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New Heavens and a New Earth

*“Nevertheless we,
according to his
promise, look for
new heavens and
a new earth,
wherein dwelleth
righteousness.”*

—II Peter 3:13

TO SINCERE STUDENTS OF the Bible, the promises of God are vitally important. This is especially so as we witness the turmoil, uncertainty, and evil which is present throughout the world in which we live.

One of the comforting promises of the Bible is found in our text—that God will establish a “new heavens” and a “new earth,” in which righteousness, instead of evil, will prevail. The Apostle Peter uses symbolic language to describe this promise, but in brief it means that by divine authority Christ will establish, on earth, a new and righteous government, through which the Bible’s promises of peace “on earth” and “good will toward men” will be gloriously fulfilled.—Luke 2:14

The opening word in our text—“nevertheless”—is very significant. It indicates that the new heavens and new earth which the Lord has promised are in contrast with what Peter had been discussing. Turning back to previous verses in the chapter, the

reason becomes very apparent. He had been portraying a time of destruction and trouble, saying that a “heavens” and “earth” would pass away, and that “the elements shall melt with fervent heat.”—vs. 10

Even this picture of destruction does not give us the full significance of Peter’s use of the word “nevertheless.” The full force of this word becomes apparent only when we read verses 3 and 4, which are the introduction to the general lesson of the chapter. These two verses read: “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming [Greek: *parousia*, meaning “presence”]? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”

In Acts 3:20-22, this same Apostle Peter is quoted as saying that following the second coming of Christ there would be “times of restitution of all things,” and that this glorious work of restoration had been foretold to the “fathers” by all of God’s holy prophets. Now, in his later epistle, Peter informs us that when the Lord would return and his second presence was a reality, some would scoff. They would see no visible evidence of Christ’s presence, and conclude that all things continue as they have since creation.

Through the testimony of the prophets, the fathers of Israel believed that the coming of the Messiah would result in rich and lasting blessings of peace, health and life. One of the proof texts of this, which Peter quoted in his sermon, was the promise made to Abraham that through his “seed . . . all the kindreds of the earth” would be blessed. (Acts 3:25; Gen. 12:3; 22:18) Those, therefore, who believe these promises made to the fathers, and repeated by Peter, have a

right to expect that the return of Christ will result in these promised blessings flowing out to the world.

It is with this viewpoint that Peter agrees when he uses the word “nevertheless,” for he continues, “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Before he gets to this point in his lesson, however, Peter reminds us that there are cataclysmic developments in world affairs which precede and are in preparation for the blessings made available through the new heavens and new earth.

In presenting this information, Peter uses the illustration and language employed by Jesus in his great prophecy pertaining to the time of his return and the end of the present age. Jesus referred to the time of his second presence as the “days of the Son of man,” and said that in those days it would be “as it was in the days of Noah,” and in the “days of Lot.”—Luke 17:26-30

Referring to this, Peter says that those who scoff and question the promise of his presence are “willingly ignorant,” for they should take into account these examples of previous destruction which Jesus had used in his great prophecy. Thus, Peter reminds us of the days of Noah, saying, “By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.”—II Pet. 3:5,6

Then the apostle follows up by giving us the meaning of this illustration which Jesus used, and informs us that in the “day of the Lord,” the present “heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the

works that are therein shall be burned up.” (vs. 10) Thus, the overall lesson which Peter presents is evident. Christ does return to establish his kingdom and to bless all the families of the earth. However, in order to accomplish this, the first work of his return must be the destruction of Satan’s world—“the heavens and earth, which are now.”—vs. 7

PICTORIAL LANGUAGE

In our study of Peter’s prophecy, it is important to realize that he uses the terms “heavens,” “earth,” and “elements” as symbols of the various aspects of a world order. For example, in verses 5 and 6 cited above, he speaks of the world order—heavens and earth—which passed away at the time of the flood. The physical heavens and the physical earth did not pass away. It was the world order that existed before the Flood which was destroyed. While it is true that nearly all the people also died, the point which Peter draws from that catastrophe is the important consideration that “the world [Greek: *kosmos*, meaning “orderly arrangement”] that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.”—vs. 6

Today, many students of prophecy are convinced that the present generation of the human race is witnessing the destruction of another world order, and that what has been occurring throughout the earth for many years past is in fulfillment of the Bible’s forecast pertaining to this time. They believe the Bible’s testimony that the earth itself “abideth forever,” but see in the crumbling systems of the world, and in the chaos and general upheaval of society everywhere, the collapsing of what the Apostle Paul spoke of as “this present evil world.”—Eccl. 1:4; Gal. 1:4

Jesus foretold that this would result in a time of “great tribulation,” so severe that unless terminated by divine intervention, “there should no flesh be saved.” (Matt. 24:21,22) The Apostle Paul, identifying the same general period as the “day of the Lord,” said that in this day “sudden destruction” would come upon the world “as travail upon a woman with child.”—I Thess. 5:1-3

These and other prophecies concerning the end of the present world order aptly describe what students of the Bible discern is taking place. The first significant spasm of destruction began in 1914, and resulted in the overthrow of nearly all of Europe’s hereditary rulers. The Second World War resulted in a further weakening of the fabric of civilization.

Since that time, countless wars, great and small, have erupted throughout the earth. Many of these are going on yet today. Add to that the world’s increasing moral decay, religious extremism, political chaos, economic uncertainties, and the ever-present threat of nuclear war. Mankind is at his wits end to resolve these problems. Indeed, the great tribulation which Jesus predicted is most assuredly upon us.

The destructive potential of the world’s present situation is very great. We may wonder if Peter’s reference to “fervent heat,” which causes the elements of the present world order to melt, might not be intended to convey the idea of literal devastation. In this time of great tribulation, “such as was not since the beginning of the world,” there is sure to be widespread destruction, regardless of how it might be brought about. However, we think that Peter is speaking largely in symbolic language.

SPIRITUAL AND EARTHLY SYMBOLS

The symbolisms of the Bible are employed because of their aptness in illustrating the subject matter discussed. In every civilization established by man there have been two important aspects, which in the Bible are symbolically described as the “heavens” and the “earth.” As we know, all life on the literal earth is subject in one way or another to the influences exerted by the heavens. Our seasons, our years, our days and our nights, are all controlled by the heavens.

Because man was created in the image of God, he is by nature a being who reaches out in worship and dependency to a higher power. Although the human race has been to a considerable extent alienated from the true God, the Creator, the people have had respect for religious influences in their affairs. In some cases, this has been exercised through various types of gods, and in others, civil governments have been set up as objects of veneration and worship.

It is this aspect of every civilization, or world order, that is symbolized in the Bible by the heavens, while the earth pictures organized society which is more or less subject to these symbolic heavens. It is this combination which Peter describes as a “world,” or *kosmos*, as it is stated in the Greek language. Thus, when Peter speaks of the heavens and the earth passing away, and the elements melting with fervent heat, he is not telling us that the actual sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, and the physical earth with all its elements, are to be destroyed.

The word “element,” as used by Peter, gives us a clue to what he means, and is translated from a Greek word denoting “an orderly arrangement.”

The Apostle Paul uses this same word when, in writing to the Christians in Galatia, he speaks of turning to the “weak and beggarly elements.” (Gal. 4:9) Here, he is referring to the ordinances of the old Mosaic Law, from which Christians are free. The point is that Paul used the word to describe arrangements and customs—elements—by which a people had once been governed, and Peter uses the term in the same manner.

Peter’s reference to the elements of the heavens and the earth, however, is much more comprehensive. This is because he is speaking of all the man-made laws, morals, customs, viewpoints, religious and civil, by which the present social order has been governed throughout the ages, and he tells us that in the “day of the Lord” these are to “melt with fervent heat.”

Without realizing it, people of the world during the past century who have insight into the significance of what has been occurring refer to these events as a “fire.” During the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson said, “The world is on fire.” When the second global struggle began, another statesman referred to it as a “four-alarm fire.” This symbolism is freely used in the prophecies which foretell the end of the present world order.

This symbolic melting of the elements does, of course, result in much physical destruction. Large portions of many countries have been reduced to rubble during the wars, revolutions, and terrorism which have plagued the world during this melting process. More significant than this, however, has been the melting of the social, political, religious and moral elements, which for centuries were

viewed as having a measure of stability. Cities and towns have been rebuilt, but efforts to restore other elements of this world order have failed.

Distress, fear, and general perplexity have resulted from all of these melting elements of the present world. Millions are angered and disillusioned by the inability of their leaders to provide the peace and security which they consider rightfully theirs to enjoy. Whatever levels of stability there have been in the past seem now to be viewed by many so-called heads of society as being based on outmoded laws, customs, and viewpoints. As a result, general law and order, respect for fellowman, and tolerance of differing opinions, is rapidly disappearing from the earth. All of these conditions are most assuredly signs that the melting of the elements of this world is progressing toward the conclusion spoken of by Peter—the passing away of this present order.

MANY ELEMENTS

As suggested in the foregoing paragraphs, this present world is made up of many elements, both religious and civil. They are not all evil in their entirety, despite present world conditions. To the extent that the ethical and moral standards of the Bible have been upheld among the people, they have benefited thereby, as have their leaders. Such positive examples, however, are becoming fewer compared to the increased degradation of society we see today. Thus, when Paul speaks of ours as an “evil world,” he means that in the overall picture, evil predominates.

In this world there are many religious elements: Christianity; Islam; Hinduism; Atheism—these being just a few of the most notable groups. There are

also many civil elements: labor; capital; social; moral; political; and business and economic. It requires no special discernment to realize that damaging friction, and even violence, exists today among these various elements, and that they have to a large extent lost any former cohesion and tolerance for one another which, in past centuries, held the fabric of this world together.

Noteworthy also is the ever-growing trend throughout the world toward looseness in abiding by former restraints, laws, and ethical practices in general. Local, national, and international law is flouted under the slightest pretext. Governments and their leaders forget their promises and responsibilities. These examples of infidelity reach into communities, and even households, causing the masses gradually to lose respect for the more honorable principles which they once held in esteem.

There are noble exceptions to this trend. We are merely describing the general developments, and these are following essentially the same pattern the world over. In this country and others, honorable men and women are making strenuous efforts to hold back the tide of social, political, moral, and economic decay, but overall, results are meager.

HEAVENS SHAKEN

Among the many signs which Jesus gave of the time of his second presence and the end of the age was that "the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke 21:24-26) He foretold that as a result of this, fear would fill the hearts of the people. How true this has proven to be. If the people of all nations today believed that the religious elements of society

could, through wholesome guidance, assist in resolving the current problems of the world, how quickly their fears would be allayed.

However, they know that this is not possible. Some of the most extensively followed religious elements of the world support violence as part of their basis of belief. Other ever-increasing elements are atheistic in nature, having little or no respect for any religious concepts in the world around them. Even among some of the more traditional western religions, there is a growing lack of regard and respect for the principles of righteousness. We can surely see that the powers and influences of the religious world, the symbolic heavens, are being shaken to the core.

Groups of determined churchgoing men and women engage in hopeful discussions, and pass resolutions indicating what they think the leadership of their respective countries should do in various situations, but they are paid little heed. Even among those who profess religious affiliation, the vast majority do not choose to get involved. For example, in the United States, over 80% of the people claim to have religious affiliation of some kind, but only 20% say they attend religious services with any degree of regularity. In many other countries the situation is equally discouraging from the standpoint of religious involvement.

We are calling attention to this picture not to criticize, nor to condemn, the religious elements of the present world. We are merely calling attention to facts and conditions which are fulfilling the Bible's prophecies of events which are to occur in the end of the present age. Thankfully, these conditions will soon come to an end, giving way to the

establishment of the divinely promised new heavens and new earth.

NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

Concurrent with the melting of the various elements of the present world has been an unprecedented increase of knowledge in all areas of investigation. This, too, was prophesied in the Scriptures. Daniel, when speaking of the “time of trouble,” and “time of the end,” said that then “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” (Dan. 12:1,4) Just one of many examples of this has been in the field of medical science. Phenomenal progress has been made, particularly in the western world, in eradicating diseases, treating illnesses, and preventive care. Average life expectancy in many countries has tripled since the end of the nineteenth century.

This does not mean that man will, by himself, find a way to live forever. The power of life is held under divine control, and the blessing of everlasting life will reach the people only through the new heavens and new earth which God has promised. How manifold will God’s promised blessings be! Peace—universal and everlasting—will be one of them. Together with his faithful associates, Christ Jesus will be the righteous ruler of that new world order. He died for his subjects in order that he might offer them health and life. (I Pet. 3:18; Isa. 53:4-6; John 6:51; Rom. 5:6-8) Thus, Christ will rule, not over a dying race, but over a race which will be given an opportunity of being restored to perfection, mentally, morally, and physically, and of living forever.—Luke 19:10; Acts 3:21; I Tim. 2:3-6

Why, someone may ask, is that new kingdom, that new world order, described in the Bible as a new heavens and a new earth? It is for the same reason that the world before the Flood and this “present evil world” are thus symbolically described. God’s new world will also have its spiritual and material aspects. Christ, together with his church, will be the spiritual rulers in the new heavens—the source of the righteous and holy elements in that new world. The “church” class is made up of those described by Paul who suffer with Christ, that they may also reign with him.—Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6

The Christ class, Jesus and the church, will exercise their ruling authority through human representatives. These, we believe, will be the resurrected ancient prophets, and other faithful ones of those past ages. To begin with, these will constitute the righteous representatives and teachers of the new earth. Gradually, however, all the willing and obedient of mankind will become associated with these “princes” in a world order based on the elements of peace and righteousness. Under the influence of these elements, God’s name will be “remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise [him] for ever and ever.”—Ps. 45:16,17

As the psalmist explains, these “princes” are to be those who formerly were considered the “fathers” in Israel. Concerning their position in God’s new world order, Jesus said that the people would come from the east, west, north, and south, and would “sit down” with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets. (Luke 13:28,29) This indicates that these faithful fathers will be recognized by all mankind as their teachers under Christ.

The spiritual and earthly phases of God's kingdom, the new heavens and new earth, are also symbolically described as "Zion" and "Jerusalem." The Prophet Isaiah uses this symbolism, saying, "Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."—Isa. 2:3

It will be because God's righteous laws will be made known to the people, and enforced, that righteousness will predominate and prevail in the promised new heavens and new earth. Throughout every corner of the earth, this will result in beating "swords into plowshares," and "spears into pruninghooks," for "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—vs. 4

Individually, it will mean that every man will sit "under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it." (Mic. 4:4) Dwelling under one's own vine and fig tree suggests peace, economic security, and prosperity. Now the world is filled with fear of the future. However, then none will be afraid, for all will realize that a new world order has been set up in which the divine Christ is the center—the righteous ruler, "The everlasting Father," and "The Prince of Peace."—Isa. 9:6,7

The Apostle Peter's reference in our opening text to God's promise of a new heavens and a new earth, was first given by Isaiah. He prophesied: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered

or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; . . . No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed. They will build houses and inhabit them; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another inhabit, They will not plant and another eat; For as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people.”—Isa. 65:17-22, *New American Standard Bible*

On the Isle of Patmos, the Apostle John, in vision, saw the fulfillment of this promise. While the prophecy given through Isaiah declares that in the new heavens and new earth there shall be no longer be “an infant who lives but a few days,” John was given a more comprehensive view of this by the assurance that “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—Rev. 21:1-4

Let us then continue to look for the promised new heavens and new earth. It is this new kingdom and its government which alone will solve the present perplexing problems of a sin-cursed and dying race. With this hope before us, we will understand the meaning of events which are causing the elements of the present world order to melt, and we will not be alarmed over the outcome. Indeed, as Jesus admonished, we will lift up our heads, knowing that our “deliverance is drawing near.”—Luke 21:28, *Weymouth New Testament* ■

Seven Deacons Selected

Key Verse:
*“Therefore,
brethren, pick out
from among
yourselves seven
men of good repute,
full of the Spirit
and of wisdom, and
we will appoint
them to undertake
this duty.”*

*—Acts 6:3,
Weymouth New
Testament*

Selected Scripture:
Acts 6:1-8

IN THE DAYS OF THE EARLY

Church, widows, generally speaking, had no income and were often dependent upon charity for their material needs. In this regard, there “arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.” (Acts 6:1) The Grecians were Christians who spoke Greek and were not Jewish by birth. We do not believe the situation described in the foregoing verse was caused by any intentional partiality or neglect of the Grecian widows. Rather, differences in language and culture

between the Grecians and the Hebrews may have created confusion and misunderstanding among the brethren.

When this issue was brought to their attention, the Apostles promptly addressed it by calling “the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.”—vss, 2,3

This recommendation by the Apostles “pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch.” (vs. 5) It is interesting to note that the seven who were chosen by the multitude all had Greek names. Here we see the wisdom of the congregation of brethren in the Early Church, in purposely selecting seven men who were Greek, who might better identify and address the specific needs of the Grecian widows.

Another lesson we can learn from this account is that each separate church, or “ecclesia,” is to consider the Lord as its Head. (Eph. 5:24; Col. 1:18) Hence, each congregation of the Lord’s people should seek to recognize the will of the Head in respect to all its affairs. It is very proper, then, that the general affairs of an ecclesia should be decided by the congregation, and not by any one person, nor by the elders of the church only. —Matt. 18:17; I Tim. 3:15

The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word *diakonos*, which means a “servant.” The Apostle Paul outlines the qualifications which should guide the congregation when selecting brethren as deacons. These include: good Christian character, faithfulness to the Truth, and zeal for service to the Lord and his flock. Paul concludes by saying: “They that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”—I Tim. 3:8-13

The Apostle Paul also used the same Greek word in a broader sense, when he referred to himself and Timothy as “ministers [*diakonos*] of God.” (II Cor. 6:4) Hence, we see that all true elders in the church are also deacons or servants. Jesus used this word in a still larger sense, when he said to his disciples: “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant [*diakonos*].” (Matt. 23:11) Thus, all consecrated followers of the Lord should be servants, and with “love serve one another.”—Gal. 5:13 ■

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Key Verse: “*Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*”
—Acts 8:35

Selected Scripture:
Acts 8:26-39

A DEACON BY THE NAME

of Philip had been preaching the gospel in Samaria, when an angel of the Lord instructed him to journey south and go on the road that went “from Jerusalem unto Gaza.” (Acts 8:5,26) Philip “arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had

charge of all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.”—vss. 27,28

The eunuch’s desire to worship God was indicated not only by having traveled alone the great distance from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, but especially by his searching and reading the Scriptures. The custom at that time was to read aloud. Evidently, as Philip was walking, he heard the eunuch reading from the book of Isaiah as the chariot passed by.

Through the Holy Spirit, the Lord directed Philip, “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias.” (vss. 29,30) The passage the eunuch was reading was: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall

declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.”
—vss. 32,33; Isa. 53:7-9

Philip kindly asked the eunuch, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” (Acts 8:30) The eunuch humbly answered, “How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. . . . And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, . . . of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?”—vss. 31,34

Our Key Verse tells us that Philip indicated to the eunuch that the Prophet Isaiah was speaking of Jesus. Here is an example of God’s usual method for teaching a truth-seeker. He uses his inspired Word as the text, and sends his representative to expound upon it. In this case, God’s providence was manifested in the scriptures which the eunuch was reading. This opened up the opportunity for Philip to instruct him, starting with the very foundation principle of the doctrine of Christ—that Jesus died as “a ransom for all.”—I Tim. 2:5,6

Philip’s teaching of the eunuch must have been very comprehensive. We believe he also explained the special privilege for those who fully consecrate themselves now, during the present Gospel Age, to do God’s will and to become, if faithful unto death, joint-heirs with Christ. (Rom. 6:3-14; 8:16,17) After learning about the heavenly call and making a full consecration to God, the eunuch was anxious to give outward witness of this by water baptism, or immersion. (Acts 8:36,37) As we recall, water baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” had been authorized by God beginning on the Day of Pentecost.—Acts 2:38

After Philip baptized him, the eunuch “went on his way rejoicing.” (Acts 8:39) No doubt Philip also rejoiced in being used by God as a chosen vessel to bear his name to one of his beloved children. May we also have such occasions for rejoicing in God and in his providences manifested toward us in giving witness to the Gospel message. ■

Ananias Finds Saul of Tarsus

Key Verse: “*So Ananias went off and entered the house, laying his hands on him with these words, Saul, my brother, I have been sent by the Lord, by Jesus who appeared to you on the road, to let you regain your sight and be filled with the holy Spirit.*”
—Acts 9:17, James Moffatt translation

Selected Scripture:
Acts 9:10-20
ers.—I Cor. 12:12,27

After Saul got up from the ground, he realized he was now blind. Those traveling with Saul led him by the hand to Damascus. (Acts 9:8) What tremendous sorrow and guilt Saul must have had, now that he realized the very ones he had been pursuing and persecuting were actually the true worshippers of God. One evidence of this is that for three days Saul “neither did eat nor drink.”

SAUL OF TARSUS’ MISDIRECTED zeal, not according to knowledge, had led him to energetically persecute Jesus’ followers. As Saul was traveling to Damascus to incarcerate any men or women he found who espoused the way of Christ, “suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.” A voice then said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me?” (Acts 9:2-4) When Saul inquired as to who was speaking to him, the response was: “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” (vss. 5,6) Saul was not persecuting the glorified Lord directly, but he was persecuting “the body of Christ,” his follow-

(vs. 9) The average person might live up to several weeks without eating any food. However, few people can survive, or avoid serious health consequences, without drinking for more than three or four days. God, however, did not allow Saul to die or to suffer ill health from his avoidance of food and drink. Instead, God sent Ananias, one of his humble and obedient servants who lived in Damascus, to intervene.—vs. 10

The Lord said to Ananias, “Go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus.” Saul had been praying during this time, and in some way God indicated to him that a man named Ananias would come and be used to restore his vision. (vss. 11,12) With concern, Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.”—vss. 13,14

The Lord reassured Ananias, saying, “Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” (vs. 15) Our Key Verse indicates that Ananias was encouraged, and went to Saul as the Lord had instructed. He told Saul that he had been sent by Jesus, and was the instrument God would use to restore his sight. Ananias also told Saul that he would be filled with God’s Holy Spirit. “Immediately, there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”—vs. 18

Reflecting upon his previously misdirected zeal, Paul later wrote: “I am the least of the apostles, . . . because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am.” (I Cor. 15:9,10) Similarly, God has also “called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus.” (II Tim. 1:9) “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”—I Sam. 16:7 ■

Peter Sent to Cornelius

Key Verse: *“He said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.”*
—Acts 10:28

Selected Scripture:
Acts 10:19-33

send men to Joppa, and call for . . . Peter: . . . he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.”—Acts 10:2-6

Cornelius was a military officer of the Roman Empire and captain over 100 men, “a centurion of the band called the Italian band.” (Acts 10:1) He rejoiced upon hearing the message from the angel, and showed his faith by immediately telling his household servants and soldiers what had happened, and sending them to Joppa, to find Peter.—vss. 7,8

WHILE GOD’S FAVOR TO

Israel as a nation ended at the time of Jesus’ death, individual Israelites still had the opportunity after this time to repent, turn away from sin, be baptized into Christ, and receive the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38; 3:19) When God’s due time came, however, the opportunity to follow Christ was opened to the Gentiles. Our lesson is the account of Cornelius, a devout man who prayed often, but who was not Jewish. An angel of the Lord came to Cornelius, and said to him, “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now

As Cornelius' servants approached Joppa, Peter was on the housetop praying to God. Suddenly, he received a vision from the Lord. He "saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat." —vss. 9-13

Peter, however, replied, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." This vision was repeated two more times, and then as Peter thought about it, "the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them." (vss. 14-20) Our Key Verse points out that Peter came to realize that it was not up to him to call any person "common or unclean."

Peter came down from the housetop and said to the men Cornelius had sent, "What is the cause wherefore ye are come?" They answered, "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee." Peter then traveled to Cornelius' home. When he arrived, not only was Cornelius waiting, but he had also "called together his kinsmen and near friends." As Peter came into the house, "Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man." —vss. 21-26

The Apostle Peter did not want anyone to worship him. Here, and in other places in the Bible, we are told to not worship the Apostles, nor even angels. (Acts 14:11-15; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9) Let us have a similar humble appreciation of those whom the Lord uses to promulgate the Gospel message. ■

Paul Begins His Third Journey

“So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”

—Acts 19:20

THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT

reveal the exact time when the Apostle Paul completed his second journey, but it is

thought by many that it may have been in AD 53 or 54. On his way home, the apostle made a brief stop at Jerusalem, and then went on to Antioch where he remained for perhaps a few months. Meanwhile, his fellow travelers—Luke, Silas and Timothy—were away from their homes, actively engaged in assisting the new congregations in Macedonia and Achaia [Greece].

After spending time in Antioch, the Apostle Paul was ready to join them again to continue the work of searching for God's people, and so his third missionary journey began. In explaining the first part of this trip, Luke gave but a brief account, saying, “After he had spent some time there [at Antioch], he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.”—Acts 18:23

Much of this territory was the same region he had passed through on his first and second journeys.

Now Paul traveled there again, revisiting and ministering to the churches he had helped establish on his previous trips. It is also likely that this time he went into areas where he had not formerly been permitted by the Lord to preach.—Acts 16:6,7

REGION OF GALATIA

Galatia and Phrygia are not specifically mentioned as having been visited by Paul and Barnabas on their first journey. However, the province of Galatia was very close to a number of the cities they passed through at that time, including Lystra, Iconium and Derbe. We remember how persecution and the threat of stoning had caused Paul and Barnabas to flee from Iconium into the surrounding country. Luke says that they fled “unto the region that lieth round about. And there they preached the gospel.” (chap. 14:6,7) Thus, it seems reasonable that the region that “lieth round about” included parts of Galatia, and now Paul intended to travel there once again.

At that time, a large portion of the central region of Asia Minor was referred to as Galatia. Its name came from the Gauls, who invaded from the west and conquered the area in the third century BC. Later, in 189 BC, the Romans conquered it, and Galatia became a Roman province in 25 BC. The churches that were established by Paul in this region on his first and second missionary journeys were visited by Judaizing teachers from Jerusalem. They questioned the Apostle’s authority and convinced some of the brethren to accept the necessity of observing the Mosaic Law. After passing through the province of Galatia a third time, Paul saw the need to write to the brethren there about this

matter. He composed his epistle to the Galatians later during his third missionary journey, probably between AD 54 and 58.

In this letter, Paul asserted and established his apostleship, supported by revelations he had received directly from God and Jesus Christ. He explained why the Mosaic Law Covenant was not the foundation upon which the Gospel church was formed. In addition, the Book of Galatians provides much valuable doctrinal information as well as admonitions for Christian living, which are just as pertinent today as they were in the days of the Early Church. It is interesting to see how the circumstances and experiences of the Early Church were so shaped and directed by God, as to make possible scriptural writings which would be of benefit to the work of the entire Gospel Age, as well as being applicable at the time they were written.

PHRYGIA AND UPPER COUNTRY

Getting back to our consideration of Paul's third journey, he was on his way to Ephesus again. Near the end of his previous pilgrimage he had stopped there, but could only stay a short time. The Jews of the local synagogue had asked that he stay longer, but he could not because of his plan to keep the feast at Jerusalem with the other apostles. Paul had promised to return, and he was now on his way to keep that promise.—Acts 18:19-21

In addition to the province of Galatia, the Gospel message had spread to other areas, including the region of Phrygia. Paul had to pass through this area to reach Ephesus, and so he would have stopped to visit the brethren there as he journeyed.

Antioch of Pisidia, Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were cities in Phrygia where ecclesias had been organized. Some of these are mentioned in Paul's letter to the Colossians.—Col. 1:2; 4:12-16

Several brethren from these classes were mentioned by Paul. Epaphras was associated with the Colossian church, and was very likely an elder. Tychicus also came from that area, although we cannot be sure to which congregation he belonged. The testimonials given by Paul of these two brethren reveal their faithful service to God. Paul wrote concerning Epaphras: "Our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ," and about Tychicus: "A beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord."—Col. 1:7; 4:7

Luke wrote: "Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus." (Acts 19:1, *New American Standard Bible*) The "upper country" included the cities of Smyrna, Philadelphia, Sardis, Pergamos and Thyatira. The churches located in these cities are not specifically mentioned by Paul. However, they had evidently been established, because they are referred to by the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation as examples of different periods of church history.

ARRIVAL AT EPHESUS

When Paul arrived in Ephesus he was introduced to new disciples of the Lord, and he inquired of them if they had received the Holy Spirit. Their response was that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit! This led Paul to ask them about the nature of their baptism, and their reply was that they had been immersed into John's baptism. (Acts 19:2,3) Whether

this immersion was recent or many years before, we do not know. More than twenty years had elapsed since John the Baptist's ministry had come to a close at his death.

Apollos had passed through this region a few months earlier, on his way to Greece. He too, had only known about John's baptism. In Paul's absence, Aquila and Priscilla had studied with Apollos, and explained the doctrine of baptism more accurately. (Acts 18:24-26) It is possible that these additions to the Ephesian church who Paul now met on his third journey had become disciples through Apollos' ministry, prior to his gaining a correct understanding of baptism and his subsequent departure to Greece. Paul saw, however, that these Ephesian brethren were true disciples of Jesus, and upon being immersed a second time with the correct knowledge of the meaning of baptism, they did receive evidences of the Holy Spirit.—chap. 19:4-6

During Paul's previous visit at Ephesus, which was very brief, apparently no ecclesia had been established. After he departed, the disciples—including Aquila and Priscilla—continued to meet with other Jews in the synagogue. When Paul returned, he too preached in the synagogue for about three months. Soon his doctrines began to arouse such opposition that Paul and the other disciples left the synagogue and began teaching in a place known as "the school of one Tyrannus."—vss. 8,9

Tyrannus was evidently a teacher of Greek philosophy, and offered an area at his school for Paul to use as a meeting place. There both Gentiles and Jews could study and worship together, and be taught by Paul. These gatherings, which continued

for two years, attracted the attention of so many people that Luke wrote, “All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:10) During this time, it is very probable that Paul lived at Aquila and Priscilla’s home, and no doubt various meetings were held there as well.—I Cor. 16:19

MANY MIRACLES PERFORMED

In addition to his preaching, Paul became well-known throughout the city and surrounding area for the many miracles he performed. (Acts 19:11,12) Ephesus was a prominent Gentile city, and was situated on the western coast of Asia Minor, across the Aegean Sea from the mainland of Greece. It was a seaport, with crossroads of traffic and trade, and was a major commercial gateway to Asia. In addition to traffic because of commerce, religious pilgrimages flowed through Ephesus, distinguished for its temple to the heathen goddess, Diana. (vss. 27,35) It was also a place of curious arts, black magic, witchcraft, sorcery, and the like. As a result, Paul had many occasions for casting out evil spirits.

Several itinerant Jewish exorcists were in Ephesus at this time. Most notable among these were the seven sons of the Jewish chief priest, Sceva. They had seen the success Paul had in casting out evil spirits, and sought to do likewise, by saying, “I command you in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches.” (Acts 19:13,14, *J. B. Phillips New Testament*) However, when they said this to a man possessed, the evil spirit within him knew this was a misuse of the name of Jesus, and stated: “Jesus I know, and I am acquainted with Paul, but who . . . are you? And the

man in whom the evil spirit was living sprang at them and overpowered them all with such violence that they rushed out of that house wounded, with their clothes torn off their backs.”—Acts 19:15,16, *Phillips*

Soon this event became publicized throughout the city. It had a profound effect upon the people, especially those dabbling in magic arts. A great number of them brought their books, which instructed them in these evil practices, together to one place and burned them. (vss. 17-19) Luke summarized the magnitude of the effect of this incident with the statement, “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”—vs. 20

PROBLEMS IN CORINTH

During the time Paul was in Ephesus, he learned of problems arising in the church at Corinth. The family of Chloe had told him about factions developing there as a result of the ministry of the gifted orator, Apollos. (I Cor. 1:11) Some began to contend that Apollos was their leader, while others said they were followers of Paul. This, of course, was not the fault of Apollos, but rather a sign of weakness and lack of spiritual perception by the brethren in that city. The report from Chloe continued by saying that still others claimed Peter as their leader, and a few held that Christ was their head.

Paul saw the need to immediately deal with this matter. Thus, while still ministering at Ephesus, he wrote the first of two letters to the Corinthian brethren. He addressed the situation with these words: “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas [Peter]; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name

of Paul?" (vss. 12,13) Two chapters later, in I Corinthians 3:1-6, Paul elaborates further on the source of these problems, ascribing them to immaturity and fleshly thinking. He concludes by saying, "You are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."

—vss. 3-6, *NASB*

The Apostle emphasized to the Corinthian brethren that the apostles and teachers whom the Lord had appointed for the ministry were not divided. All of them with their different talents and gifts were cooperating in the work of God, and that this should be recognized by all the brethren. "Let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God."—vss. 21-23, *NASB*

Paul's letter continues this important theme. "These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" —I Cor. 4:6,7

VISIT TO CORINTH DELAYED

Much of this information about conditions in Corinth probably came directly from Apollos, who had evidently come to Ephesus while Paul was there. Paul tried to persuade Apollos to return to Corinth, but apparently it was not possible at that time for him to do so. (I Cor. 16:12) We learn in verses 5-9 of this account that Paul also wanted to see the Corinthian brethren again, but he, too, postponed his visit for two reasons. One was that he wanted to spend more time with the brethren than his current obligations would allow. The other reason was that in Ephesus a special door of opportunity had opened, and he wanted to avail himself of it.

There were other brethren from the Corinthian church who were currently residing at Ephesus. Paul cites them in this same passage as examples of faithfulness and love. “Ye have known the household of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruit of Achaia, and to the ministration of the saints they did set themselves— . . . I rejoice over the presence of Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, . . . for they did refresh my spirit and yours; acknowledge ye, therefore, those who are such.” He also mentions Aquila and Priscilla, and the church which met in their home. They, too, sent their greetings from Ephesus to the brethren at Corinth.—vss. 15-20, *Young’s Literal Translation*

THANKFUL FOR ASSISTANCE

It was disappointing to receive news about the problems concerning some of the brethren in the Corinthian church. However, Paul was stimulated and refreshed by these other wonderful brethren

who had traveled such a long distance to assist him in Ephesus. Stephanas was one of the first converts in Corinth whom Paul had immersed, along with his entire family, and they became devoted servants of the Lord and the brethren. (I Cor. 1:16) When Stephanas and his family, along with Fortunatus and Achaicus, joined Paul at Ephesus to help with the marvelous work being done there, they all were a welcome addition. They joined the other laborers there—Timothy, Luke, Aquila and Priscilla—in the ministry of the Gospel.

Another brother from Corinth, Erastus, who was a city official there, arrived to help Paul at Ephesus. (Acts 19:22; Rom. 16:23; II Tim. 4:20) Sosthenes was still another who had come to help in the work of the Gospel. He had formerly been a ruler in the synagogue, prior to being converted by Paul. (I Cor. 1:1; Acts 18:17) Although those invited by God to be disciples of Jesus were mainly from the poorer and less influential class of this world, occasionally prominent persons were called, like Erastus and Sosthenes. (I Cor. 1:26) Their hearts were right, their faith was strong, and they had qualities the Lord was seeking.

It appears that at the time of Paul's current stay at Ephesus, Timothy and Silas had done what they could at Corinth and had left. Timothy joined Paul at Ephesus. Silas, however, who had traveled and worked faithfully with him for four years, is not mentioned again as one of Paul's companions. Later, he is noted as being with the Apostle Peter. (I Pet. 5:12) Thus, although taking his leave of Paul, Silas continued to work in the ministry, using the opportunities the Lord opened for him.

CHURCH AT EPHESUS PROSPERED

The new ecclesias in Macedonia needed assistance, and Paul wanted very much to visit them again. However, at that time, the opportunity for witnessing in Ephesus continued to be so great that he decided instead to send Timothy and Erastus to those classes, while he stayed in Ephesus. (Acts 19:22) As stated by Luke in our opening text, the Word of God had indeed grown “mightily . . . and prevailed.” The church at Ephesus prospered and grew, becoming a large class with many elders.

Many years later, after the death of Paul, it is believed that the Apostle John became an elder in Ephesus, and also traveled to other surrounding cities of Asia Minor, serving the brethren in those locations. He ministered in this capacity until he was exiled to Patmos, an island in close proximity to Ephesus. As he wrote the Book of Revelation, John could attest to the Lord’s words of commendation to the church at Ephesus: “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”—Rev. 2:2,3

The ministry of the Gospel had borne much fruit in Ephesus and in many other areas of Asia Minor. Thus, the search for God’s people progressed with fervor through the great zeal of those who were moved by the Lord to engage in giving witness to God’s wonderful plan. ■

“If It Be So”

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”
—Daniel 3:17,18

WHEN THE NATION OF Israel was conquered by the Babylonian empire, many of their citizens were taken captive and brought to Babylon. Among these were three young Hebrews who were given the Chaldean names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In addition to these three, there was also Daniel, who later became one of God’s outstanding prophets. All four of these young Hebrews were given

special training by the servants of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king. Shortly thereafter, when Daniel was able to tell the king about his dream in which he saw a great humanlike image, and interpret it for him, Nebuchadnezzar gave him a high position in the government.—Dan. 2:1-48

Daniel seized the opportunity to request of the king that his three friends also be given suitable positions in the government, to which he agreed. (vs. 49) Later, Nebuchadnezzar erected a great golden image,

and directed that all the officials in his government attend the dedication of this immense statue. This, of course, included the three young Hebrews. It was further commanded that upon a certain signal, played on musical instruments, all should bow down and worship this image.—Dan. 3:1-5

The three young Hebrews properly concluded that this would be equivalent to worshipping a false god. This would constitute idolatry, which was forbidden by the law of their God. Thus, when the signal was given they did not bow down before the image. (vs. 12) This information was communicated to Nebuchadnezzar, and the three young men were brought before the king. He decided to give them another chance, and said to them, “Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”—vss. 13-15

At this juncture, it is worth noting that no mention is made of Daniel in this account. Where he was on this occasion, we do not know. However, it is possible that, due to his higher position, Daniel was away at the time, conducting business on behalf of the empire. Nevertheless, if he had been present on this occasion, we can be assured that, like the other three Hebrews, Daniel would not have bowed down and worshipped the king's image.

With steadfastness, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to king Nebuchadnezzar with the words of our opening text. They said that God was able to

deliver them from the fiery furnace if it was his will to do so. However, if it was not his will, they would still be delivered, through death, from the hand of the king. In either case, they said they would not worship the king's image. In the response of these three young men, we have a remarkable display of faith, which was based on the promises of God.

THE RESURRECTION HOPE

The Apostle Paul indicates that “in the law and in the prophets” it was taught that there would be “a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” (Acts 24:14,15) The three young Hebrews who refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image were undoubtedly of the “just” class, and would know about God's promises of a resurrection. Their faith allowed them to conclude that if the God of Israel did not see best to deliver them at that time from the fiery furnace, he would surely deliver them from the captivity of death in his own due time. Hence they were willing to confront the king and rely upon the wisdom and will of God to deal with them as seemed good in his sight.

This was proper reasoning. Centuries later the Apostle Paul wrote, “If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept”—I Cor. 15:16-20

God's faithful servants of the Old Testament did not understand fully his loving arrangements

through the redemptive work of Christ, whereby the dead would be restored to life. However, the evidence is that they did have the hope of a resurrection, and it was this that made much of the difference in the manner in which they served God. As part of their life of faith, they were willing to “sleep” in death until the time came for the resurrection promise to be fulfilled. Those who did not exercise such faith in God’s promises readily drifted away into idolatry and into other sins. They additionally would likely have had no scruples against bowing down to the great image which Nebuchadnezzar set up.

WE ARE ALSO TESTED

The example of the three Hebrews is a meaningful one to us who have covenanted to do the Heavenly Father’s will. We have many assurances in the Bible that our God is able to care for us in every time of need. With these assurances we can be enabled to meet every test of faith and obedience which his wisdom may permit to come upon us. Even in the case where a crisis in our life as a Christian may come in the form of a temptation from the Adversary, God permits it as a test of our fidelity to him.

These tests come to us in many ways. Often small things are involved, and we find ourselves confronted with a decision as to whether we will follow the course of righteousness set forth in the Word of God, or whether we will take an easier way. This may be the way of less sacrifice, which would be more pleasing to the flesh. We know, however, that if we choose the Lord’s way, he is able to overrule to his own glory and to our deliverance from trial, if it be his will to do so.

Our decisions as followers of the Master must not be based on the expectation that if we choose the hard way the Lord will lift the burden. Rather, we should act based on what we believe the Lord wants us to do, regardless of what the outcome may be so far as our own immediate circumstances are concerned. In doing so, we should always keep in mind, as the three Hebrews did, that our God is able to deliver us, and that he will deliver us in his due time, even if that due time is not until our resurrection.

“BUT IF NOT”

Another meaningful statement in the reply of the three Hebrews to Nebuchadnezzar is contained in the three words, “But if not.” They did not know whether it would be God’s will to deliver them from the fiery furnace. However, they did not intend to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s image. They forthrightly told the king that under no circumstances, even the threat of death in the fiery furnace, would they serve any Babylonian gods, or worship the image he had set up.—Dan. 3:18

We too are given two viewpoints when confronted by tests of faith and obedience. The one is, “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.” The other, “But if not,” we will not serve other gods—neither the world, the flesh, nor the Adversary. The three Hebrews knew that God would deliver them out of the hand of the king, but just how or when, they did not know. The same is true with us. We are assured of ultimate deliverance into the kingdom, but just what the Lord’s providence may be in the meantime we do not know. It is a matter of faith.

THREE HEBREWS DELIVERED

As it resulted for the three Hebrews, God permitted them to be cast into the burning fiery furnace, but they were so fully protected that the flames did not hurt them. When the king investigated he discovered that instead of there being three in the fiery furnace, there were four, the fourth being “like the son of God.” In other words, while the Lord permitted these faithful servants to pass through this “fiery trial,” his presence was with them and they were not injured. The fire had no power upon their bodies, “nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed.” They did not even have the smell of fire on them.—Dan. 3:20-27; I Pet. 1:7

The Apostle Paul wrote that it was through faith that these Hebrews “quenched the violence of fire.” (Heb. 11:34) Upon the basis of faith we too can pass through fiery trials with our “inward man,” or “new creature,” unscathed. (II Cor. 4:16; 5:17) We know that our ultimate deliverance will be into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We also realize that this deliverance will mean the death of the flesh and all its interests. Therefore, regardless of what happens to our flesh, and irrespective of the timing of such experiences, we know that God is in charge and is looking out for our eternal, spiritual welfare.—II Cor. 4:14-18; 5:1

We have Jesus for an example. God permitted his enemies to put him to death. Yet Jesus, as a New Creature, came through his “fiery furnace” uninjured, with not so much as the smell of “smoke” upon him. So it will be with us. Our faith can “quench the violence of fire” also, even one which may destroy

our flesh, but the severity of our trials will not harm us as New Creatures. We will know that through all of them our Heavenly Father's presence is with us, by his Holy Spirit, and by all the other means of grace which he, in his love and mercy, is pleased to provide.

GOD'S PROVIDENCES VARY

The Lord's providences in the lives of his people vary. This is brought to our attention by the Apostle Paul, as he presents us with a sizable list of faithful ones of the past, and states briefly some of their works of faith. Of Abraham he said, "When he was tried, [he] offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."—Heb. 11:17-19

Notice how Abraham's faith in God's ability to raise the dead entered into his obedience in presenting Isaac for sacrifice. Abraham believed that in the event he sacrificed Isaac, he would be restored to him. His faith was sufficient to give him assurance that he would sustain no permanent loss in obeying God's request to offer Isaac in sacrifice.

Surely this was a great test of faith! Abraham was no different in his feeling for his son than any other devoted father would be. In addition, Isaac was a very special son. Abraham had waited many years for his birth, and when he was born it was the result of a miracle. He might well have wondered why God would perform a miracle to give him this son and then ask him to slay the boy for a burnt offering.

However, Abraham's faith rose above any misgivings he may have had. He prepared the altar, and laid Isaac upon it. He even raised his knife to slay his beloved son. Then the Lord intervened, and provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac. Does our faith lead in paths of obedience to this full extent? We frequently do not understand why God indicates certain paths for us, but are we willing to enter those paths? Do we build our "altars," and place the "wood" upon them? Do we go so far as to raise the "knife" in obedience to the Lord's will?

The enabling power of faith should lead us thus along the pathway of obedience, even though when no "ram" is provided to remove the stress of the trial from our own hearts. We have made a covenant of sacrifice with the Lord, and it should be no cause for wonder, or for hesitation, when he gives us the opportunity to live up to the terms of our covenant. On the other hand, the Lord has his own due times and ways, and we believe that every devoted child of his can testify that "rams" have often been provided. This is especially true where the Lord knows that a particular trial may be too severe for us.

While we have covenanted to die, following in the footsteps of Jesus, in most cases this turns out to be a gradual laying down of our lives, which calls for an extended period of faithfulness, often nearly a lifetime. It is in the experiences of daily laying down our life, and giving up our will, that our faith enables us to accept the Lord's providences. We also have this promise: "God . . . 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, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

DANIEL'S EXAMPLE

In Paul's summary of those ancient heroes of faith he speaks of those who "stopped the mouths of lions." (Heb. 11:33) Daniel was one of these. It was in the days of Darius, who was king of the Medo-Persian Empire. Daniel had the king's support, but other officials in the realm were jealous, and sought a way to have him destroyed. They succeeded in deviously persuading Darius to issue a decree that for thirty days no one was to ask a petition "of any God or man," other than the king. Those who disobeyed were to be punished by being thrown to the lions.—Dan. 6:1-8

Darius signed the decree, not suspecting that it was in reality a conspiracy against his beloved Daniel. Once signed, however, it could not be changed, for such was the law of the Medes and Persians. Daniel, of course, continued his prayer habits as usual, doing so in open view. He was apprehended and brought before the king. Darius was helpless, and could do nothing but order that Daniel be cast into the den of lions, which was done.—vss. 9-17

Darius was unable to sleep that night, and early in the morning went to the lions' den and called to Daniel, hoping that he would find him still alive. Daniel was indeed alive, and replied, "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me."—vss. 19-22

Here we have an illuminating experience. The Lord permitted Daniel to be cast into the den of lions, but through his angel gave him protection. Even so, it must have been a harrowing experience. Just to

be thrown among lions would be most unnerving. We are not informed as to whether Daniel had any assurance from the Lord that he would be guarded by an angel. Thus, even though he actually was protected, it must have been a severe test of his faith.

Our experiences are often similar. The Lord may permit us to be surrounded by circumstances which threaten to engulf and crush us. Perhaps he intends to send his "angel" to deliver us, but we cannot be sure. As we often sing, "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." In order that our faith might be tested to the full, he seldom reveals in advance just which direction his providences are leading. By faith, though, we wait on him.

The "lions' dens" into which we are thrown may not be literal, as in the case of Daniel. We may not be locked up in a prison dungeon with our feet made fast in the stocks, as were Paul and Silas. However, the Lord knows just the circumstances which will serve best to test our faith. It is at these times that we look up to him in faith and say, "If it be thy will, Lord, we know that you are able to deliver us, but if not, give us strength and courage to endure until we have proven worthy of that great deliverance in the first resurrection. Help us to lean on your might, that we might be faithful even unto death, and thus receive the promised crown of life."

The ministry of the holy angels is a very real thing in the life of every servant of God. (Ps. 34:7; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14) An angel closed the mouths of the lions which threatened Daniel. In the case of Paul and Silas a great earthquake shook the prison walls and broke their chains asunder. In both instances, though, the tests were severe before these

miraculous deliverances took place. Our tests may also be severe, and many times the Lord will provide a way of escape. The time shall ultimately come, however, when there will be no way to go except through the floods and storms and fires of trial, and into the kingdom itself.

OTHER EXPERIENCES

Not all the Old Testament heroes of faith were delivered from their trials in miraculous ways as were the three Hebrews and Daniel. Paul says, "Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not [the fulfilment of] the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."—Heb. 11:36-40

Here was faith being demonstrated in a different way. There was no miracle to keep the smell of fire from the sheepskins and goatskins which many of these wore. They were stoned, but no angel was there to divert the stones in other directions. They were slain with the sword, with no one to stay the hands of the wielders of the weapons. They were destitute, afflicted, and tormented, not clothed in regal garments of government, protected and honored. They wandered in deserts, mountains, dens and caves of the earth, having no home or resting place.

Nevertheless, their faith rose above all these staggering experiences. It was a faith by which they were convinced that despite the fact that the God of Israel may have seemed to desert them, they knew that he had not. By this living faith, amidst suffering and death-dealing experiences, this group of faithful servants of God received a “good report.” That is, they proved worthy of the reward which awaits them of being “made perfect” after the completion of the “us” class of Christ’s footstep followers of the present Gospel Age.

JESUS ENDURED

Paul refers to these faithful ones of old as a “great . . . cloud of witnesses.” (Heb. 12:1) The faithful ones of the New Testament also serve the Lord’s people today as a cloud of witnesses. When we need encouragement, what a blessing it is to go with Paul on one of his missionary journeys, or to fellowship with him through his epistles. To contemplate upon Peter’s experience in the prison when, being delivered by an angel, the iron gate opened miraculously, is an inspiration to faith and fidelity.

Paul reminds us of the greatest example of all when he wrote, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”—vss. 2-4

Surely to look unto Jesus should help us through any trial. Jesus knew that it was the Father’s will

for him to lay down his life. However, the joy that was set before him by the promises of God enabled him to endure all his trials, including his final one on the cross. It will be even so with us. Many times we will need to draw on this source of strength.

As Paul reminds us, though, we “have not yet resisted unto blood.” That is to say, we have not yet been faithful even unto death as Jesus was. We know that our Heavenly Father will support us by his Spirit. He will strengthen us in all our trials, many times providing partial deliverance from their severity. Nevertheless, finally there must come that resisting “unto blood.” It will be then that we need to lean on the Lord more than we have ever done before, and we can do so with the assurance that he will not fail us.

When Jesus was arrested, he said to Peter, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11) He did drink that cup, completely and victoriously. We also have a cup to drink. (Matt. 20:22,23) May our dedication to the Heavenly Father be so complete that we will not hesitate to partake of it to its final dregs, even “unto blood.” Let us do this with the clear understanding that God’s power could spare us this final test, but that divine wisdom and love know that this would not be best. Let us realize more and more, day by day, that if we are to share with Jesus in the throne of his glory we must be faithful now, even unto death. May our faith be so strong that we will rejoice in the fact that there is no other way to kingdom glory.—Rev. 2:10 ■

Our Anointing Through Christ

***“To whom God
would make known
what is the riches
of the glory of this
mystery among the
Gentiles; which is
Christ in you, the
hope of glory.”
—Colossians 1:27***

THE SCRIPTURES FRE-quently speak of the church as being “in Christ,” giving the thought of membership in his body. (Rom. 12:4,5; I Cor. 12:12-27; II Cor. 5:17) Our Lord used the figure of a vine and its branches to convey the same thought. He spoke of himself as the vine, and of the church as the branches, partaking of nourishment through the vine. (John 15:1-7) This is not the thought, however, that is expressed by the apostle’s words, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

The word Christ signifies anointed. All who will be members of the royal priesthood are anointed—not separately, but collectively. “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.” (II Cor. 1:21) This was pictured in the Old Testament by the installation into office of both the kings and the high priests of Israel. According to the Jewish law, every king and every

high priest must be anointed, or else he could not serve. The oil which was used in this ceremony was of a peculiar kind, which was not to be used for any other purpose.—Exod. 30:22-33

The anointing which our Lord and the members of his symbolic body have received is different from any other arrangement in the entire world. It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which is variously spoken of as the spirit of holiness, the spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of truth, the spirit of God, and the spirit of Christ. (Rom. 1:4; II Tim. 1:7; John 14:17; Rom. 8:9) It is not the Truth, but the spirit of the Truth. It is not God or Christ, although it is in harmony with the character of both the Father and his Son. It is not holiness, yet it is in full accord with holiness. It is, however, reflective of a mind that is fortified and strengthened by the Word of the Lord. It is the spirit, or disposition, which is associated with a sound mind, with holiness, with truth, and with the attributes of God and Christ Jesus. This enables its possessor to view things more correctly, giving wisdom and grace for the affairs of life far beyond any that they would have had without it.

As the anointing of kings and priests in Israel was the divine evidence that they were accepted to office, so it was with our Lord Jesus. The Apostle Peter tells us that “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.” (Acts 10:38) Our Lord was set apart for a very high office. In harmony with the divine arrangement, he is to be the great antitypical King and Priest, “after the order of Melchisedec.”—Heb. 5:6

Jesus prayed to God concerning his followers, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is

truth.” (John 17:17) The word “sanctify” means to set apart, or make holy. During the Gospel Age, God has been setting apart those who are to be members of the body of Christ. These are invited to be kings and priests unto God, and they are called “a royal priesthood.” (I Pet. 2:9) Consequently, when one is received into this body, under the headship of Christ, he comes under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. “You have an anointing from the Holy One.” (I John 2:20, *New American Standard Bible*) This anointing is from the Father in that he alone can give the recognition. It is by means of the Son, and through him alone, that we can come to the Father. —Matt. 11:27

This is well illustrated by the consecration of the Jewish high priest. The holy oil was poured upon Aaron’s head, pointing forward to the anointing of our Lord at the time of his consecration. The oil then ran down to the very skirts of Aaron’s garments, prefiguring the anointing of the body of Christ, which is the church. (Ps. 133:2) This descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church was manifested at Pentecost. —Acts 2:1-4

DISTINCTION BETWEEN ANOINTING AND BEGETTING

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is slightly different from the begetting of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit which came upon Jesus at Jordan was both the anointing and the begetting power of God. John the Baptist saw and bore record that our High Priest was thus begotten, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.” (John 1:32) From the moment at which

he was begotten, our Lord was also anointed, and the term “Christ Jesus” means “anointed Jesus.”

Concerning Jesus’ disciples at Pentecost, they were waiting for acceptance by God. Our Lord had appeared in the presence of God as their Advocate, in order that their consecrations might be acceptable. (I John 2:1) The Father recognized their acceptance by shedding forth the Holy Spirit, and gave visible evidence by the appearance of “cloven tongues like as of fire,” which “sat upon each one of them.” (Acts 2:3) That recognition constituted both their begetting and their anointing. The former—the begetting—represented the matter from the individual standpoint, while the latter—the anointing—showed it from the collective. We are begotten individually, but we are anointed collectively.

If we were to consider the anointing and the begetting as two different steps of progress, we would be obliged to say that the begetting of an individual takes place first, and then he becomes part of the anointed class, and recognized as an heir of God. However, this ordering of one before the other is not necessarily in accord with the thought. These seem to be two pictures which represent the matter from two different standpoints. We are not individually anointed, nor are we collectively begotten.

This Holy Spirit which we receive from God abides in us, as long as we remain under its life-giving influence. By doing so, we will also continue to abide under the anointing as a prospective member of the body of Christ. The Apostle John said, “The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you.” (I John 2:27) Our individual begetting takes place at the beginning of our consecrated earthly sojourn.

If we are “faithful unto death,” our resurrection, or spirit birth, will take place. (Rev. 2:10) Thus, we are individually begotten, and then at the end of our earthly course, born of the spirit.

Paul gives us serious admonitions concerning the Holy Spirit’s vital importance in our life: “Grieve not the holy Spirit of God,” and “Quench not the Spirit.” (Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19) A quenching, or extinguishing, of the Holy Spirit’s begetting power in us would also mean a ceasing of being part of the anointed class. If we “have not the Spirit of Christ,” then we are “none of his.”—Rom. 8:9

In the Scriptural picture of anointing, it is the entire body which is anointed, and there is no need for a repetition of the ceremony which took place on the Day of Pentecost, nor of its miraculous outward manifestations. At the beginning of the Gospel Age, the one body was symbolically anointed, and all who will be members of that body have come under the one anointing. All who faithfully remain under that anointing will share in Christ’s resurrection, the “first resurrection,” to “glory and honour and immortality.”—Rev. 20:6; Rom. 2:7

FOREKNOWN OF GOD

Just as our Lord was begotten to a new nature by the Holy Spirit, each member of his body must be similarly begotten, for “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” (I Cor. 15:50) If we have received this begetting, and come under the church’s anointing, we are eligible to all that God has promised to the Christ—first to the Head, and then to the members of his body. As God foreknew the work of his only begotten Son, the Redeemer,

he also foreknew this class.—Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4,5; I Pet. 1:18-20

Long before our Lord came to earth to provide the redemptive price for Adam, the Father had planned that there should be a special anointed company. The head of this class would be Christ Jesus, and his body would be the church. (Eph. 1:3,4,22,23) Jesus was to have the highest place in the Christ company, and associated with him would be those who have his spirit, and who had made a full consecration of their lives to do God's will faithfully, even unto death.—I Pet. 1:2-4

For those who have made an acceptable consecration of their will to God, and have presented themselves in sacrifice, Jesus stands as their Advocate before the Father, covering their blemishes and imperfections. Our Lord's work is not that of anointing, but of making it possible for us to be received by the Father. The anointing is of the Father, but by means of the Son's redemptive work. The Apostle Peter says that because of Jesus' faithfulness as man's Redeemer, he "received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit," to be "shed forth" to his consecrated followers.—Acts 2:33

If we have this spirit of God, it is an evidence to us that we are his children. As long as we possess it, we maintain our relationship as sons. (Rom. 8:9,14) The resulting thought is that if we are children of God, we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (vs. 17) The Apostle Peter adds that we are begotten "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by

the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”—I Pet. 1:4,5

The words of our opening text suggest the thought that whoever has the Spirit of God has evidence of a “hope of glory,” and will receive the fruition of their hopes if found faithful. On one occasion, which we have previously quoted in part, the Apostle John said, “The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you.” Then he adds, “ye need not that any man teach you.” (I John 2:27) That is, those who have this anointing do not need someone to teach them that they are abiding under the influence of the Holy Spirit. They have the indication or witness of it in their own hearts and experiences. These evidences are more apparent to themselves than to anyone else.

THE MIND OF CHRIST

The testimony that we have been anointed may not be understood except as we have the instructions of the Word of God. The Scriptures give us an outline of the witness to the possession of the Holy Spirit, so as to leave no room for doubt. They tell us that the Holy Spirit, the begetting power in us, leads us more and more to have the “mind of Christ.” (I Cor. 2:16) We were not begotten or anointed with the mind of Christ, but with the Holy Spirit. However, if we have the Holy Spirit, we will find it needful to develop the mind of Christ. Paul said, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 2:5

A fundamental aspect of the mind of Christ is the desire to do the Father’s will and to engage in his service. Jesus, even at the young age of twelve,

expressed to his mother his need to “be about [his] Father’s business.” (Luke 2:49) We recognize that we have a Heavenly Father whose service is the highest possible work in which we can engage. The labor of the spirit-begotten child of God must be heavenward, otherwise he will lack proof that he has passed from the condemnation upon the human race and become a New Creature.

If we have the spirit of loyalty to God, to the Truth, and to the brethren, we have the mind, or disposition, of Christ. Indeed, we still have the weaknesses of the flesh to contend with, but it is our privilege to fight against these. (I Tim. 6:12) In so doing, we become transformed in the spirit of our minds, and have our life more fully centered in the Truth and in the service of the brethren.

If there is a decrease of zeal in this direction, then we may know that there is danger of going backward instead of forward. There is a possibility that we may lose our “first love,” and become more or less cold to the Word of God. (Rev. 2:4; Matt. 24:12) If we allow our minds to be led away to earthly things, ambitions, or worldliness, all of which war against heavenly things, these may be evidences of a loss of our first love.

The Apostle John admonishes us: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (I John 2:15) We should seek our pleasures, not from earthly sources, but from the heavenly bounties which are ours to claim. “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col. 3:2) We are not speaking against those requirements of family, home, or job which are part of our earthly

stewardship. Our eternal aspirations, however, are to be bent heavenward. Jesus instructed us: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." —Matt. 6:33

If we strive to make these principles applicable to all the affairs of life, and do not lose our focus concerning the things which are most important, we will be blessed thereby. We will be helped in the Lord's service, and prepared for the kingdom in which God has promised us a share. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matt. 6:19,20) The chiefest of all treasures is the personal love and communion of God and his Son, Christ Jesus, and the honor and privilege of being "espoused . . . to Christ." —II Cor. 11:2

OTHER EVIDENCES OF THE ANOINTING

In addition to having the mind of Christ, we have other evidences that we have been anointed. We find ourselves needing spiritual food, and to satisfy our hunger, the Heavenly Father has provided us the knowledge of his glorious plan and of his character. Each new view of these things gives us fresh inspiration. If we then find some of our brethren spiritually hungry, how can we withhold from giving them the spiritual refreshment which we have? Indeed, we have the blessed privilege of helping them to be filled with the nourishing food of God's Word, being "instant in season" and "out of season," for their spiritual benefit.—II Tim. 4:2

If we love the Truth, we will serve the Truth. This service is sure to bring upon us the disapproval of the world, and will not result in an earthly reward.

The world will conclude that we are doing it for money or some selfish reason, for they will surely fail to see the real purpose of a truly consecrated life. In many cases, the selection and preparation of the members of the body of Christ for placement in the symbolic temple of God is going on without the knowledge of the world of mankind. (I Kings 6:7) If, in all these things, we patiently endure, we will thereby prove ourselves to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ.—II Tim. 2:3

If devotion to the will of the Father brought upon our Lord shame and ignominy, we must not wonder that we are treated likewise. If the world called the “master of the house Beelzebub,” they will assuredly call his followers some evil name. (Matt. 10:25) The willingness to persevere in all this, and with joy count it as a part of our sacrifice and reasonable service, is a further evidence that we have been anointed.—Rom. 12:1

We may find that we can very easily love some of the brethren, but that there are others whom it is not so easy to love. They may seem not to be loveable, or we may perceive that they are not easy to approach. Some also may view us in this same way. However, we all should reflect that if the Lord can receive and love us as his brethren, we should do the same, and look past these things. We must develop love for all the brethren—the rich and poor, the educated and uneducated—and desire to render them assistance as opportunity arises, without partiality toward one over another.—John 15:13; I John 3:14,17; James 3:17

The evidences that one has come under the anointing of the Holy Spirit are: increased hunger

for spiritual things; a desire to assist others to see and to grow in knowledge and heavenly grace; persecution from the worldly minded; and the development of the mind of Christ. Additionally, it is to have a disposition which is loving, generous, forgiving toward others, and reverential toward God and obedient to his will. Whoever finds, upon self-examination, that he has these evidences in his heart of a full devotion to God's will, has the witness of the spirit that he is a child of God. Such, Paul says, are "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. . . . And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. 3:26,29

THE HOPE OF GLORY

The word "glory" carries with it the thought of honor and dignity, and sometimes also that of brightness or shining. The Scriptures speak of the Heavenly Father as having the "excellent glory," that glory which is above all others. (II Pet. 1:17) Our Lord Jesus is said to have been "received up into glory." (I Tim. 3:16) Of Adam, it is said that he was "crowned . . . with glory and honour," and given dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea. (Ps. 8:5-8; Gen. 1:28) In this connection, Adam's glory seems to refer to the fact that he was made in the image of his Creator.—Gen. 1:27

Applying these same thoughts to ourselves, we find that at the present time we have no glory of this kind. The blessing and honor we have received, however, is the possession of the Holy Spirit, which is the evidence of our adoption into the family of

God. This is merely the beginning of the glory which God has promised to those who are faithful—an “earnest of the Spirit.” (II Cor. 1:22; 5:5) To have the begetting of the Holy Spirit in us is to come under its anointing power. If we allow the Holy Spirit to operate in our life, and faithfully cooperate with it, the end will be glorious.

The anointing which we have received is the spirit of Christ in us. It is the hope or basis of the glory which we are seeking, and which is to be like that of our Redeemer, whom God has exalted above all angels, principalities and powers. This anointing, this spirit of Christ within us, is the promise, hope, and basis, of all that is coming to his faithful body members. Let us, therefore, heed the admonition of Paul that we “quench not” this Holy Spirit of Christ. On the contrary, let us cultivate it, develop it, and give attention to it daily. Continuing, the apostle says, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.” (I Thess. 5:19,21,22) Thus, may we hear the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”—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.

Sister Clara Koszka, Buffalo, NY—June 14. Age, 98
Sister Arla Mae Boldt, Verona, WI—June 17. Age, 83

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

FRANK AND ERNEST PROGRAMS

DawnBible: The classic *Frank and Ernest* program is a great way to learn Bible truth. I listen to them with pen and paper in my hand. The programs are about 15 minutes long. One can learn a great deal (in heart and head) from listening to these programs.—OH

LOOKING FOR A BIBLE STUDY

DawnBible: I am interested in learning from the information you sent. Do you have a Bible study I can partake in? I am loving your booklets.—FL

STATEMENT OF FAITH

DawnBible: I retrieved an article about countenance of God on Google and I found it very refreshing. I would like to know your statement of faith before I go further into your website.—SC

THE NEW CREATION IN SPANISH?

DawnBible: About nine years ago I had contact with you, and a person from the USA communicated with me and sent me some literature which I try to share here in my locality. A month ago communicated with me and from another city Medellín, a brother named Rafael and since then we have spoken three times.

I looked at *The New Creation* book and I would like to know if it is possible to have it physically in Spanish?

The magazine *The Dawn* I received again in the email address you have but I would appreciate having in my hands that book. I would also like to know what possibilities I have for forming a study group in the city of Bogota. Thanks—Columbia

LOVE YOUR MINISTRY

DawnBible: Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I am learning to be the best I can be for Jesus. I love your ministry, it seems very pure. May God bless you all—KY

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

DawnBible: I am a member of the Bible Students

of Allentown PA. I moved away ten years ago and have no local ecclesia. I would like to know if you have any information on speaking in tongues. I work with some people who practice this and they do not know the danger of it. I thought I had a booklet about it but I don't see it listed here. Thank you.—TN

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

AUGUST 3—"Separate yourselves from the people of the land."—Ezra 10:11 (Z. '99-203 Hymn 57A)

AUGUST 10—"If there be any consolation [comfort] in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."—Philippians 2:1,2 (Z. '04-296 Hymn 166)

AUGUST 17—"Quench not the Spirit."—I Thessalonians 5:19 (Z. '03-25 Hymn 260)

AUGUST 24—"Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."—John 17:11 (Z. '03-77 Hymn 230)

AUGUST 31—"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."—Daniel 3:17,18 (Z. '99-172 Hymn 360)

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below are routed through the Pilgrim Department of The Dawn. Their visits are furnished free upon request. Write to: The Dawn Pilgrim Department, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. A visit will be arranged whenever possible.

B. Keith

Salem, OR	August 1
Portland, OR	2

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

E. Blicharz

Atlanta, GA	August 13
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R. Goodman

Atlanta, GA	August 13
-------------	-----------

L. Griehs

Columbus, OH	August 5,6
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“The LORD hath appeared of old into me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”—Jeremiah 31:3

The whole world is seeking for happiness. The few who have truly found Jesus, and who have made a full consecration of their hearts to him, and to whom he has given the water of life—these few have found the happiness which the world is seeking in other directions in vain. They have found a heart satisfaction which is able even to offset trials, sorrows, difficulties and disappointments from other sources, and to glory in this realization, that their experiences are working to their advantage, proving them, preparing them for still greater riches of glory by and by.

—*Songs in the Night*, August 3

CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

OKPU ALA NGWA CONVENTION, August 2—Class Meeting Hall, Okpuala Ngwa, Abia State, Nigeria. Contact C. Godwin. Email: nyerugo@yahoo.com

NIGERIA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 25-27—Central School Obudi Agwa Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu, #24 Fayemi Street Coca Cola Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Phone: 2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

JACKSON CONVENTION, September 2,3—FaHoLo Camp and Conference Center, 3000 Mt. Hope Road, Grass Lake, MI 49240. For information, contact B. Davis. Phone: (517) 788-6552 or Email: r2d2lad@comcast.net

NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 2,3—Double-Tree Hotel Mahwah, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ. Contact G. Passios. Phone: (201) 939-3196 or Email: gpassios11@verizon.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 2-4—(New location) Bastyr University, 14500 Juanita Drive NE, Kenmore, WA 98028. For reservations and information, contact L. Flinn. Phone: (206) 518-2678 or Email: laurie@flinn.us

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 9,10—Comfort Inn, 4725 University Drive (Hwy. 72), Huntsville, AL 35806. Phone: (256) 562-2525. Mention “Huntsville Bible Students” when making reservations. Contact J. Cothren. Phone: (256) 852-8505 or Email: jimmycothren@att.net

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, September 23,24—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI

53207. Contact D. Farchione. Email: Debfarchione@aol.com

PITTSBURGH AREA CONVENTION, September 30-October 1—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact G. Balko. Phone: (724) 771-0139 or Email: gbalko57@gmail.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, October 14,15—Kenowa Hills Middle School, 3950 Hendershot Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49544. Contact T. Malinowski, 5609 Buttrick Avenue SE, Alto, MI 49302. Phone: (616) 868-0313 or Email: malinowski.tjm@gmail.com

SAN LUIS OBISPO CONVENTION, October 21,22—Masonic Hall, 859 Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo, CA. Contact M. Allard. Phone: (805) 773-2962 or Email: medlallard@juno.com

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 28,29—South Seminole Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 831-2098 or Email: jkuenzli@cfl.rr.com

DETROIT/METRO DETROIT JOINT CONVENTION, October 29—Pleasant Ridge Community Center, 4 Ridge Road, Pleasant Ridge, MI. Contact G. Zendler. Phone: (248) 399-8843 or Email: ngzendler@wowway.com

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 5—Westwoods Italian-American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact A. Suraci. Phone: (203) 248-3793 or Email: annasuraci@comcast.net

*Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in him always, and feed on his Word.
Make friends of God's children;
help those who are weak;
Forgetting in nothing his blessing to seek.
—Hymns of Dawn*