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A Herald of Christ's Presence

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An Administration of Righteousness

“The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; ... he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.”
—Isaiah 11:2-4

A NEW ADMINISTRATION

will soon begin in Washington. Although there are still disputations in some states as to the results of the vote in November, it appears that none of these will change the outcome that Joseph Biden will be the next president of the United States. As is often the case, there is renewed hope among many people that the new president and his administration will be able to resolve some of the distressing problems blighting the peace and happiness of the nation, as well as bring together a country which is greatly divided politically, socially and economically.

Sixty-eight years ago, in January 1953, another noteworthy change of administration took place,

when Dwight Eisenhower took the reins of government, the first Republican to do so following twenty years of Democratic leadership under Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman. In his inaugural address, President Eisenhower sounded a completely different tone than we have become accustomed to hearing today. He was careful not to make definite promises, because he realized the task was too great to be handled by one man, or even by one political party. He also avoided placing the blame for the nation's problems on the opposing party, something nearly unheard of today. Below, we quote some brief excerpts from his inaugural address.

“In the swift rush of great events, we find ourselves groping to know the full sense and meaning of these times in which we live. In our quest of understanding, we beseech God’s guidance. We summon all our knowledge of the past and we scan all signs of the future. We bring all our wit and all our will to meet the question: How far have we come in man’s long pilgrimage from darkness toward the light? Are we nearing the light—a day of freedom and of peace for all mankind? Or are the shadows of another night closing in upon us? ... This trial comes at a moment when man’s power to achieve good or inflict evil surpasses the brightest hopes and the sharpest fears of all ages. We can turn rivers in their courses, level mountains to the plains. Oceans and land and sky are avenues for our colossal commerce. ... We have attained a summit unmatched in human history.”

The President then raised a sobering question as to how worthwhile this exalted place in the world might actually prove to be. Speaking of the dangers

facing the nation and the world, he continued: “Yet the promise of this life is imperiled by the very genius that has made it possible. Nations amass wealth. Labor sweats to create—and turns out devices to level not only mountains but also cities. Science seems ready to confer upon us, as its final gift, the power to erase human life from the planet.”

These were dramatic words, and they are particularly worthy of reflecting on in hindsight. We first note what seems to be a sincere reference to beseeching God’s guidance—a most admirable desire. Although today’s leaders on rare occasion will make reference to God, it is mostly but lip service, with no form nor substance to back it up. With great interest we also recall the sobering questions, “How far have we come in man’s long pilgrimage from darkness toward the light? Are we nearing the light? ... Or are the shadows of another night closing in upon us?” As we review the events of the ensuing decades, most would likely conclude that the world’s journey from darkness to light has progressed little, if any, since these words were uttered nearly seven decades ago.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

We need only to look back at the year just ended to see the depth of problems facing the incoming administration under President Biden. To state matters briefly, the year 2020 was defined by three overriding issues in the United States, all of which were deeply divisive. First, there was the COVID-19 pandemic, which hung as a shadow over every family and household for nearly the entire year, and continues even today. Second, and despite the pandemic, the summer months produced all manner

of demonstrations, riots and destruction in city after city, as protesters and counter-protesters gave evidence to the frustrations and the polarized attitudes of the populace. Third, the presidential campaign and subsequent election further served to widen these divisions, both between the candidates, as well as among the voting public.

Therefore, we ask: Will 2021 and the new administration under President Biden bring increased wisdom to deal with the myriad problems facing the country and the world? Will sincere and valiant attempts be made to heal the great political and social divides which plague the nation? Will the global pandemic subside, either through the availability of vaccines, or through other means? Will the new administration be prepared to deal with other challenges, perhaps unknown at the present time, but which may come to the forefront in the coming year?

HUMAN WISDOM UNSUCCESSFUL

In light of both present conditions and those of past decades, human wisdom's inability to solve the problems of the world is increasingly evident, though many of the noble minds among mankind have sincerely tried, and continue to do so. One of the greatest of all hindrances to real progress in these endeavors is human selfishness. In the breakdown of a social order which has occurred in our time, religious and moral restraints are being thrown off more than at any time in the past, allowing the selfish propensities of man to have free rein.

Self-interest, uncontrolled by ethical, moral, or religious standards, manifests itself in all levels of national and international affairs. In former times,

the common people would have felt a sense of shock at some of these things, but no more. In fact, among the masses in general, many now relish the “freedom” to do as they please, without regard for the lives and property of others, and with little or no consequences resulting from their actions. Under such conditions, it can hardly be suggested that the world is presently on the road to peace and happiness for all.

Human wisdom has no cure for selfishness. This malady, which is so potent in creating world disorder, can be dealt with only by divine power. Indeed, this is the real hope of the world today, for the very circumstances which have long baffled world leaders are clearly in fulfillment of Bible prophecies. These prophecies also assure us that we are living very near to the time when a new, righteous administration will begin governing world affairs.

This is the time foretold by the revelator, when the kingdoms of this world become “the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.” (Rev. 11:15-18) If our leaders could appreciate the fact that God is already directing the outcome of present world conditions, they would understand that the blessed results will not be brought about by a Democratic or Republican administration, but by his beloved Son, whom he has enthroned to be King of kings, and who is already shaking the kingdoms of this world in order that his own righteous government might rule in the hearts and lives of men.—Hag. 2:6,7; Heb. 12:25-28

PROPHETIC EVIDENCES

One of the prophecies we believe is descriptive of our day reads, “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the

archangel, and with the trump of God.” (I Thess. 4:16) In this highly symbolic statement, the Greek word here translated “shout” means an incitement to action. The thought is that Jesus’ return and subsequent invisible presence would be accompanied by this “shout,” or incitement of the people to action which had previously been suppressed by governments and religious institutions.

The forces set in motion by the prophetic statement that “knowledge shall be increased,” providentially timed for these last days, have brought about this “shout” on the part of the masses everywhere. (Dan. 12:4) As a result, a great tempest and storm, like the violent waves of the sea, has come upon the continents of the earth. To the onlooker who fails to see the prophetic meaning of this incitement of the people, it seems like some evil influence at work. Concerning it the Prophet Jeremiah wrote: “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.” (Jer. 25:32) Such is the symbolic language that the prophecies use to describe the events of our day.

In Paul’s prophecy, he also said that the Lord would return with the “voice of the archangel.” This connects the prophecy to Jude 1:9 and Daniel 12:1, where the archangel is identified by the name “Michael,” and where is provided the further explanation that when Michael “stands up,” there would be “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” Paul also states that the “trump of God” would be sounded in conjunction with Lord’s return. This symbolizes a message. It is God’s message pertaining to the fact that the time is close at

hand, even at the doors, when mankind will be brought under the control of his promised righteous government, centered in Christ.

Together with the restoration of life itself, that new age will witness the liberation of the people from economic, social, and other forms of distress under which so many now are in revolt. Thus we see that the “shout” of incitement and the “trumpet” sounds of a coming new order are closely related; and it is because, through the increase of knowledge, the nations have been hearing these proclamations that the prophetic “whirlwind” has been stirred up from the “coasts of the earth.”

The foretold “increase of knowledge” has indeed placed the world in a position to provide an abundance for all, and it has brought about blessings to many. Yet, it has also been a time of great fear, lest man use his knowledge for destructive rather than productive purposes. Thus is fulfilled Jesus’ prophecy concerning the time of his return, that men’s hearts would fail them for fear as they looked at the things coming upon the earth. (Luke 21:24-26) By contrast, David described the attitude of the Lord’s enlightened people at this time, saying that they should not fear, “though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”—Ps. 46:2

“Earth” is used here to symbolize a social order, and the “mountains” signify kingdoms or governments. The “sea” pictures the restless, discontented condition of the masses. How graphic is the picture, and how true to present conditions as recognized by all discerning minds. It is true, of course, that the masses do not yet know what the real change is

which is taking place. That is why, reiterating the sobering words posed by a United States president 68 years ago, many are frank to admit that they fear that a night darker than ever before is about to settle down over the earth. Beyond such fear, and the terrible eventualities to which present world conditions might lead, most see nothing else. That is why they are fearful, and wonder whether or not mankind has made its final steps of progress, and is now poised for its own destruction.

GOD HAS A PLAN

The prophecies of God's Word, which so accurately and graphically describe these conditions of our day and explain the divine purpose concerning them, also assure us of their glorious outcome. It is not without reason that the great leaders of earth, no matter how sincere they may be, are unable to calm the tempest and direct the international ship of state to a quiet haven of peace and safety.

Thankfully, these issues have been removed from human hands, except as God permits them to move and act in keeping with his designs. Human wisdom will not be able to establish lasting peace, but the King of kings will, although not until the storms, the whirlwind, the shouts of incitement, and earth's great time of trouble have fully shaken all aspects of present society, and taught the nations and the people that, apart from God, they cannot survive.

God not only has a plan, but he guarantees its success by his infinite wisdom and power. Jesus is the ruler in that plan, not elected by the people, but chosen by God. His enemies killed him when he was here on earth twenty centuries ago, but divine power

raised him from the dead. After his resurrection Jesus announced to his disciples, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”—Matt. 28:18

By the use of this God-given power, Jesus will have no difficulty in establishing divine control over the peoples of earth. Associated with him in that government will be his faithful followers who, throughout the age, have suffered and died with him. They, too, are raised from the dead in what the Scriptures describe as the “first resurrection.” This is in order that they may share with Jesus in his righteous administration.—Rev. 20:6

These will be the invisible rulers over the new social order upon the earth. They will have human representatives to assist in the work of governing the people. These will be the heroes of faith of past ages, those such as Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and many others, both men and women. (Heb. 11:1-40) These also will be raised from the dead before the new kingdom is ready to function for the liberation of the people from their bondage to sin and death. In all this, however, the most important consideration is that divine, miracle-working power guarantees the success of God’s plan for solving the present problems of the earth.

GOVERNED BY DIVINE WISDOM

All the associate rulers in God’s kingdom will be directly under the headship of Christ, and will be wholeheartedly in harmony with all the righteous principles by which he will judge and govern the people. Our opening text reminds us of some of these principles. “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,” we are told, “the spirit of wisdom and under-

standing, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” If we had no other assurance than this, we would know that Christ’s kingdom will be gloriously successful, and that it will victoriously fulfill all the gracious promises which the Creator has made concerning it.

Without questioning the sincere desires of many of earth’s leaders to find a solution for the dilemma of the people, there is no assurance that the Spirit of God rests upon them to give wisdom and sound judgment. They are governed, at best, by constitutions and principles developed by limited human wisdom. At the same time they labor under tremendous pressure from all sides, and often from expediency, deviate from what they might otherwise accept as guideposts to action.

How different it will be with the King of kings! He will be guided and empowered by the Spirit of God, the Heavenly Father. Christ’s spirit of reverence for the divine will and laws will prevail throughout the entire framework of his administration. He will not be under the necessity of placating various conflicting elements and divergent interests of those who will work with him in that divine government.

“He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.” In other words, earth’s new king will be able to read the hearts of men. He will know and understand their innermost thoughts, and, through his representatives, will deal with the people according to what they really are at heart, and not upon the basis of what they profess to be. We can only imagine what changes this will make in governmental administration!

“With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” The shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, which have resulted in such a tempest throughout the earth, are not designed merely to arouse the peoples of earth to a sense of their needs, and then not satisfy the heart hunger thus awakened. Under the rulership of this righteous king, the legitimate desires of all mankind will be satisfied.

The “poor” and the “meek” will then have someone to speak for them. David wrote concerning earth’s new ruler, “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.”—Ps. 72:12-14

“All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.” (Ps. 72:11) The great and mighty, as well as the meek and humble of earth, will recognize the virtues and qualifications of this new king. He will not pamper the rich and exploit the poor, nor will he exalt the poor and destroy the rich. All will be treated equally and impartially.

One of the symbolisms descriptive of the effect of Christ’s rulership pictures the valleys being exalted, and the hills made low. (Isa. 40:4; Luke 3:5) This indicates a just distribution of all the bounties of the earth, and a recognition of the fact that God has “made of one blood all nations.” (Acts 17:26) Therefore, from the divine standpoint, there will be no dukes and lords, neither will there be peasants and paupers, under the kingdom arrangement.

Beyond this, and even more wonderful, is the fact that this new administration will give health and life to the people—everlasting life. This is why God allowed Jesus’ enemies to put him to death. It is why Jesus voluntarily gave himself up to die, for it was the divine purpose that his rulership should not be over a dying race, but over one being restored to life. It was, therefore, necessary that first of all he should die to redeem mankind from death. Paul wrote that Jesus gave himself “a ransom for all,” and then added, “to be testified in due time.”—I Tim. 2:4-6

Jesus gave himself as a ransom at his First Advent. It will be during his Second Advent, or presence, that the glorious truth concerning this will be testified, or made known to all. All who, when they learn of this provision, accept God’s grace through Christ and obey the laws of that “government” which will then be upon “his shoulder,” will not need to die. (Isa. 9:6) They will be restored to perfection of being and live forever in happiness and peace upon the earth.

As for the immediate future under the new administration in Washington, we know not what may develop in America and throughout the world. We know from the prophecies, however, that only the Heavenly Father will be able to speak peace to the nations with an authority which will accomplish his eternal design. This he will do, in his own due time. Without doubt, we believe, that time is near. Therefore, let us continue to watch and pray and wait, knowing that ere long, there will be heard throughout the earth the divine command: “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”—Ps. 46:10,
Revised Version ■

Jesus' Commission to Preach

Key Verses: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”*
—Luke 4:18,19

Selected Scripture:
Luke 4:14-22

of the kingdom according to their opportunities and abilities.

Jesus declared of himself, “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12) He knew, however, that he would not personally

THE ANOINTING OF THE

Holy Spirit upon Jesus by God took place at the time of his baptism in the River Jordan, which symbolized his consecration to do the Father's will, even unto death. This anointing constituted the power, authority and privilege given to Jesus to preach the message of the Gospel. In our Key Verses, our Lord quotes from the prophecy of Isaiah, in which is detailed various aspects of the ministry which he would undertake during his First Advent. (Isa. 61:1,2) Those who seek to follow in Jesus' footsteps, and who have similarly dedicated their lives fully to God's service, also come under this anointing and, like their Master, have the privilege of preaching the Gospel

remain in the world, and that the work of God entrusted to him would be continued by his representatives and ambassadors. In Revelation 20:4 they are referred to as those who give up earthly hopes and ambitions “for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.” We are encouraged by the promise given to these: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

At the beginning of the Gospel Age, miracles were performed which demonstrated the power of God during the establishment of the Early Church. Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead, and the apostles did the same. After the apostles died, however, these miraculous works ceased, and the Lord’s people since have been called upon to walk entirely by faith. Nevertheless, they have continued to be witnesses of Jesus by faithfully proclaiming the Gospel, which Paul asserts, is “the power of God unto salvation.”—Rom. 1:16

As Christians, we continue to have the privilege of being witnesses for Jesus. We do so by proclaiming God’s marvelous plan for man’s salvation through the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus. We tell of his birth, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation to God’s “own right hand in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 1:18-23) We speak of the “first resurrection” hope of those who will live and reign with Christ. (Rev. 20:6) Finally, we proclaim the raising of all the dead and the restoration of the willing and obedient to perfect human life on the earth.—John 5:25; I Cor. 15:22

As children of God, and ambassadors of Christ, we rejoice that the anointing of the Holy Spirit has authorized us to be witnesses of Jesus. It is a great privilege to be thus used to explain the plan of God as it relates to those who are invited to be joint-heirs with Jesus in the spiritual phase of his kingdom, as well as to proclaim the glorious hope of the “restitution of all things” for mankind during the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom.—Rom. 8:16,17; Acts 3:20,21 ■

Called to Follow Jesus

Key Verse: *“Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.”*
—*Luke 5:10*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 5:1-11

asked them to launch again and cast out their nets. They caught so many fish that their nets began to break. (Luke 5:1-6) Jesus then addressed Simon Peter directly, as recorded in our Key Verse: “From henceforth thou shalt catch men.” Peter, James and John were already Jesus’ disciples in a general sense. Now, however, he was choosing them to be among his twelve apostles, who would be sent forth to spread the Gospel message abroad in the earth.—*Luke 6:12-16*

For Jesus’ twelve chosen apostles and also for us, being merely a hearer of the word is not sufficient. A lifelong inward work must take place within us as followers of the Master. “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil.2:13) We are to seek for an understanding of the doctrines and principles of God’s Word, and then build our faith structure upon the foundation which a knowledge of these divine truths affords.—*I Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20; II Tim. 2:19*

Peter describes this building process, first by reminding

us that we have been given “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.” He then identifies certain qualities which we are to add to our faith structure—virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. “If these things be in you, and abound,” Peter continues, “they make you that ye shall neither be barren [idle] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:4-11

If, by virtue of the promises of God, we are to attain the divine nature, it is necessary to give “all diligence.” Just as Jesus pointed out in the lesson given to Peter, James and John, we will not be able to divide our interests between the things of God and the things of the world. Paul wrote, “This one thing I do.” (Phil. 3:13) This is the only approach to the Christian life which will result in victory, and the only attitude of heart in which to be if God is to fulfill his promises to us. He knows about our temporal needs and has promised, through the words of his Son: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Matt. 6:33

What a blessed prospect is assured to us by God’s wonderful promises. Truly he has given us “good doctrine.” (Prov. 4:2) Let us, as did Peter, James and John, yield ourselves to his perfect will and way that we might be made ready for that blessed entrance into the kingdom, where we shall be “like him,” and “see him as he is.”—I John 3:2 ■

The Power to Forgive and Heal

Key Verse: *“I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.”*

—**Mark 2:11**

Selected Scripture:
Mark 2:1-12

THE EVENTS RECORDED

in today’s lesson took place in the early part of Jesus’ ministry, during which it is said that he visited towns “throughout all Galilee,” and even “in desert places.” (Mark 1:39-45) In these places he preached the message of God’s long-promised coming kingdom, which he proclaimed to be nigh at hand. (vs. 15) He

also healed the sick and infirmed, which resulted in great crowds following him wherever he went.

On the occasion of our lesson, Jesus had entered Capernaum, and while dwelling in a house there, a large crowd of people gathered, and he preached to them. (Mark 2:1,2) Among the multitude was a man, “sick of the palsy,” who was carried to Jesus on his bed by four people, in the hope that he might be healed.—vss. 3,4

Upon seeing the situation unfold before him, “Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” (vs. 5) A few scribes who were in the crowd, “reasoning in their hearts,” thought that Jesus had spoken blasphemy, believing that only God had the power to forgive sins. Jesus read their thoughts and responded to them by pointing out that to say, “Thy sins be forgiven thee,” was easier than saying,

“Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk,” because the latter would require visual confirmation that it had occurred. Thus, if he had the power to heal, he also had the power to forgive sins. (vss. 6-10) Jesus then immediately commanded the man to arise, take up his bed, and walk. “He arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all.”—vss. 11,12

Our Lord healed the sick to foreshadow the great work of his Millennial reign, to establish his authority as Israel’s Messiah, and to manifest his love and sympathy toward all. For the followers of Jesus, both then and now, there is additionally the lesson of faith. The stricken man, and those who brought him to Jesus, had faith that he would be healed to such a degree that they carefully lowered him on his bed from the roof into the house to be near Jesus. (vs. 4) Paul states the vital importance of faith very succinctly, saying, “without faith it is impossible” to please God.—Heb. 11:6

On another occasion Jesus gave an example of the importance of having a strong faith when he healed a woman who had been stricken with disease for twelve years. (Matt. 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48) In simple faith, she came to him. She was so assured of his power that even as the multitudes thronged around Jesus, she said, “If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.” Doing so, she was immediately cured, and Jesus knew that healing power had gone out from him. His words to her, “thy faith hath made thee whole,” show the close relationship between faith and healing.

Although the healing work of Jesus brought many blessings to those who, in faith, believed in his power and authority, these were only temporary blessings, benefitting but a few. The great work of the coming Messianic kingdom, however, will bring permanent healing of all diseases—physical, mental and moral—to all of mankind who, in faith, believe and obey from the heart God’s righteous laws.—Ps. 103:2-5 ■

Jesus' Prayer for His Disciples

Key Verses:
“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”
—John 17:20,21

Selected Scripture:
John 17:14-24

have loved you.” (John 13:34) Later, the Apostle John, recognizing the fact that Jesus had literally given up his life on behalf of others, expounded further on this “new commandment,” instructing us that “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (I John 3:16) In obedience to this commandment of love for the brethren, and under the directing influence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus’ footstep followers throughout the present age

DURING JESUS’ EARTHLY

ministry, he invited those who followed him to be his disciples, saying, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matt 16:24) To carry out these instructions requires that one give his all in service to God and, as Jesus’ disciple, to also undergo trials and testing. Those who faithfully follow the Lord’s footsteps in this regard can claim the promise, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”—II Tim. 2:12

The night before his death, Jesus said to his disciples, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I

have engaged in the work of laying down their lives in sacrifice and service for one another.—I John 4:7-11

After giving his disciples the “new commandment,” Jesus prayed for them. “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.” (John 17:9) Although Jesus’ petition was specifically on behalf of the eleven disciples who were with him at that time, our Key Verse shows that his prayer encompassed all of his faithful followers throughout the entire Gospel Age. He prayed for all of his present and future followers because he knew that difficult trials and hard experiences would come to all of them in due time. (Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:20; Rom. 8:16-18) Jesus prayed “not for the world,” because the work of the present age is not for the world’s conversion, which will come about when his Messianic kingdom is established.—Matt. 6:10

In his prayer, Jesus said that his footstep followers “are not of the world.” (John 17:16) He then petitioned his Father: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (vs. 17) In asking God to sanctify his disciples, Jesus was requesting of the Father that he provide all the experiences which would be necessary for his followers in order to set them apart from the world, and to make them holy. This sanctification work, we understand, does not mean perfection in every thought, word, or action in life, for that is not possible under present imperfect conditions. It does mean, however, the development of perfection of intent in the “meditation” of the heart.—Ps. 19:14

Through the words of his prayer, uttered nearly two-thousand years ago, Jesus exhorts us to have the same mind, desire and disposition as he had, and which allowed him to do the will of his Heavenly Father. This brings about our oneness with him, and with the Father—a oneness of purpose and love for God’s glorious plan of salvation for all mankind. “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”—John 17:21 ■

Peter's Pentecostal Sermon

Key Verse:
***“Therefore let all
the house of Israel
know assuredly,
that God hath
made that same
Jesus, whom ye
have crucified,
both Lord and
Christ.”***
—Acts 2:36

Selected Scripture:
Acts 2:14-36

cost, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter stood up before the people and spoke these words: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, ... being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, ... For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord [Jehovah] always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Greek: death, the grave], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life.”—Acts 2:22-28

We note in the above words Peter's reference to the prophecy of David found in Psalm 16:8-11. David, who spoke in the first person, was personifying in advance the confidence and faith of Jesus. As the greater David, Jesus had full faith that, if he proved faithful, he would

be raised from the dead, to continue the full and glorious accomplishment of God's plan of salvation. In this, Peter says, Jesus was able to say that his heart rejoiced, and his tongue was glad.

Peter continued his sermon, saying, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." (Acts 2:29) That is, this prophecy from the Psalms could not have referred to David himself, because his sepulchre still exists, and contains his corrupted remains. David, Peter further states, "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake [prophetically] of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell [the death state], neither his flesh did see corruption."—vss. 30,31

Moved by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter presents in our lesson a strong, logical argument, based on the words of the Prophet David. First, it was necessary that Jesus die as man's Redeemer, delivered fully into the death, or grave, condition. He would not, however, remain in death. Having been faithful, on the third day he was raised to life, no longer as a fleshly being, but as a glorious spirit being. It was the resurrected Jesus who testified, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, ... and have the keys of hell [the grave] and of death."—Rev. 1:18

Jesus died as man's Redeemer, and rose again by the mighty power of God, who glorified him to sit at his right hand. Nevertheless, he is not yet recognized as Lord of all. However, those who understand that he was indeed Christ, the Messiah, are greatly blessed to see, by faith, the eventual glorious outcome of the plan of God centered in the redemptive work of his dear Son. As a result of this work, all the families of the earth will be blessed.—I Cor. 15:20-26; Gen. 22:18

Our All in All

“Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”
—*I Corinthians 1:30*

AS WE BEGIN THE YEAR

2021, an honest examination and appraisal of ourselves are most surely in order. (II Cor. 13:5, *New American Standard Bible*) Such introspection will help us to keep before our minds the fact that as members of the fallen and sinful race of mankind, we have nothing of virtue or character by which we can commend ourselves to God. We cannot hope to be acceptable to him based on any righteousness of our own. (Rom. 3:10) This means that our sonship privileges in God’s family are possible only through the abundance of his grace whereby he can be “just, and the justifier” of those who come to him through Christ Jesus. (vs. 26) Salvation, and all the divine blessings accruing as a result, are ours because of the Heavenly Father’s love in giving his son, our “all in all,” to be our Redeemer.—John 3:16; Eph. 1:23

The value of salvation is appreciated most by those who, having a proper evaluation of their own fallen condition, realize their great need for it. (Ps. 34:18) Those who come to him in simple faith and full devotion may not only enjoy “peace with God”

through his divine favor, but have access also to the inner chambers of his grace, and there “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1,2) Such a “great salvation,” the apostle elsewhere explains, “began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”—Heb. 2:3

Jesus’ First Advent marked the opening of the age during which the high, or heavenly, calling was to operate. Not until he came and shed his blood as the Redeemer of both the church and the world would it have been possible for anyone to meet the conditions laid down for those who are called to glory, honor and immortality.—Rom. 2:7

CHRIST—OUR WISDOM

Christ was the first one to walk in the path that leads to immortality. Only through the merit of his ransom sacrifice, and by virtue of his counsel and example, is it possible for others to walk acceptably in the same “narrow way.” (Matt. 7:14) As our text states, Christ is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. In other words, he is everything to us, in order that we may be “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”—Rom. 8:17

One of the official titles the Scriptures give to Jesus is that of Counselor. (Isa. 9:6) A counselor is one who teaches and advises those who come to him for instruction. As such, he needs much in the way of wisdom to properly and effectively carry out his responsibilities. In Christ, we have both a wise and a perfect counselor, whose instruction to us comes directly from his Heavenly Father, the Creator and God of the universe. Thus, if we are to be truly wise

it is essential that we follow the instructions and leadership of Christ.

To receive and properly develop the wisdom that comes to us through Christ, we must first have reverence and devotion to his Father, Jehovah. “The fear [reverence] of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom.” (Prov. 9:10, *American Standard Version*) This quality of reverence for God is necessary from the very beginning of our approach to him. We recognize his greatness, perfection of holiness, and our own unrighteousness. This is the “beginning of wisdom,” for it implies a willingness and desire to put aside our own imperfect ways and to accept the perfect will of the God. Approaching God in this attitude of humility, we recognize the need for a Redeemer as a requisite step in the way of wisdom. We also come to understand that the Bible, God’s holy Word, is to be the guiding light of our lives in the development of wisdom.

Christ is the living Word of God, and thus a personification of divine wisdom, He was “made flesh, and dwelt among us,” being “full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) In the perfect example of his life, we have a pattern before us of the manner in which the wisdom of God is to take effect in our thoughts, words and actions. He is the “captain” [Greek: chief leader] of our salvation, who, in being himself guided by the words of God, has shown us the true meaning of those instructions as we seek to follow in his footsteps.—Heb. 2:9-11

WISDOM FROM ABOVE

The Apostle James gives us a comprehensive statement concerning “the wisdom that is from above.”

He says that it is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17) In these words we have a revealing example of how the various elements of heavenly wisdom are to operate in those who are fully devoted to the doing of God’s will. Much of earthly wisdom functions along lines contrary to the principles mentioned by James and is frequently rooted in pride and selfishness. Thus, it is often displayed at the expense of purity, peace, gentleness, and the other qualities mentioned by James.

How different, though, is the heavenly wisdom which is in harmony with the divine character of love. Christ wonderfully displayed all the qualities of heavenly wisdom as he went about in his Father’s service. He was “first pure,” or holy. He was this by nature, even as a child, having been born as a perfect human being. As a Jew, Jesus gave evidence of his moral and intellectual purity by his complete obedience to the Law given to Israel by God at Mount Sinai. He was pure also in his wholehearted devotion to the divine will from the time of his baptism at Jordan until his death on the cross. The Master’s absolute loyalty and dedication to the doing of his Father’s will are encapsulated in his unequivocal response to Satan following one of his temptations. Jesus said, “It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”—Matt. 4:10

WISDOM IS PEACEABLE

The Apostle Paul admonished that “if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” (Rom. 12:18) This beloved servant of God knew,

even as Jesus exemplified in his life, that putting purity first in the consecrated life means that we will not always be able to dwell in peace in the world and with the worldly-minded. To Jesus, living peaceably did not mean that he could yield to Satan's suggestions to compromise the divine Law. Neither was it his desire to avoid persecutions that might come upon him for the sake of "peace" with the hypocritical leaders of the day. Aside from this, however, in the case of both Jesus and Paul, they gave evidence of divine wisdom by living as peaceably as possible with their fellow man.

One of the prophetic titles given to Jesus is that of "The Prince of Peace." (Isa. 9:6) In his sermon on the mount, he proclaimed a blessing to the peacemakers. (Matt. 5:9) By his own example, the gracious words which fell from his consecrated lips promoted peace and goodwill among those of pure hearts who heard him. To others, the Master's words of peace stirred up enmity against him. In following Jesus' example, we may not be confronted with similar large and dramatic issues to test the purity and peaceable nature of our devotion to God, but the Master's loyalty to these principles associated with divine wisdom constitutes a perfect pattern for us.

GENTLENESS REQUIRED

Following the course of heavenly wisdom should lead us to develop gentleness of character. As we make progress in the narrow way, the rough tendencies of the flesh and the world should yield to refinement as well as gentleness of heart and disposition. Christ was pleasingly gentle, and he was so "easy to be intreated" that even little children were not leery

of his presence. (Matt. 19:13,14) Those who sought for the blessings he could bestow were given his consideration, even though they often succeeded only in touching the hem of his garment. The Master's gentleness and ease of approach was in keeping with his pure character and with the peace which he possessed.

In our desire for wisdom, and in our disposition to acquire it, we, like the Master, should be gentle. We should have an open heart toward those with whom we come in contact, and always be ready to extend the blessings of comfort and joy to all those willing to receive them. We note these words of Paul to the brethren at Thessalonica, in which his attitude of gentleness and entreaty are so beautifully shown: "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."—I Thess. 2:7,8

"MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS"

The wisdom which is from above rejoices in mercy. How beautifully Jesus exemplified this quality of the divine character, both in his teaching and in his manner of life. When he was asked how often one should forgive, he said, "Until seventy times seven" times, essentially indicating that there should be no limit to mercy and forgiveness. (Matt. 18:22) The quality of mercy serves to bypass nearly all friction and disputes that might otherwise rob followers of the Master of the fullness of joy that should be theirs. Whether in our individual lives, in our homes, or among our brethren in Christ, the mercy element

of heavenly wisdom serves to sweeten all of our experiences and to make us more like our Father in heaven.

The “good fruits” spoken of by James are the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. (Gal. 5:22,23) The proper ripening of this fruit, and its resulting display in our lives, will inevitably give sure evidence of the wisdom from above. To be full of good fruits, we must be emptied of self. Only thus can the Holy Spirit of God become the all-possessing power of our lives—the power and influence by which we can develop good fruit.

NO PARTIALITY

The Scriptures explain that “ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11) Therefore, to show partiality in our dealings with fellow members of the body of Christ would indicate a lack of wisdom from above. Just as God is no respecter of persons, so we who are trying to be like him must ever maintain his viewpoint, which is one of love that seeks to bestow blessings upon all. To be partial in our dealings with each other would be contrary to the course of heavenly wisdom, and the example set by Christ. Indeed, some of the disciples seemed to be more appreciated by the Master than others, and these were granted some additional privileges. His nearness to Peter, James and John is specifically indicated, perhaps because of their greater love and understanding of him. God is not a respecter of persons in any unjust way, yet he makes it plain in his Word that he draws especially near to those who draw near to him.—James 4:8

“WITHOUT HYPOCRISY”

The heavenly wisdom which we see exemplified in Christ is also “without hypocrisy.” It is so pure, peaceable, gentle, merciful and impartial toward all, that there is no room for hypocrisy to gain a foothold. To be properly guided by heavenly wisdom we must be out of harmony and sympathy with all that is sinful. To avoid hypocrisy, however, this must be the case not merely outwardly, but also in our hearts and in our thoughts. Being “without hypocrisy” also means to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only.”—James 1:22

When analyzing the wisdom which is from above, we find that in the life of Jesus we have a perfect example to follow as we walk in the narrow way. Not only, therefore, does the beginning of wisdom lead us to Christ as our Redeemer, but we find wisdom’s perfection manifested in his every word and deed, which, by God’s grace, we are striving to copy in our own lives.—John 13:15; I Cor. 1:24; I Pet. 2:21

CHRIST—OUR JUSTIFICATION

In addition to being our wisdom, the apostle explains that Christ is also our righteousness. The word “righteousness” is translated from a Greek word meaning “equity” or “justification.” (*Strong’s Greek Dictionary*) Various forms of the same Greek word are used in the New Testament, and are translated “justified,” “justification,” and “righteousness.” Considering the meaning of the Greek word used in our text as equity, or justification, we get a comprehensive view of what Christ means to us in connection with our relationship to the Heavenly Father and our hope of life. (Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31) Christ is our “equity” in the sense that the value of his ransom sacrifice is sufficient to redeem us from Adamic sin. By faith in Jesus’ ransom offering and full consecration of ourselves to the doing of the Heavenly Father’s will, we become “justified” in God’s sight, and he counts us as righteous. Thus, we are permitted to enjoy the privileges of fellowship and partnership with the Father and with his Son.

When we say that Christ’s righteousness makes up for our deficiencies, it does not mean we are free from sin literally, but only in a reckoned sense. As long as we are in the flesh, we cannot hope to reach the high standard of perfection displayed in the holy and undefiled Jesus. Yet, we should strive each day toward this end. He is our example of righteousness, our pattern and guide, to show us the upright way in all matters of life. We should daily wage an aggressive warfare to control our thoughts, words, and deeds, to bring them into harmony with the will of God, as exemplified by the example of Christ.—II Cor. 10:4,5

Knowing that Christ is our righteousness should serve to remind us throughout our earthly pilgrimage of our true position before God. We have been rescued from the pit of sin and death by divine grace, and the solid rock upon which we have been set, and now stand, is Christ Jesus. (Ps. 40:2; Matt. 16:16-18; I Cor. 3:11) Our continued relationship with the Heavenly Father as his children depends upon our standing firm upon the rock of Christ’s righteousness to the end of the way.—I Cor. 15:57

CHRIST—OUR SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification signifies holiness, or the setting apart to holy service. The meaning of sanctification from the divine standpoint is beautifully illustrated by the inscription on a gold plate which was affixed to the mitre worn by Israel's high priest, which read, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." (Exod. 28:36,37) This designated the high priest as one who had been specially set apart to serve God in the holy ceremonies of the Tabernacle, including the offering of sacrifice.

In the consecration service by which Israel's priests were dedicated to carry out the office of the priesthood, a portion of the blood from the ram of consecration was placed upon the tip of the right ear, the right thumb, and the great toe of the right foot of the priests. (Lev. 8:22-24) This indicated the comprehensiveness of their consecration. In the case of those who follow the Master, it serves as a fitting picture that all of our life's powers are to be dedicated—sanctified for use in the divine service.

As the blood was put upon the thumb of the right hand, so our actions should be that of service to the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren. The blood being put upon the great toe of the priest's right foot fittingly symbolizes our walk of faith in the footsteps of the Master. As the blood was placed upon the right ear of the priest, our hearing is to be one of faith, in which we "hearken unto the voice of the LORD," that we may know and do his will. (Deut. 30:10) If our consecration is complete, if our devotion is whole-hearted, we will not pay attention to suggestions of any kind which may turn us aside from our sanctified service to God.

The work of sanctification is not a momentary one. Indeed, there is a moment in which one gives himself in consecration to do God's will. However, the carrying out of that consecration, the living of a life set apart to the holy service of God, is the work of a lifetime. Daily we should study the Word of God, and look "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." (Heb 12:2) Daily we should strive to set aside the ways of the flesh and have the Spirit of God fill our hearts. In all of these things Christ is our sanctification, because the fullness of his zeal and devotion to God is set before us as a perfect standard and example to be followed.

Jesus, praying on behalf of his church, asked that they be sanctified by "the word of truth." (John 17:17) This statement points out to us that ignorance and error do not sanctify. Our study of God's Word should, therefore, be sincere, and in the spirit of humility, that we may glean from its pages that which will assist us in the lifelong work of sanctification in which we are engaged.

CHRIST—OUR DELIVERANCE

Christ is also made unto us "redemption," says the apostle. The word redemption is here used in the sense of deliverance, which is the end result of the completed redemptive work in each faithful footstep follower of the Master. The thought is that of our full victory through Christ, and the attainment of a position of glory with him in the Messianic kingdom. If this ultimate and full deliverance is to be realized, we also understand that there will also be intermediate and incidental deliverances of the faithful along the narrow way. Christ is made

unto us deliverance, both in our daily experiences of trial and testing, as well as in our final deliverance, when he “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” —Phil. 3:21

The redemption, or deliverance, which is in Christ Jesus, both as it applies to our present experiences and also to our ultimate deliverance into the kingdom, is based fully upon the sacrifice he made on our behalf. In connection with that sacrifice, Jesus was severely tempted, tested and tried, and the apostle explains that by reason of this, he can help us when we pass through difficult experiences, which otherwise might overpower us.—Heb. 2:17,18

Because Christ is dealing with us as a faithful and sympathetic high priest, we have the promise, “God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tried beyond your ability; but with the trial, will also direct the issue, that you may be able to bear it.” (I Cor. 10:13, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) Thus, in all experiences, God will both help us and deliver us according to his direction.

Let us, through all of our daily experiences in the narrow way, learn to put our trust more fully in him who is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. By so doing, we will finally experience that great and ultimate deliverance into the kingdom. This grand hope is especially meaningful today because the signs around us in the world indicate that the entire church will soon be complete and united with her Lord. Then, the great work of the kingdom can commence, which will bring the blessings of health, life and peace to all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:18; 28:14 ■

The Christian's Priority

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

SETTING PRIORITIES IS

generally recognized as being a sound practice to follow in life. To be successful in business, for example, it is essential that the primary needs of the business be given priority over personal likes and conveniences. The same is true in every walk of life, whether in the home, in society, in family relationships, and in those between employer and employee.

Seeking the kingdom of God is a full-time, all-absorbing priority which, as Jesus states in our opening text, should be “first” in importance for all footstep followers of Christ. Seeking God’s kingdom, for the Christian, refers to a daily, determined effort to be found worthy of joint heirship with Jesus, to reign with him as kings and priests in the promised kingdom of God which will bless all the families of the earth. (Rom. 8:17; Rev. 20:6; Gen. 28:14; Matt. 6:10) Only a few will attain to such a

high position, and these are addressed by Jesus as a “little flock.”—Luke 12:32

There is nothing any of us could do of ourselves to earn such a royal position. On the other hand, the Lord offers us the opportunity to demonstrate our love and loyalty to him through daily, faithful devotion to his cause. This seems like a simple test of worthiness, but when we endeavor actually to carry out the terms of our discipleship they are found to be very exacting. This, no doubt, has much to do with why this class is referred to as a “little flock.”

“ARE YE ABLE”

Jesus’ disciples believed that he had been sent by God to be the Messiah of promise. They expected that he would set up a righteous government in Judea that would extend its domain to the whole world. They were doubtless greatly inspired by all his wonderful teachings pertaining to the kingdom, although they did not understand much that he said. However, they grasped the idea, and rightly so, that he was offering them the opportunity to share with him in the work of his kingdom.

This is why they disputed among themselves as to which of them would be greatest in the kingdom. It was for this reason, also, that two of the disciples made the request to sit on Jesus’ right hand and on his left hand in the kingdom. (Mark 9:33,34; 10:35-37) On no occasion did Jesus discourage his disciples from entertaining the hope of sharing in the glories of his kingdom. Rather, he encouraged them in this hope, assuring them that it was the “Father’s good pleasure” that they should be joint-heirs with him.—Luke 12:32

However, Jesus explained to his disciples, and to us, that to secure such a high position of honor in the divine arrangement would be very costly. He asked them, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" Those to whom this question was first asked replied, "We are able." (Matt. 20:22) Thousands since have given the same answer, and have undertaken to carry out the conditions, but many have fallen by the wayside, having become "weary in well doing."—Gal. 6:9; II Thess. 3:13

The "cup" of which the Master spoke, and from which he drank, is not a literal one. Rather, it is a symbolic cup, being suggestive of the sum total of his experiences in doing the Father's will. It was a "cup" which God had poured for him, a way of life from his baptism at Jordan to his death on the cross, which was not planned by him, but by his Father.—John 18:11

From the natural standpoint, Jesus might have preferred a course in life which would have permitted him to enjoy more fully the temporal blessings of home, family and friends. However, he had come to do his Father's will, and to drink the cup of experience which the Father had poured for him. To be faithful to this purpose, and to constantly set it as his highest priority, resulted in the giving up of the security of a home and family and becoming literally a pilgrim and a stranger in the earth. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests," the Master said, "but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."—Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58

Had Jesus used his pleasing personality and the miracle-working power which had been given to him, merely to appeal to the public, he soon could have

become the most popular person in all Israel. Influenced by these qualities, many did follow him for a time. Jesus, however, was also given a message to proclaim. In doing so, he exposed popular error, and was an unflinching advocate of unpopular truth.

Jesus was able to read the hearts of the religious leaders of Israel, and knew that they were hypocrites. When he told them of their hypocrisy, rather than causing them to repent, it evoked their bitter animosity. This finally cost Jesus his life. Nevertheless, it was all a part of the cup which the Father had poured out for him, so he humbled himself, and “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” —Phil. 2:8

When we made a consecration to do God’s will and to follow in our Master’s footsteps, we also were saying, “We are able” to drink of the cup that Jesus drank of. The beginning of another year is a most appropriate time for us to ask the question: How well are we doing with this undertaking? Perhaps we can measure the degree of our success by making a check as to whether, in keeping with our text, we are seeking “first” the kingdom of God, and making it our highest priority in life. Seeking and doing the will of God was the first priority of Jesus’ life, and it must also be first with us. Paul expressed this thought, saying, “This one thing I do.” —Phil. 3:13

SETTING OUR AFFECTIONS

When we make a consecration to do God’s will, we begin to set our affections on things above, which means that earthly things should lose their attraction for us. (Col. 3:1,2) Herein, however, lies one of the principal struggles of the Christian life. It is one

in which we must face life's realities, and are called upon to deal with them upon the basis of faith and the spirit of sacrifice. In this struggle we may at times be conflicted in the providing of needful material things as compared to the assurances given to us by the promises of God. The wisdom and strength which will assist in this struggle are based upon our faith.

In the context of our opening Scripture, Jesus admonishes his followers to "take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." (Matt. 6:25) Instead, as stated in our opening text, we are to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all our temporal needs "shall be added" unto us. That is, the entire matter rests upon what we are seeking "first" in our life.

In elaborating the lesson, Jesus said that the "Gentiles"—the world in general—seek after food, raiment, and other material things of life, meaning that they make these their first, or primary, consideration and priority. This is natural and proper for them, in so far as the desire to feel secure in providing for themselves and their families, both for the present and also the future.—vs. 32

As Christians, we likewise realize the need to eat, to be clothed, and to have shelter. These requirements for ourselves and our families are very real, and affect us so vitally that they may become a severe test of our faith. How do we carry these out properly while still seeking "first" the kingdom of God? Each morning when we arise we may start the day by saying, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me." (Ps. 116:12) This is the

proper attitude for those who are seeking first the kingdom of God. Yet, often we may find that our earliest thoughts are mostly concerned with the temporal affairs of life, and that they become the predominant focus of our day's activities.

GOD'S CARE OVER US

When Jesus said that we should “take no thought” for our life, he used a Greek word which means “anxious thought” or, as we might say, “to be troubled with worry.” It is essentially the same thought as conveyed by the Apostle Peter when he wrote, “Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.” (I Pet. 5:7, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) Similarly, Paul wrote, “Be not anxious about anything; but in everything let your petitions be made known to God, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.”—Phil. 4:6, *Diaglott*

Paul then assures us that if we are not anxious about anything and are thankful for the blessings provided by the Lord, the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (vs. 7) With this peace of God ruling in our hearts we are in a position to concentrate our thoughts on the things pertaining to the kingdom. Logically, Paul then further admonishes us to “think on these things.”—vs. 8

There is no mistaking the end result in Christian thought and action of casting all our care upon the Lord, and therefore not being anxious about the material needs of life. Paul climaxed his admonition along this line by writing, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

(Phil. 4:9) How plainly is the matter stated! If we want the God of peace to be with us, continually giving us the peace which surpasses all human understanding, there are things for us to do—things which we have “learned, and received, and heard, and seen” exemplified in the life of those such as the Apostle Paul.

This is merely another way of saying that we should follow the example of Christ. We have many noble examples of those who followed Christ, and Paul is one of them. He knew that, according to the flesh, it was not an easy way, but was a way of sacrifice, weariness and suffering. Paul, though, wanted to know Jesus in the sense of having a “fellowship,” or partnership, in his experiences and in his suffering. This was the “one thing” which dominated his thinking, his planning, and his action. It was his first and foremost priority.—Phil. 3:10,13

Not all in the Early Church were of this persuasion. Paul tells us about this, saying, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ... who mind earthly things.)”—Phil. 3:17-19

We are not to suppose from this description that the ones Paul refers to were morally corrupt. It is just that he uses strong language to emphasize that they were not walking in the way of sacrifice, that they were not seeking first the kingdom of God. They were “minding earthly things” to such an extent that these were demanding all their attention, and the “first” things of their spiritual life had nearly been crowded out entirely. They had forgotten that

their citizenship was supposed to be in heaven, and that their main objective in life was to set their “affection on things above.”

In the case of those whom Paul thus describes, it would seem that they had become believers in name only. They may still have believed in, and even enjoyed, the message of the Gospel. If there was any time left after they had made adequate provision for their earthly needs, they would perhaps seek the fellowship of their brethren. They likely had not denied the Lord. Yet, in all this, their course in life was evidently in opposition to the principle of sacrifice to such an extent that the apostle said they were “enemies of the cross of Christ.”

Similarly, the danger to us is not so much that of going to the full extent of giving thought only for the material needs of life, but of compromising between this extreme course of unfaithfulness and that of making our spiritual interests absolutely first in priority. To avoid compromise is both difficult and costly. That is why Jesus asked the disciples, “Are ye able?” Only by divine grace and strength are any of us able to walk in such a “narrow way.”—Matt. 7:14

Paul said that we should follow his example and “do” what he had done. Let us notice what he actually did. When first he realized that Jesus was the Christ of promise, he inquired, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6) Here is the true spirit of consecration. Obedience to this spirit led Paul to devote his entire life to the great mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ and serving the brethren of the Early Church. Moreover, this would not merely be under pleasant circumstances, nor when no inconvenience to the flesh was involved.

A GREAT EXAMPLE

Paul's seeking first the kingdom of God took him among enemies in Jerusalem, where he was mobbed and almost killed. It took him on weary journeys by land and by sea. It led to bitter persecution, imprisonment, stripes, hunger, and other hardships. It finally resulted in his death in a Roman prison, just as Jesus' faithfulness led to his death on the cross. Now we can understand what Paul meant when he wrote that we are to do what we have seen in him. It was surely true of Paul that he took "no thought" for his life, but cast all his care upon the Lord. For this reason he was "not anxious about anything," but always thankful for whatever material things the Lord provided for him.—Matt. 6:31; Phil. 4:6, *Diaglott*

Paul did not, however, expect that his food and clothing would drop down to him from the sky. When necessary he worked at his trade of tent-making in order to secure his material needs. (Acts 18:1-3; II Thess. 3:8,9) Always, however, his first priority was to seek those things which pertained to his spiritual life, and to the righteousness necessary to attain a share in the heavenly phase of the kingdom of God.

When Paul admonished us not to be anxious about anything, he did not imply that the Lord always makes abundant provision for our material needs. Later in the chapter, he wrote concerning himself, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—Phil. 4:12,13

We can be assured that Paul did not at times go hungry or suffer need because he was a poor manager of his material affairs or of his tent-making business. Rather, he was “abased” at times because he had followed the leadings of the Lord in a life of sacrifice. Such a course relegated material needs to a position of relative unimportance to an extent that at times he was temporarily hungry or lacked in some other material way.

Paul is not advocating the idea that in order to be a faithful Christian one must deliberately forsake all thought of providing the necessities of life with the certain knowledge that the result will be to suffer want and hunger. To do so would be to tempt God, which is sin. Rather, the apostle was indicating that he would be content in any given circumstance as it might come. Quoting again a portion of verse 12 from the *New International Version*, Paul says, “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry.”

To the faithful apostle this was all in God’s providence, and he valued the lessons he had learned. He had plied his trade of tent-making when opportunity offered. However, when the call came to make another pilgrim journey, he accepted it as from the Lord, and did not worry because he had no surplus funds laid aside for the proverbial rainy day.

It is important to note, of course, that Paul, so far as we know, had no family obligations to consider. He needed only to provide for himself so far as material needs were concerned. For this reason he was justified in giving less consideration to food and raiment than those who have family responsibilities. It was pleasing to God that Paul took a course which

left him hungry on occasion. However, none of us has the right to expect others to go hungry or to suffer a lack of temporal necessities on account of our own lack of providing such things to those who depend on us. This would be sacrificing them, instead of ourselves. Paul's own words are clear in this regard: "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."—I Tim. 5:8

Paul's own course of faithfulness, to the point where he did not always have ample food, or suffered other material need, provides for us a very high standard to emulate. Seeking the kingdom was not only the first priority of his life, but it can nearly be said that it was the only real matter of importance to him.

Not many, perhaps, have been in a position to abandon their interest in material things so completely as Paul, but his example is the ideal to keep in mind. Our first priority should be to do the will of God. He knows that we need food and clothing and shelter, and has promised to help overrule the providing of these if we keep the main objective of our consecrated life at the forefront of our daily walk.

BUILDING LARGER BARN—A DANGER

Jesus' instruction to his disciples not to take anxious thought concerning tomorrow's needs is also recorded in Luke 12:22. His advice begins with the meaningful word, "Therefore." This indicates that the preceding verses have a close bearing on what follows. Looking back, we find in verses 16-21 that Jesus had just related the parable of a man whose land yielded more bountifully than he had expected. His barns were filled. Thinking the matter over, he decided

that he would tear down his barns and build larger ones. He concluded that in this way he could attain economic security and would not need to be at all concerned about his future needs, but then he died.

Then come Jesus' instructions, "Therefore, ... Take no thought for your life." In other words, "Do not take the sort of thought this man did," which was an anxious, selfish thought. It never occurred to him that the Lord had blessed his land in order that he might have a surplus which he could use to benefit others. Instead, he used this abundance as if the Lord had provided it solely for his own personal security. This was wrong.

The challenges of the Lord's people today are not unlike they were at the beginning of the age. It is necessary to make a living, and regardless of how we do this, proper attention must be given to it. If employed by another, we should render faithful service. If we are conducting our own business, proper concern must be given to it in order that it might return to us that which we need.

There is no set rule laid down in the Bible as to how much time or effort we should devote to material needs, and how much of our time and effort should be given directly to the Lord. This is a matter each consecrated follower of the Master must determine according to his or her circumstances. Where our lesson does draw the line, however, is with respect to the manner in which we approach our necessary temporal responsibilities and the need to keep them secondary to seeking "first the kingdom of God." (Matt. 6:33) With this, our work in the office, the factory, the home, or in our own business, should always be done as unto the Lord. It is his will that we take care of our own,

and we may properly consider whatever means of livelihood we have as being by his providence.

God has his own way of taking care of the sparrows, and so he also has of adding necessary material needs to those who seek first the kingdom of God, and who “are of more value than many sparrows.” (Matt. 10:31) An eye that never sleeps watches over us. (Ps. 121:2-4) An arm that is strong and tireless bears us up and gives us strength to continue. Let us, then, cast all our care upon him, and press on in the way of sacrifice until we hear the Master’s words, “Well done.”—Matt. 25:21 ■

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 Suresh, Bangalore, India—November 18. Age, 46

Brother Pawel Wozniak, Krakow, Poland—November 21. Age, 54

Brother Greg Gowryluk, Winnipeg, MB—November 22. Age, 74

Sister Jean Wawryk, Saskatoon, SK—December 3. Age, 94

Brother Charles Krasonic, West Newton, PA—December 4. Age, 84

Brother Jan Zalitacz, Chrzanow, Poland—December 11. Age, 84

Brother Stanislaw Pluskwa, Babica, Poland—December 14. Age, 64

Sister Bronislawa Zuziak, Kozy, Poland—December 14. Age, 67

Statistical Report

For the year ended September 30, 2020

FOR THE PAST eighty-eight years, the Dawn has engaged in the work of preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and has been privileged to provide material to groups and individuals throughout the world to use in their witness efforts. By any measure, 2020 was a most interesting and challenging year due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, it was a year also full of opportunities. With God's providence evident throughout, many of the activities of the Dawn continued, and in a few cases even expanded, during 2020. By the Lord's grace, we are pleased to present this report to our readers.

During 2020 the Dawn was able to increase its witnessing expenditures in several areas compared to the previous year. These increases included the categories of radio, internet advertising, and other media advertising. Taken together, expenditures in these three areas increased by nearly 12% in 2020.

In total, the Dawn's witnessing expenses in 2020 were 5% below the previous year. We had a net operating deficit, excluding bequests and investment income, of (\$424,178), compared to a 2019 deficit of (\$431,699). The table at the top of the next page provides details of operating revenue and expenses for the 2020 fiscal year:

Income	Receipts	Expenditures
Revenue (excluding bequests and investment income)	<u>\$74,016</u>	
Expenses		
Radio (domestic)		\$ 77,512
TV (domestic)		14,000
Radio and TV (foreign)		27,970
Internet and Other Media		97,009
Pilgrim Service (domestic and foreign)		7,783
Other Foreign Support		12,632
Shipping/Mailing (domestic and foreign)		30,078
Shop Operating Expense		30,079
Plant Operating Expense		165,761
House Operating Expense		<u>35,370</u>
Total Expenses		\$498,194
Less Income	<u>74,016</u>	
Net Operating Deficit	\$(424,178)	

The Dawn has budgeted to maintain expenses related to witness activities in 2021 at similar levels to 2020. Increases in witnessing expenditures will be considered if additional opportunities arise, and for which necessary resources are available.

ACTIVITIES

The Dawn magazine is available in nine languages, either in printed or online format. The English *Dawn* is printed in India for the Indian brethren and their witness efforts. In addition to *The Dawn* magazine, *Hope* and *Life After Death* booklets continue to be sent upon request to funeral homes in the United States.

The *Frank & Ernest* radio program is currently broadcast on seventeen stations in the United States, as well as on stations in South Africa, West Africa, India, the Caribbean, Central America,

South America, and England. The *Bible Answers* television program is broadcast each Sunday morning on Urban America Network. The Dawn also broadcasts thirty second radio and television spot announcements offering booklets throughout the United States each month.

In 2020 the Dawn once again placed ads in several farmers' almanacs, offering various booklets. This continues to be one of our more effective methods of advertising, as it reaches an audience which seems to be especially receptive to the message of the Bible.

The Dawn website yields requests for literature from many countries around the world. It also has available for online reading or download thousands of pages of current and archived booklets, books, and *Dawn* magazine issues.

In 2020 the Dawn continued its Internet keyword advertising on Google and Microsoft for 39 booklets in English, 12 booklets in Spanish, 8 booklets in French, and 3 booklets in German. During the past year, the number of "clicks" to these keywords, which brings the user to the Dawn's ad page for viewing, was over 237,000 for all languages combined. This was an increase of more than 10% from 2019. The viewing of these ads generated over 1,600 mail responses for booklets. Booklets read online as a result of the same ads totaled approximately 11,000. In addition to mail responses and booklets read online, a person can also download the advertised booklets from the ads. However, statistics for downloaded booklets are not currently available from our Internet Service Provider. In 2021 we plan to add new booklet offerings

and implement other changes in order to further enhance responses in this highly effective area of the Dawn's witness activities.

The Dawn's YouTube channel, "The Dawn Magazine—Monthly Video," continues to be an increasingly popular method of presenting the message of Truth. During the past year 23 videos were added, bringing the total number of videos posted on the channel to 131. During the year, the videos were viewed 3,410 times, for a total of over 24,000 minutes. In the coming year, we plan to add the *Parables of Jesus* Dawn article series from 2015-2016 to the channel. They will include the original audio narrations and will have video content added.

In 2020 the activity of the Dawn Pilgrim service was severely limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In March, Brothers Joe Dolan and Bill Dutka traveled to Africa, a trip in which they had planned to visit brethren in four countries over a period of 50 days. However, after only 12 days, it was necessary that they return home to the United States, having only visited Kenya. Their time there, however, was very fruitful, and a report of this abbreviated trip appeared in the July 2020 issue of *The Dawn*. Although other in-person pilgrim trips were not possible in 2020, several brethren visited and served "virtually" at conventions held outside the United States during the year. Among these were online visits with brethren in Canada, Germany and Australia.

RELOCATION TO FLORIDA

As reported last year, in late 2019 a facility was leased in the Orlando, Florida area to house the

relocated Dawn printing, shipping and inventory operations. By early January, 2020, the build-out of the space was mostly complete, we took occupancy, and equipment began to arrive. During January and February, equipment installation and training took place for a planned gradual start-up of operations in March.

These plans, however, were put on hold when, on March 11, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, and the entire nation was shut down, including the Dawn's physical plant operations in both New Jersey and Florida. Although printing was curtailed at this time, in the Lord's providence, both the English and some foreign language *Dawn* magazines continued to be produced electronically, and were made available on the Dawn's website for reading or download.

In late spring, due to easing shutdown restrictions in Florida, the Longwood facility began printing and mailing out the English *Dawn* magazine, starting with the April issue. By late summer, we were caught up on printing and mailing of the English *Dawn*. Starting in the fall, we began catching up on printing of foreign language *Dawn* magazines, with the first priority being Spanish, which has a large subscription list. It should be noted that the resumption of these activities has all been done, and continues to be done, with strict limits on the number of people allowed in the facility at one time, proper sanitizing, social distancing, and face-mask requirements.

We are thankful to the Lord for his guidance and direction as the relocation process has unfolded, and we continue to look for his leading and wise direction

in 2021, especially in the midst of the ongoing pandemic and its resulting uncertainties.

STAFFING

We could not accomplish our activities without the assistance of many brethren. Currently there are approximately twenty brethren in North America involved in the work, both on-site and remotely.

Overseas, we have the assistance of brethren in many foreign countries, including Australia, Germany, France, India, Italy, Spain, Colombia, Brazil, and several countries in Africa. The brethren in Australia print the *Cebuano Dawn* for the brethren in the Philippines and coordinate the witness work there. We thank all the brethren for their continued work and support. It is our privilege to labor with you in our Father's Vineyard.

THE YEAR AHEAD

We are thankful for the many willing hands and hearts of brethren throughout the world who have assisted and supported, directly and indirectly, the work of the Dawn during the past year. We are excited about the prospects for 2021, knowing, of course, that all of our efforts and plans are in the all-wise hands of our Heavenly Father. As the words of the hymn say, "He knows ..." Most of all, we rejoice in the privilege of bearing witness to the Truth given to us by our Heavenly Father, and look forward to continuing these efforts for as long as the Lord allows.

We ask for your prayers on behalf of the work of the Dawn, as daily we seek to proclaim the Gospel message throughout the earth, and strive to be good stewards over the opportunities which God's providence has made available to us. ■

General Convention Bulletin

July 17-22, 2021—Johnstown, Pennsylvania

THE 2021 GENERAL CONVENTION will be held this year in one of two ways depending on the COVID-19 pandemic. If we are able to hold an in-person convention, it will return to the beautiful facilities of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, on the dates noted above. If it is determined that an in-person convention is not possible or advisable, a live online convention will be held during the same week.

In the event of an in-person convention, air conditioned rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style air conditioned apartments with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities will be available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge if both beds are occupied.

All room and meal costs for children 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. In addition, 100% of the room and meal cost of those from ages 13 through 17 will be refunded if the young person attends at least 75% of the studies for his or her age group. This subsidy does not cover meals paid at the door.

This year's convention theme text will be taken from Philippians 4:7, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707
E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com (407) 670-4189

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 16, 2021				
Saturday, 17th				
Sunday, 18th				
Monday, 19th				
Tuesday, 20th				
Wednesday, 21st				
Thursday, 22nd				
Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals <input type="checkbox"/>				
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts) <input type="checkbox"/>				
Check: <input type="checkbox"/> private bath or <input type="checkbox"/> shared bath				
<input type="checkbox"/> double occupancy <input type="checkbox"/> single occupancy				
<input type="checkbox"/> interested in APTS				
Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)				
Address:				

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

T. N. Alexander

Online Broadcast of Convention
Anglesea, Australia
January 23,24

R. Charlton

Online Broadcast of Convention
Anglesea, Australia
January 23,24

O. B. Elbert

Online Broadcast of Convention
Phoenix, AZ January 16,17

S. Jeuck

Online Broadcast of Convention
Anglesea, Australia
January 23,24

A. Kopczyk

Online Broadcast of Convention
Anglesea, Australia
January 23,24

B. Montague

Online Broadcast of Convention
Phoenix, AZ January 16,17

J. Parkinson

Online Broadcast of Convention
Phoenix, AZ January 16,17

T. Ruggirello

Online Broadcast of Convention
Phoenix, AZ January 16,17

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JANUARY 7—"Speak evil of no man."—Titus 3:2 (Z. '03-425 Hymn 267)

JANUARY 14—"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air."—I Corinthians 9:26 (Z. '03-421 Hymn 266)

JANUARY 21—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—Matthew 16:24 (Z. '00-118 Hymn 279)

JANUARY 28—"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."—Revelation 3:5 (Z. '97-16 Hymn 82)

2021 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Friday, March 26, 2021.

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

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Numerous conventions in coming months will not be held in-person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these, however, will have an online broadcast alternative. Listed below are the details which the Dawn has been made aware of concerning upcoming conventions. Please contact the brethren shown in the listings to find out the status of a convention, and also how you can attend an online broadcast if one is planned.

CHICAGO NEW YEAR CONVENTION, January 2,3—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact D. Whittaker. Phone: (630) 293-4810 or Email: donnawh@live.com

PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 16,17—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact A. Mengos. Phone: (480) 390-3767 or Email: samengos@yahoo.com

AUSTRALIAN CONVENTION, January 23,24—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Charlton. Email: randscharlton@bigpond.com

HARTFORD CONVENTION, February 7—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Slivinsky. Phone: (860) 289-0116 or Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 13,14—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact K. Freer. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 6-8—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Wesol. Phone: (407) 921-9248 or Email: jerrywesol@hotmail.com

The Year Before Us

*Standing at the portal of the opening year,
Words of comfort meet us, hushing every fear;
Spoken through the silence by our Father's voice,
Tender, strong and faithful, making us rejoice.
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For His Word shall never, never pass away.*

*"I, the Lord, am with thee, be thou not afraid;
I will help and strengthen, be thou not dismayed.
Yea, I will uphold thee with Mine own right hand;
Thou art called and chosen in My sight to stand."
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For His Word shall never, never pass away.*

*For the year before us, oh, what rich supplies!
For the poor and needy, living streams shall rise;
For the sad and mournful, shall His grace abound;
For the faint and feeble, perfect strength be found.
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For His Word shall never, never pass away.*

*He will never fail us, He will not forsake;
His eternal covenant He will never break;
Resting on His promise, what have we to fear?
God is all-sufficient for the coming year.
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day;
For His Word shall never, never pass away.*

—*Poems of Dawn*