide redemption. (Gal. 3:24) Only a relatively few Israelites continued their efforts to keep that Law, and to learn the lesson which it taught. As a result, when Jesus came at his First Advent, most Jews did not accept him as their Messiah, the one to whom the Law, as a schoolmaster, had been pointing.

Despite the general inability of the people of Israel to gain peace with God and his promised blessings under the Law Covenant, they were not left without hope, for the Heavenly Father made a promise to them of a "New Covenant." This promise is recorded in Jeremiah 31:31-34. The promise of a New Covenant was given subsequent to the division of the nation into the northern, ten-tribe kingdom, and the southern, two-tribe kingdom. These two segments of Israelites are frequently referred to in the prophecies as "Israel" and "Judah." In making his promise of future blessings, God included them

all, stating that the New Covenant was to be made “with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.”—vs. 31

This New Covenant was not to be like the one the Lord made with the Israelites when he “took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake.” The Scriptures indicate that the essential difference between the two covenants would be in the fact that the latter, or New Covenant, would not be “written and engraven in stones,” as was the former Law Covenant. Rather, under the New Covenant, Jehovah would put his “law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. ... They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD.”—Jer. 31:32-34; II Cor. 3:7

THE BLOOD

God’s past and future covenant promises to Israel are examples of his even greater and all-encompassing purpose to re-establish his law in the hearts of all mankind and to reconcile the entire sin-cursed race to himself. From the beginning of human experience with sin, God began to show that the basis upon which man’s recovery would be accomplished is through the shedding of blood. For this reason he showed his favor to Abel by accepting the animal sacrifice which he offered.—Gen. 4:4; Heb. 11:4

The slaying of the Passover lamb in Egypt, and the sprinkling of its blood upon the lintels and doorposts of the Israelites’ houses, constituted

another picture emphasizing the necessity of the shedding of blood. In this instance, the firstborn of the nation were first saved, and the next morning all Israel was delivered from bondage, picturing the deliverance of all mankind from the thralldom of sin and death.—Exod. 12:1-13,40-42

Later, when the Law Covenant was made with the nation, there was again the shedding of blood. Moses and his assistants sacrificed burnt offerings, peace offerings, and oxen, collecting the blood in basins. Then, when the covenant was inaugurated, this blood was used to sprinkle both the book of the Law, and all the people.—Exod. 24:5-8; Heb. 9:19,20

Following the inauguration of the Law Covenant, the Tabernacle was set up and its services initiated, and again there was the shedding of blood. (Heb. 9:21) Important among these services were the yearly Day of Atonement ceremonies in which a bullock and a goat were slain. Their blood was taken into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and sprinkled on and before the mercy seat, to make reconciliation, first for Aaron and his house, and then for all the people.—Lev. 16:1-34

All of this shedding of blood, beginning with Abel and continuing in one ceremony or another to the coming of Jesus at his First Advent, pointed forward to his blood. Paul explains that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, but the blood of Jesus can. (Heb. 10:4) It is sin that has alienated the human race from God, and that sin must be atoned for, expiated, before the people can be reconciled to God, and before he can put his law “in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.”

The making of this New Covenant and the expiation of sin is the great objective of God's plan of reconciliation. Peter describes this grand purpose as the "restitution of all things," spoken by the mouth of all God's holy prophets. (Acts 3:20,21) How fitting, therefore, that Jesus should speak of his blood as being the "blood of the covenant." It is, indeed, the value of his sinless life, given up in sacrifice and represented by the life-giving virtue of blood, that will make possible the regaining of perfect human life by all of Adam's race during the coming Messianic kingdom.

MINISTERS OF THE COVENANT

There are certain texts of Scripture which, if interpreted apart from the general testimony of the Bible on this subject, might be thought to indicate that the promised New Covenant was inaugurated by Jesus at his First Advent, and that it has been gradually expanding since then as more and more believers come under its terms. In this we have much the same situation as that which exists respecting the Bible's testimony pertaining to the promised kingdom of Christ. Many have contended that the kingdom was established at Pentecost, whereas merely the selection and preparation of Jesus' associate rulers began there.

Jesus is the "KING OF KINGS" in his kingdom, but there will be 144,000 selected from the human race to reign with him. (Rev. 19:16; 14:1; 20:6) They will be both kings and priests. Jesus will also be the "mediator" of the New Covenant, the principal one in bringing about the reconciliation of the world to God. (I Tim. 2:5,6; Heb. 12:24) However,

those who reign with Jesus as kings will also be associated with him in the work of reconciliation. Paul speaks of these as “able ministers” of the New Covenant.—II Cor. 3:6

The work of the present Gospel Age has been the selection and preparation of these for the high position they will occupy with Jesus during the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom. Their training involves the necessity of sacrifice, of laying down life itself in proof of their fidelity to God and to the divine principles of righteousness which they will be called upon to establish in the minds and hearts of men.

These “able ministers,” of which Paul spoke, themselves enter into a covenant with God—not the foretold New Covenant, but a “covenant ... by sacrifice.” (Ps. 50:5) There is nothing said in connection with God’s promises of the New Covenant to indicate that those with whom it will be made will be called upon to sacrifice. The original Law Covenant promised bountiful earthly blessings to Israel. (Deut. 28:1-6) It will be the same with the New Covenant. It is a covenant of restoration, and those in whose hearts its laws become fully written, and lived by, will be perfect mentally, morally and physically, and will live forever as human beings.

SACRIFICE AND GLORY

We have noted that there was a certain preparatory work which preceded the inauguration of the Law Covenant. It was a work involving animal sacrifices and required only one or two days to complete. Preparation for the New Covenant, however, does not involve animal sacrifices, and is spread out over the present Gospel Age—approximately

two symbolic “days” of a thousand years each. (II Pet. 3:8) This sacrificial work of preparation for the New Covenant began with Jesus’ death at Calvary. His footstep followers, though having no merit of their own as far as the redemptive work is concerned, nevertheless, are invited to offer themselves in sacrifice, suffering and service. (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15,16; I Pet. 2:5) Thus they are counted as having a share in the development of a sympathetic “royal priesthood,” in preparation for the administration of the New Covenant.—Heb. 9:23; I Pet. 2:9

It is after this sacrificial work is completed that the New Covenant will be inaugurated. In II Corinthians 3:3, Paul speaks of the literal “tables of stone” and the laws which were written on them. He then explains that by the Spirit of God his law is now being written in the “fleshy tables” of our hearts. This suggests the manner in which we are prepared as “able ministers” of the New Covenant. At the institution of the Law Covenant, the tables of stone accompanied Moses when he came down from the mount. As his face was ablaze with the glory of God, so the promise is that those who are faithful in suffering and dying with Jesus, will appear with him in glory.—Exod. 34:29-35; Col. 3:4

The ministry of the Law Covenant was a “ministration of death,” because the people could not measure up to the requirements of the law that was “written and engraven in stones.” (II Cor. 3:7) However, the “ministration of the spirit” which is now writing God’s law in the “fleshy tables” of our hearts, preparing us to be ministers of the New Covenant, will result in the opportunity being given to all mankind of attaining everlasting life.—vs. 8

Paul then speaks of the comparative “glory” of the former Law Covenant arrangement with that of the coming New Covenant. “If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. ... Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.”—II Cor. 3:9-12

In the next chapter, Paul alludes to the “glory that excelleth,” describing it as “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” which is preceded by our present “light affliction” of sacrifice and suffering. (II Cor. 4:17) We have the afflictions now, while we lay down our lives in keeping with the “covenant by sacrifice” into which we have entered with God. The glory that excels, and which will accompany the inauguration of the New Covenant, is as yet but a hope. In Romans 8:24 Paul explains, “Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” These scriptures further emphasize the point that the glorious inauguration of the New Covenant is yet future, and that the preparatory work of sacrifice still continues.

“HOW MUCH MORE”

Paul explains that the “blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean” had a certain purifying effect, that it “sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.” Then he adds, however, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”—Heb. 9:13,14

We are being purged to serve the living God as ministers, or servants, of the New Covenant. “For this cause,” the apostle adds, “He [Christ] is the mediator of a new covenant.” (vs. 15, *RV*) He does not mediate between God and us to bring us into that covenant. Rather, he purges, or purifies, us that we may offer ourselves in acceptable sacrifice, and thus qualify to be associated with him, as members of his body, in the future ministration of the New Covenant.

While Jesus, the Head of the Christ class, finished his sacrifice, all of his body members have not. They are still being “planted together in the likeness of his death,” that they might “be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” (Rom. 6:5) The New Covenant cannot be in force until this aspect of the divine arrangement is finished.

GIVEN FOR A COVENANT

In Isaiah 42:1-7 we have a prophecy concerning Jesus, the chosen “servant” of Jehovah. In verse 6 we read, “I the Lord have called thee [Christ] in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people.” The thought is that through Jesus the promised New Covenant would be made with the people, and that he would be “given” in sacrifice as a surety for that covenant.

The Apostle Paul knew from another portion of Isaiah’s prophecy that Jesus would not be alone in this. In II Corinthians 6:1 he refers to our being co-laborers and beseeches us to receive not this “grace of God” in vain. Then in the next verse he quotes from Isaiah 49:8 concerning “a season acceptable” and a “day of salvation,” adding, “Behold! now

is a well-accepted season; behold! now is a day of salvation.”—*The Emphatic Diaglott*

Thus, the Apostle Paul identifies Isaiah 49:8 as applying to the footstep followers of Jesus. It reads, “In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.” In this prophecy a promise is made to the faithful followers of Jesus which is identical in meaning with the one made to Jesus in Isaiah 42:6. How clear it is from the combined testimony of Isaiah and Paul that the inauguration of the New Covenant must wait until these joint-sacrificers with Jesus have finished their course in death.

If we are to understand the lessons presented to us in the Book of Hebrews, we must realize that Paul places the church, not as being represented by the camp of Israel, but by the priesthood, the servants of God being prepared to assist in administering the New Covenant. Their preparation as ministers of the New Covenant is the work of the present Gospel Age. We are now fulfilling our covenant with the Lord by sacrifice, and at the same time being trained for the future work of glory as kings and priests with Christ Jesus, and as ministers of the New Covenant which will bring about the reconciliation of the world to God.

The entire scope of this work is suggested by Paul when he wrote that God was, through the work of Christ, “reconciling the world unto himself.” This is the great objective of God’s plan as it is centered in Christ. To us, Paul added, has been

committed “the word of reconciliation.” (II Cor. 5:18,19) It is upon this basis that we are “ambassadors for Christ.” Even in the development of the church class, the individuals being drawn to God and called into his service need to be reconciled to God, so we are commissioned to say to these, “Be ye reconciled to God.”—vs. 20

Thus, in the great economy of God, we are being prepared for the future work of reconciling the world through the arrangements of the New Covenant, by now serving what might be termed an apprenticeship. Thereby we are given the great privilege of demonstrating our complete harmony with the future work in which we hope to share, though, like Jesus, our present work is under conditions which call for sacrifice, suffering and faithfulness, even unto death.—Rev. 2:10

In his epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul indicates our relationship to, and development under, the original covenant God made with Abraham. In Galatians 3:17, he makes the important statement that the promises cited in God’s covenant with Abraham preceded the establishment of the Law Covenant by more than four hundred years, and of necessity, would also precede the promised New Covenant by a much longer span of time. The covenant made with Abraham, Paul said, calls for the development of a “seed,” which he identifies as Christ. (vs. 16) Then, later in the chapter, the apostle adds that if we are “in Christ Jesus,” and prove faithful in fully belonging to him, we will be counted as part of “Abraham’s seed,” and together with him, be “heirs according to the promise.”—vss. 26-29

We recall that Isaac was the long-promised natural seed of Abraham, and as such most assuredly pointed forward to Christ as the greater seed through which blessings will eventually come to all the families of the earth. In the next chapter of Galatians, however, Paul states that the church also is represented in Isaac. He says, “We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.” (Gal. 4:28) This means that Isaac, as Abraham’s natural seed, foreshadowed the greater “seed” class—Jesus and his church—as those who will be the instruments of blessing to mankind under the New Covenant arrangement. Through this covenant the blessings promised in the covenant with Abraham, will be made available not only to the “house of Israel,” and the “house of Judah,” but to “all the families of the earth.”—Gen. 22:18; 28:14

Surely, we can thank God for his “high calling” through Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:14) We recognize, as Paul did, that the attaining of such an honored position in his plan of salvation lies only in the conviction that “our sufficiency is of God,” and not of ourselves. (II Cor. 3:5) As he guided and directed the path trodden by his beloved Son, Jesus, and helped him, we know from the Heavenly Father’s promise that he will also help and preserve us, and together with Jesus give us a “covenant of the people.” (Isa. 42:6; 49:8) Then, under that New Covenant, all the willing and obedient of the world will be reconciled to God, come into heart harmony with him, and be restored to that original “at-one-ment” with the Creator enjoyed by Adam prior to the time when he transgressed the covenant. ■

Joseph and His Brethren

“Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.”
—Genesis 45:4,5

IN LAST MONTH’S ISSUE, we considered the first thirty years of Joseph’s most interesting life. After many varied experiences, Joseph had now been promoted by Pharaoh to oversee all affairs in the kingdom of Egypt. Under his leadership, the Egyptians stored enormous quantities of food during the foretold seven years of plenty. Then began the seven years of famine, which were felt not only throughout Egypt but in neighboring countries as well,

reaching even to Canaan, where Joseph’s father, brothers, and their families resided.—Gen. 41:28-44,57

While years had passed since Joseph had been sold into Egypt by his brothers, his father Jacob was still living. The whole family, however, was feeling

the effect of the famine. Jacob, having heard that there was corn in Egypt, said to his sons, "Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt."—Gen. 42:1-3

Jacob's youngest son, Benjamin, was not allowed to go with the others, in case, as the father explained, "peradventure mischief befall him." (vs. 4) Benjamin was very dear to his father, not only as his youngest son, but also because his beloved Rachel, Benjamin's mother, had died giving birth to him. With Joseph, his only other son by Rachel, supposed dead, Benjamin would be the last living tie the father had to link him with his cherished wife.

Thus the ten brothers proceeded to Egypt. Arriving there and making known their mission, it was necessary that they appear before Joseph, since only upon his word could corn be sold to anyone. They did not recognize this young Egyptian prince as their brother Joseph, but he recognized them. Joseph made a pretense of accusing them of being spies, which they fervently denied, explaining that they were all the sons of one man, and that they had two other brothers, one of whom "is not," and the other remained at home with their father.—vss. 5-13

Joseph, of course, knew that his brethren were not spies. However, he had decided on a way to discover whether or not they had acquired a change of heart since they had first thought to kill him because of their jealousy, and subsequently sold him as a slave. Joseph continued to insist that they were spies. However, he proposed that in order for them to prove the truthfulness of their story, he would

hold nine of them prisoners while one returned to Canaan to bring their brother Benjamin down to Egypt for him to see.

Joseph imprisoned his brothers for three days, after which he changed his ruling, deciding to keep only one of them, while the nine returned home with food. Simeon was the one chosen to remain a prisoner in Egypt until Benjamin was brought from Canaan. Confronted with these hardships, the brothers were reminded of the wrong they had done to Joseph, and their consciences pricked them. They discussed the matter among themselves, not realizing that the great ruler before whom they were appearing could understand their language, which undoubtedly was Hebrew. It was perhaps this evidence of their repentance which caused Joseph to relent and allow all but Simeon to return to Canaan.—vss. 15-24

He not only allowed the nine to return to Canaan and commanded that their sacks be filled with the corn for which they had paid, but also directed his servants to replace their money in each sack. Later, as one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, he discovered that his money was there also. They were all afraid, supposing that they would then be accused of theft.—vss. 25-28

Upon their arrival home they explained to their father, Jacob, what had occurred, and why Simeon was not with them, but he refused to allow them to take Benjamin into Egypt. He said, “My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.”—vs. 38

Here the word “grave” is a translation of the Hebrew word *sheol*, the only word in the Old Testament which is also translated “hell.” It is evident that Jacob expected to go to *sheol* when he died, which indicates clearly that *sheol*, the Old Testament hell, is not a place of torment but, as the Scriptures teach, the condition of death, from which there is to be a resurrection.

FAMINE CONTINUES

While Jacob was adamant that Benjamin must not be taken to Egypt, as the famine continued and the family’s food supply dwindled, something had to be done. He directed that his other sons make another trip to Egypt for food. Then Judah intervened and reaffirmed their situation, insisting that Egypt’s ruler really meant what he said about their brother Benjamin, and that it would be useless to return to Egypt for food unless they complied with his conditions.—Gen. 43:1-5

Finally, after Judah had promised faithfully to be personally responsible for Benjamin, Jacob relented. He instructed his sons to go to Egypt, and, with the thought of presenting as favorable an impression upon the ruler as possible, he said to them, “Take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man.”—vss. 11-13

While suggesting that his sons take every precaution and do all they could to win favor with Egypt's ruler, Jacob knew that only Jehovah could really protect them and Benjamin. He said, "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin." (vs. 14) The brethren did as instructed by their father, and in due time they arrived in Egypt and were presented to Joseph, whom they still did not know.

Joseph directed the ruler of his house to make ready, for he would have these Hebrews dine with him that day. Naturally, they at once became suspicious. Having themselves practiced treachery upon their brother, Joseph, they feared what might befall them. While Joseph was out, they approached the steward of his house and offered as full an explanation as possible concerning the money they had found in their sacks and told him that they had brought this money back with them, and more besides. Then the steward said, "Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them."—vss. 15-23

What more could he say to assure the men that the ruler had no evil intentions toward them! He had talked to them in their own language, speaking of their God, and the God of their father. We might gather from this that Joseph did not fail to witness to his Egyptian servants concerning Jehovah, the true God. Certainly, he had never hesitated to credit God for his ability to interpret dreams. All in Egypt who knew of Joseph's past realized that he was a Hebrew, and that the God he

worshiped was the God of the Hebrews, and therefore was the God of Jacob and of his sons, who had now come the second time to buy corn.

Finally, Joseph returned home, and it was time for dinner. He inquired after their father—if he was alive, and well. They assured him that he was, for which Joseph was glad. Seeing Benjamin again, he could not refrain from weeping for joy, but concealed himself in his “chamber” while doing so, for it was not yet time to reveal himself to his brethren.—Gen. 43:24-31

At last, they sat down to eat. Joseph sat alone, for it was considered an abomination for Egyptians to eat with Hebrews, and he still wanted his brothers to believe that he was an Egyptian. They marveled, though, that according to the directions of Joseph, they had been seated in accordance with their ages. How did this Egyptian know their ages, and why, as the account records, was Benjamin given five times as much as the others? They no doubt pondered these things in their hearts. Nevertheless, “they drank, and were merry.”—vss. 32-34

When the time came for his brothers to start on their homeward journey, Joseph commanded his steward to fill their sacks with corn, and again to replace the money they had paid, “every man’s money in his sack’s mouth.” In addition, the steward was instructed to put Joseph’s special silver cup in the mouth of Benjamin’s sack. The next morning they started for Canaan, and for home, happy in the thought, no doubt, of the joy they would soon bring to their aged father.—Gen. 44:1-3

However, a new trial was in store for them. Joseph directed his steward to overtake them and

accuse them of the theft of the silver cup. They were certain, of course, that they had not stolen the cup, and readily agreed that if the steward found it in any of their sacks, the one to whom the sack belonged should become the servant of the ruler and not return to Canaan.—vss. 4-10

Joseph's brethren were shocked to see that the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack. They "rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city." (vs. 13) It was a dark time for them, for now it seemed certain that Benjamin would be detained in Egypt, and they would have to return to Canaan and break the sad news to their father.

Judah, however, did not give up. Having promised his father that he would be personally responsible for the safe return of Benjamin, he pleaded with Joseph for his release. He explained all the circumstances to Joseph, and appealed to his sense of kindness and mercy by emphasizing that if Benjamin were retained in Egypt, it would probably break their father's heart. He said, "When I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave."—vss. 18-31

Then, explaining to Joseph that he had personally made himself responsible for Benjamin's safety, Judah offered to remain in Egypt as a prisoner in his place: "Let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father,

and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.”—Gen. 44:32-34

Joseph could endure no more. He was convinced now that his brethren had experienced a change of heart since they had sold him as a slave. He ordered all except his brothers to leave his presence. Then he said to them, “I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?”—Gen. 45:1-3

The record says that Joseph’s brethren were troubled in his presence. The *Rotherham Emphasized Bible* says they were “terrified,” and well they might be, from their standpoint. Here was the one whom they so grievously injured and supposed dead. Now he was before them as a powerful ruler in Egypt, and they were at his mercy.

From Joseph’s standpoint, however, there was no need to fear, because he had already forgiven them. He asked them to come near to him, and he repeated, as noted in our opening text, that he was their brother and that God had sent him to Egypt “to preserve life.” In the 7th and 8th verses, Joseph again stated that it was God who had overruled all these matters, the purpose being to “preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”

The Biblical account of Joseph and his brethren shows the marvelous manner in which Jehovah preserved the natural seed of Abraham. It is also an outstanding example of how the Heavenly Father is able to cause the wrath of men to praise him. If it be his will, God can protect his people against any and all attacks which might be made against them by their enemies.

In the New Testament, we see some interesting comparisons between the life of Jesus and that of Joseph. Driven to jealousy and hatred by their religious leaders, the Jewish nation put Jesus, a fellow Israelite, to death, even as Joseph's brethren endeavored to dispose of him.—Matt. 26:59; 27:1

From prison, Joseph was exalted to rulership, occupying the position of life-giver to his brethren, to the Egyptians, and to surrounding nations. Likewise Jesus, cast off by his brethren, and cast into the great prison house of death, was called forth and exalted to the right hand of God and will be life-giver to the whole world of mankind during the thousand years of his kingdom.—Acts 2:22-24; 3:13-26; Rev. 20:6

Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from the experiences of Joseph is the manner in which he received them. His faith in God never wavered. He never complained. While he had every reason to be resentful of his brothers and, when the opportunity came to punish them severely, he did not permit his heart to become bitter toward them. Instead, he was ready to forgive and to bless.

Joseph possessed a noble character, which was based upon his faith in God. He knew that the Lord's hand was overruling in his experiences. Thus, he had no reason to resent whatever God permitted, nor to be bitter against those who mistreated him. It is important for all the Lord's people thus to accept what they cannot change, and to realize that if the Heavenly Father wanted it otherwise, he is abundantly able to accomplish his purposes.

JACOB MOVES TO EGYPT

After revealing himself to his brethren, Joseph's next step was to send for his father and the remainder of the family. He explained to his brothers that there were to be five more years of famine, and that this move into Egypt was a necessity if their lives were to be saved. Pharaoh concurred in this, and the land of Goshen was set aside for the newcomers.—Gen. 45:6-16

Lavish arrangements were made for the return to Canaan for their father and their families. Changes of raiment were provided for the ten brothers, five changes of raiment for Benjamin. He also was given three hundred pieces of silver. Twenty asses were sent to the father, "laden with corn and bread and meat." Joseph said to his brothers, "See that ye fall not out by the way." Benjamin had been favored above the others, and Joseph did not want them to become jealous over him. He knew their weakness.—vss. 17-25

Jacob was overjoyed when he was finally convinced that his beloved son Joseph was still alive and was a ruler in Egypt. He accepted Joseph's invitation, and in due course the entire family arrived in Goshen. (vss. 26-28) The list of those who went to Egypt is given in chapter 46 of Genesis. The total, including the two sons born to Joseph in Egypt, was seventy. They were given a royal welcome, both by Joseph and by Pharaoh. There they "grew, and multiplied exceedingly."—Gen. 47:27

By now Jacob was very old. He called Joseph and obtained a promise from him that when he died his body would be taken back to Canaan for burial. Before his death he pronounced a blessing upon Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and upon

his deathbed he blessed all twelve of his sons. It was here that the Messianic promise of a coming ruler was made to the tribe of Judah.—Gen. 49:8-10

“When Jacob had finished this charge to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and joined his ancestors in death.” (Gen. 49:33, *New Living Translation*) In harmony with his request he was taken to Canaan for burial. There he was laid away in the cave of Machpelah, in the field which Abraham bought as a burial place for his wife Sarah and himself. It was also where Isaac, his wife Rebekah, and Jacob’s wife Leah were buried. (Gen. 23:1-20; 49:28-31) Jacob’s funeral procession was probably one of the greatest of all time, consisting of “all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father’s house: ... And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company.”—Gen. 50:7-9

After Jacob died, Joseph’s brethren again became apprehensive of what his attitude toward them might now be. When they spoke with him to find out, Joseph assured them that they had no cause for fear, explaining again that God had overruled all the circumstances of his life for his own good, and also for theirs. “Now therefore fear ye not,” he said. “I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.”—vs. 21

Joseph additionally assured his brothers that God would surely visit them in due time and restore them to the land which he had promised to Abraham. Being assured of this, he gave instructions that upon his death, his body should be embalmed, and when they would return to the land of promise,

it should be taken with them. (Gen. 50:24,25) Commenting on this, Paul wrote, “By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”—Heb. 11:22

Joseph was one hundred and ten years old when he died, having served as a ruler in Egypt for eighty years. (Gen. 50:22,26) His dreams in which he saw, in symbol, his father and his brothers bowing down to him had been marvelously fulfilled. However, he did not take advantage of the circumstances to punish them. He did not even remind them of his dreams. In exaltation, he remained humble and kind and was an instrument of blessing to his brethren, to the Egyptians, and to other nations. What a noble example for God’s people now to follow! ■

OBITUARIES

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

Brother John Grigalunas, Oswego, IL—April 9.
Age, 98

Sister Halina Szczecina, Swidnik, Poland—April 15.
Age, 83

Sister Virginia Wilson, Portland, OR—April 24.
Age, 93

Brother Shiva Kumar, Tumkur, India—April 26.
Age, 46

Sister Zofia Kozak, Lublin, Poland—April 29. Age, 90

Sister Gangamma, Bangalore, India—April 30. Age,
46

Brother Maria Anthony, Bangalore, India—May 4.
Age, 56

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

NEW BIBLE STUDENT

DawnBible: Kindly send me *Daily Manna/Songs in the Night* with vow and morning resolve. I am also keen to learn Dawn Hymns.

I will also appreciate if I can be receiving your monthly updates and *The Dawn* magazine. I am a new student who is willing to learn more.—Kenya

LESSONS HELPFUL

DawnBible: I am a Sunday school teacher. Your lessons are very helpful each week.—OH

TRUTH-UNCHANGED AND CONSISTENT

DawnBible: I am an ex JW of 46 years. By studying the history of the organization I found the real truth, unchanged, understandable and consistent!

Thank you for all you do in spreading the gospel of the kingdom!—MS

GLAD TIDINGS UNTO ALL PEOPLE

DawnBible: I appreciate the Dawn from years ago even until now. Knew many by their voices only via the tape service; and many others in person. The booklets have been helpful in giving out the glad tidings which shall be unto all people, Luke 2:10. May the Father send you blessings of sunshine, and may his church soon be completed. Lord bless.—IL

EL ALBA MAGAZINE

DawnBible: (*translated from Spanish*) Greetings, I wanted to thank you for the submission of the *El Alba* magazine, which I have been receiving very regularly.

The topics treated are very building and of high quality, to grow in the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth. Grace and peace.—FL

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

A. Fernets

Online Broadcast of Convention
Vancouver, BC June 12,13

R. Goodman

Online Broadcast of Convention
Delaware Valley, PA June 6

L. Griehs

Online Broadcast of Convention
Portland, OR June 19,20

K. Humphreys

Online Broadcast of Convention
Portland, OR June 19,20

S. Jeuck

Online Broadcast of Convention
Delaware Valley, PA June 6

B. Keith

Online Broadcast of Convention
Portland, OR June 19,20

T. Krupa

Online Broadcast of Convention
Vancouver, BC June 12,13

E. Kuenzli

Online Broadcast of Convention
Portland, OR June 19,20

T. Ruggirello

Online Broadcast of Convention
Portland, OR June 19,20

B. Siwak

Online Broadcast of Convention
Portland, OR June 19,20

In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. Psalm 31:1

THERE is nothing that puts the Christian at greater disadvantage in the presence of his foes than for him to let go, even temporarily, his grip upon the anchor of faith. Let him do so for a moment, and of necessity darkness begins to gather round him: he cannot see the brightness of his Father's face, for "without faith it is impossible to please God;" and while he grapples again for the anchor, the powers of darkness fiercely assail him with doubts and fears, based generally upon his human imperfections, which he should ever bear in mind are covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness. If we would have the peace of God reign in our hearts, we must never let go our anchor, "nor suffer Satan's deadliest strife to beat our courage down." The language of our hearts should always be, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him."—Daily Heavenly Manna, June 6

CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

Numerous conventions continue to be held via online broadcast. Please contact the brethren shown in the listing to find out the status of a convention, and also how you can attend an online broadcast if one is planned.

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 6—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Elbert. Phone: (732) 710-8754 or Email: obe3@com-cast.net

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 12,13—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact B. Smith. Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 19,20—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Wojcik. Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 3,4—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact B. Siwak. Phone: (306) 960-5526 or Email: bswk77@gmail.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 17-21—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 25,26—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact T. Malinowski. Phone: (616) 304-7691 or Email: malinowski.tjm@gmail.com

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JUNE 3—“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech, there are no words, their voice is not heard; but their melody extendeth through all the earth, and to the end of the world their words.”—Psalm 19:1-4 (Leeser) (Z. '95-121 Hymn 283)

JUNE 10—“Lord, teach us to pray.”—Luke 11:1 (Z. '95-213 Hymn 115)

JUNE 17—“Who may abide the day of His coming: and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire,...and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.”—Malachi 3:2,3 (Z. '96-45 Hymn 67)

JUNE 24—“If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Romans 8:17 (Z. '96-151 Hymn 13)

Trust and Wait

*When I cannot understand my Father's leading
And it seems but to be hard and cruel fate,
Still I hear that gentle whisper ever pleading,
God is working,*

God is faithful,

only wait.

“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.”—Exod. 14:13

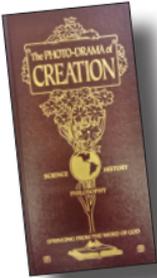
“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”—Psa. 27:14

—Songs of the Nightingale

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD

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

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

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

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 55

