

The Dawn

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Table of Contents

HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

"He Whose Right It Is"	2
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INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

Doubting God's Promise	12
Accepting God's Promise	14
Rejoicing in God's Greatness	16
Celebrating the Savior's Birth	18

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

Heavenly Manna	20
Seventy Times Seven	29
Priorities	43
Lessons from the Past	52
Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts	51

VOICES FROM THE PAST

Overcoming Hindrances	58
-----------------------	----

"FRANK AND ERNEST"

Radio Schedule	34
----------------	----

THE BIBLE ANSWERS

Television Schedule	36
---------------------	----

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

OBITUARIES

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

CONVENTIONS

Highlights of Dawn

At this wondrous season, we rejoice once again to read the words of the Prophet Isaiah speaking prophetically of our Lord Jesus' birth:

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. . . . Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." —Isaiah 9:6,7

We rejoice also in the knowledge that even in troublous times such as these in which this year of 1988 closes, we can have the assurance that we are experiencing the evidences that the Gentile Times have indeed ended and that the one "whose right it is" to sit upon David's throne will soon exercise that right, and take unto himself his great power and begin his reign over the nations of the earth.

"He Whose Right It Is"

The Jewish nation "shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."—Luke 21:24

THESE words were part of a long answer Jesus gave to his disciples when they asked him, "When shall these things be, and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" (Luke 21:7) Matthew's account reads, "When these things shall be, and what the sign of thy presence and the conclusion of the age." (Matt. 24:3, Rotherham) When God created Adam and Eve, he said to them, "Be fruitful, and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of

the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Gen. 1:28, **New International Version**) Man was originally constituted a ruler or king over the earth, but this dominion was forfeited because of sin. Since the time of Adam, various individuals, groups, dynasties, or royal families, have attempted with varying degrees of success to rule over at least a portion of their fellows, and their small segment of the earth.

This was true respecting the Jewish nation—the natural descendants of Abraham, the man to whom God promised that “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3) This promise was so important that it was confirmed by God’s oath. (Heb. 6:13,17) Part of his promise was, “Thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies.” (Gen. 22:17) At the time these words were written, powerful cities were walled, and gates in the walls controlled access to the city. Those who controlled the gates controlled the city. So this expression was God’s way of telling Abraham that his seed would be in control of the affairs of the world. But God did not specify the time for the fulfillment for this great and wonderful prophecy.

The LORD first began to deal with Abraham’s descendants as a nation at the death of Jacob. At that time the Israelites were simply a collection of families without a government, laws, land, or ruler. They were bond slaves in the land of Egypt when Moses was sent by God to deliver them from their bondage. At the death of Moses, Joshua became responsible for the division of the Promised Land among the tribes, which they had entered under his leadership.

During the four hundred year stretch of time following the death of Joshua, Israel was without any king or ruler. This is known as the period of the judges. Describing this era, the Scriptures say, “Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judg. 17:6) Because of the wickedness of the people, God permitted them to come periodically under the control of their enemies—the Philistines, Amalekites, Midianites, Amorites, and

other heathen nations. In each instance, after they had suffered enough, God would raise up a judge who would deliver them from oppression. Some of these included Gideon, Deborah, and finally, the last judge, Samuel. Near the close of his life, Samuel tried to appoint one of his sons to carry on as his successor. But the people rejected this idea for several reasons.

The main reason was that they wanted a king such as their heathen neighbors had. Kings at the head of kingdoms was the usual arrangement—Israel's system of judges was an exception to the normal. God agreed to give the Israelites what they wanted, though he instructed Samuel to warn them of the difficulties they would encounter living under a king. But they were certain they wanted a king, so Samuel, under God's direction, selected and anointed Saul to be their first king. Saul's reign began well. He seemed to be a humble and good ruler. But before long he departed from the ways of God, and David was anointed to be his replacement.

God did not promise Saul that he would be the first in a *royal line* of kings. Saul was anointed to be a king, not the head of a royal house. But, just before his death, Jacob had spoken this wonderful prophecy: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gen. 49:10) David was of the tribe of Judah. God here says that the sceptre, or right to rule, would remain with Judah [David's line] even though some of those who exercised this authority would be extremely wicked kings. Yet God exercised mercy toward David, as expressed in the marvelous words, "the sure mercies of David." See II Chronicles 6:42, Isaiah 55:3, and Acts 13:34.

The Davidic line of succession continued until 606 B.C., when King Zedekiah, one of the royal line of David, was overthrown by the Babylonish king, Nebuchadnezzar, and taken captive with the people into Babylon. Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel where the king was enthroned, was destroyed. In this con-

nection, the Prophet Ezekiel, who had already been taken to Babylon, wrote this significant prophecy: "Thus saith the LORD God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be . . . until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:26,27) Even though David and many of his successors in his line were dead, and even though his current successor was defeated and going into captivity, God assured the prophet that the house of David was not dead. Kingship would be held in suspension until he came whose right it was, at which time God would surely give the crown to him.

Who was this person who had the right to David's throne? The answer is given to us in the words of the angel, who told Mary, "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the LORD God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:31-33) Jesus is the one "whose right it is." The promise that Judah, David's royal line, would be forever had nothing to do with David's natural descendents, nor, for that matter, with David himself. It was a promise which saw its fulfillment in Jesus, the Son of God—the true heir to the throne of David.

Isaiah spoke prophetically of Jesus in these words: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will perform this." (Isa. 9:6,7) This will be the great work during the reign of Christ.

The Bible gives us many thrilling promises in connection with the reign of him, whose right it is. In Isaiah's prophecy we read how there will be no end to the increase of his peace! Micah said, "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid." (Mic. 4:4) The fulfillment of these, and many other promises, are associated with the reestablishment of the throne of David, first in Israel, then over the entire earth.

When the disciples asked their Master for information which would enable them to be aware of the sign that it was the time for Jesus' second presence, he told them, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." If 'Jerusalem' is no longer 'trodden down' (controlled by) the Gentiles, then we know the times of the Gentiles are over. Note that Jesus did not say, 'when the kingdom is established', or 'when every man will dwell under his own vine and fig tree'. He did not say, 'after the resurrection of those who are to be the

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earthly representatives of the kingdom' nor 'when the blessings of peace and joy fill the earth'!

In 606 B.C., when Zedekiah was overthrown and taken captive to Babylon, the nation of Israel lost its independence. Although, seventy years later, King Cyrus allowed any who desired to return to their land, from a national perspective the nation never regained its independence. They continued to be subject to Babylon as long as it was a world power. Then they were subject to Medo-Persia, to Greece, and—in the days of Jesus when he uttered the prophecy in Luke—to Rome.

The use of the word 'Jerusalem' refers to the government of Israel. Even today we commonly refer to a government by naming its capital. If one asks what the thinking is in Paris, for instance, we expect to discover the thinking of the leaders of the French government. If we were to say that Paris is under the control of another government, it would generally mean that the entire nation of France was in subjection. This is the thought of our Lord's prophecy. The whole Jewish political arrangement was trodden down. No one in Israel had any liberty. They all paid taxes to Rome. This was the *treading down* of Israel by a foreign nation. Jesus said it would continue until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled.

Another picture of this is given to us in the Book of Daniel. The prophet interpreted a dream of Nebuchadnezzar in which that king is likened to a tree which had been cut down and banded about for "seven times." (Dan. 4:10-16) A prophetic 'time' is a period of 360 days. One prophetic 'day' often equals one literal year. Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks, with Messiah cut off in the middle of the seventieth week (chapter 9, verses 25-27) illustrates a prophecy which can only be understood if a conversion is made between prophetic time (one prophetic week equals seven prophetic days) and literal time (seven prophetic days equal seven literal years). Thus "seven times" means seven times 360, or 2,520. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar actually became a

reality. He was "cut down" for seven literal years. But in this experience he pictured what happened to Israel. As a nation they were "trodden down" for 7 [years] multiplied by 360 [years], equals 2,520 years.

This period began when Zedekiah and the Jews were carried off to Babylon in 606 B.C. Counting two thousand five hundred and twenty years from that time brings us to 1914 A.D. This prophecy *does not* describe when Gentile kingdoms would begin and continue to exist; for they existed and exercised their powers long before 606 B.C., and they still continue to exist even now. But the prophecy *does refer* to the time during which four specifically designated Gentile empires would keep Israel subject to their control. The year 1914 marks the time when things changed dramatically in the world. It was a time that changed Israel's fortunes. Today Israel is not trodden down, or controlled, by anyone. She pays taxes to no foreign government, she selects and chooses her own governing body, makes her own laws, controls her own army, and is free to make her own decisions affecting her country internally, as well as on the world scene. This conclusively proves that "the times of the Gentiles" has ended!

Nebuchadnezzar was Babylon's king in 606 B.C. when Israel was brought under their subjugation. In the second year of his reign he had a dream that troubled him. As revealed by God, through Daniel, he dreamed of a mighty image whose head was of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs

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of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay. Then a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands, smote the image on its feet, ground it to powder, and the wind carried it away. In his interpretation, Daniel said, "Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. . . . Thou art this head of gold."—Dan. 2:32-38

In what sense was Nebuchadnezzar this head of gold? Not that he was a ruler—for his father had ruled before him, and he was already in the second year of his own reign. The sense is that the God of heaven **had given** him dominion. It made no change in the Babylonian empire. It merely gave recognition to the fact that God was taking a hand in the affairs of Babylon beginning at that time, including control over the affairs of Israel.

This God-given dominion continued on, for "after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth." (vs. 39) When the stone smote the image and destroyed it, the gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay, all came down together. Clearly the elements did not represent these nations—for Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and even Rome had long since ceased to exist as world empires! But what **was** destroyed was this ideology, this God-given dominion to the Gentile nations. It all came tumbling down in 1914—in the First World War!

The kings of the earth had long claimed special authority for their right to rule others. This was known as the "divine right of kings." The Apostle Paul acknowledged this when he said, "The powers that be are ordained of God." (Rom. 13:1) But God did not give these ruling powers the right to exploit, torture, or burn their opposition at the stake. Prerogatives such as these were a corruption of their right to rule ordained by God.

In our time the last vestige of this ideology has been destroyed. No statesman today would be so foolish as to advocate the restoration of a state-church system to save the world from chaos. That which was represented by Nebuchadnezzar's great

chaos. That which was represented by Nebuchadnezzar's great image is gone. The right to rule granted by God to four specific successive world empires is over. We do not understand this to mean that there must be no Gentile nations left in the world before we can say that the Gentile times are ended. As we stated before, and again reiterate, Gentile nations existed from the beginning of time, and they certainly continue to exist today. Notice particularly the closing words of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream: "In the days of these kings [when the ideology of a God-given right to rule is in force] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."—Dan. 2:44

So we see from our Lord's prophecy, recorded in Luke, that the times of the Gentiles has surely ended because Israel is no longer subjugated by Gentile nations. Israel is not, however, at this time receiving the blessings of the kingdom. But of course Jesus did not say this would happen at the particular time he described. Certainly, from the viewpoint of the Gentile kingdoms, that which was represented by Nebuchadnezzar's image was indeed doomed and destroyed when the 2,520-year period of God-given dominion came to an end in 1914!

Our conclusion is sure: we are in the period when the God of heaven is preparing to set up a kingdom. It is being set up in the sense that through Christ the world's kingdoms and organizations are being weakened and destroyed. Soon earth's dark night of weeping will close. Then the glorious sunlight of God's blessings will shine through the Messianic kingdom with its healing beams on all the weary earth. (Mal. 4:2) Glory, glory, hallelujah!

• • •

The Gentile Times have ended for their kings have had their day.

And with them sin and sorrow will forever pass away.

The tribe of Judah's Lion now has come to hold the sway:

Glory, glory, hallelujah! Our King is marching on!

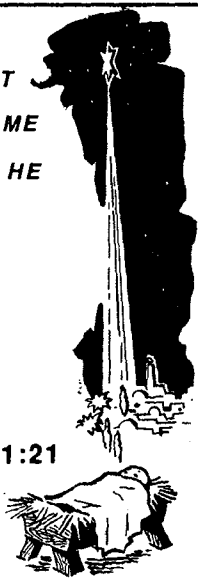


Jesus, Our Savior

OUR text sums up the entire work of our Lord Jesus, and indicates that it is all implied in the meaning of the name Jesus—Savior. We sometimes refer to our Lord as the Savior of sinners, and properly so, because we are all sinners through our share in the Adamic fall.

We sometimes speak of him as the Savior of the world, and properly so, because the whole world was lost through Adam's disobedience, and the whole world was redeemed and is to have the glorious opportunity of reconciliation to the Father through their Redeemer.

But, it is also appropriate that we note the statement of this text, "He shall save *his people* from their sins." This statement that only the Lord's people are to be saved from their sins is in full agreement with the other statements that he is the Savior of the world, because, although his salvation must extend to and embrace every member of Adam's race, yet only those who, when they know of the great salvation and of the opportunities accorded them, accept the same and become his people—only they shall get the full salvation and be delivered completely from death and attain to the life everlasting, which is the gift of God to all those who obey him, and to no others.

☐

**"THOU SHALT
CALL HIS NAME
JESUS: FOR HE
SHALL SAVE
HIS PEOPLE
FROM THEIR
SINS."**

—Matthew 1:21

International Bible Study Lessons

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 4

Doubting God's Promise

KEY VERSE: *"The angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."—Luke 1:13*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Luke 1:5-13, 18-20, 24,25*

FOR a Jewish couple to remain childless was often construed as a sign of God's disfavor. However Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth, now aging and still childless, "were both righteous before God." (Luke 1:6) He was a priest and very devoted to his responsibilities in the Temple. And the fact that Elisabeth was barren was a matter of concern and prayer to them for many years.

It was while he was going about his priestly duties, burning incense upon the altar, that he suddenly saw an angel standing there. Naturally, Zacharias was afraid, but the angel bore good news, announcing that Elisabeth was to bear a son, and they should call his name John. Even though this was told by an angel from God, the physical impediment of their advanced years made these words seem unbelievable. Zacharias

asked for some sign that this, their fondest hope, could be realized. He probably expected some evidence of a return to the virility of youth, but instead he was struck dumb, and could not speak.

God is not pleased with a lack of belief in his Word, even if by human abilities it might seem incredulous. That is why Abraham and Sarah, who were faced with a very similar circumstance, are heralded in the Scriptures as examples of faith to follow. When God promised Abraham that he would have a seed, his wife was also barren, and Abraham did not know how this promise could be fulfilled. However, his lack of knowledge did not weaken his faith. He believed God, and so he started out on a life of faith ever believing that the time would come when the seed of promise would be born.

In Abraham's case it was not just a few weeks before the physical evidence of the fulfillment of God's words were apparent. It was a long wait of twenty-five years. Even this great prophet's lack of knowledge of God's unique abilities to perform put a strain on his credulity. When God made it clear that no other mother for the seed would be considered except Sarah, Abraham laughed. (Gen. 17:17) Years had passed and now Sarah was not only still barren, but past the age of childbearing. Because he did not know how God could possibly fulfill this promise, his faith momentarily wavered, but soon he realized that all he needed to know was that God had promised, and this was a sufficient foundation for his faith.

The Apostle Paul's analysis of Abraham's great test was that he "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith . . . and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised he was able to perform."—Rom. 4:20,21

There are striking parallels to this in the Christian life today. By faith we enter into the narrow way having little knowledge of where we are going. The Apostle John wrote, "We are God's children, what we shall be has not yet been

disclosed, but when it is disclosed, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2, **New English Bible**) We accept our future by faith, and lay hold upon this promise, yet not knowing its full meaning.

God also tests our faith by permitting us to wait for the fulfillment of his promises. This principle of God's dealings with his people is referred to by the prophet where he says, "Though it [the vision] tarry [seem long in coming], wait for it." (Hab. 2:3) Jesus illustrated it by the parable of the ten virgins. And surely the Lord's people at this end of the age have had their faith severely tested by the seemingly long wait for the fruition of their hopes.

The signs of the times today should be a great stimulus to a dwindling faith. Surely the vision of truth is speaking eloquently and convincingly today. It is saying, "Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption [deliverance] draweth nigh."—Luke 21:28

To Zacharias and Elisabeth, God's Word was mightily fulfilled. The words of Gabriel, "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord," aptly expressed the life of John the Baptist. About him Jesus said, "There hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." ☐

Accepting God's Promise

KEY VERSE: *"Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."*—Luke 1:38

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:26-38

THE message which the angel delivered to Mary preceded the beginning of its fulfillment in her life. The angel explained to her what the Lord desired to have accomplished and how it would be carried out. She would conceive in a miraculous way through the intervening power of the Holy Spirit, and bring forth a son and call his name Jesus. He indicated that this child would be the long-awaited Messiah who would occupy the throne of his father, David.

How Mary's mind must have reeled at the thought of this—that the time had at last come for the Messiah. And how of all the many generations of Jewish women, and the thousands then living in Israel, she had been selected for this great honor of bringing him into the world. "Blessed art thou among women," the angel had said. The Prophet Isaiah had written: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isa. 7:14) She was

that virgin. The thought flashed through her mind, as she later told her cousin, Elisabeth, how the LORD had regarded her, one of "low estate," to become known to the world and henceforth all generations would call her "blessed."—Luke 1:48

Then, too, she must consider Joseph, to whom she was espoused. This would be difficult for him. Many of her family, friends, and people generally, no doubt, would be critical of her situation. But she quickly dismissed these thoughts. Would not the great God who could perform wonderful miracles adequately handle all such problems! The angel assured her that "with God nothing shall be impossible." (vs. 37) Finally, Mary, realizing that the angel was waiting for her word of consent, said, "Behold the handmaid of the LORD, be it unto me according to thy word." And the angel departed from her.

In the manner described by the angel, Mary became the mother of

Jesus, who was the Son of God. By this arrangement the *Logos*, or Word of God (John 1:14), as Jesus was known in his prehuman life, became flesh and dwelt among men; and as a perfect man he died a ransom for Adam and all the race of mankind. Mary did not become the mother of God, as is generally supposed. While at the time Mary did not fully understand all that was involved, she did recognize that it was God who was acting to bring deliverance to his people, and so she said, "My soul doth magnify the LORD and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior."—vss. 46,47

As the great Author of the plan of salvation, it is very proper to think of God as a savior. Through Jesus he has provided salvation for the entire human race. But God himself did not come to earth and die on the cross. It was his beloved Son, Jesus, who was made flesh for the suffering of death. (Heb. 2:9) It was by the *grace of God* that Jesus tasted death for every man. Since he was God's representative on the earth, it was appropriate that the name Immanuel (meaning 'God with us') be given to him.

Very little is mentioned about Mary in the Gospel accounts, and the few references that are given

reveal that she was not considered by Jesus and the disciples as a person to be venerated. She was merely a woman among women, and was given no special honor above that enjoyed by all other disciples.

On the occasion recorded in Mark 3:31-35, where his mother and others of his family interrupted his teaching activities, it seems that Jesus purposely made himself aloof. In this incident the Master makes it very emphatic that earthly relationships did not count as much with him as did those which pertained to the Spirit—that those who did God's will were his real brothers and sisters, and even closer to him than his natural mother.

Thus the fact is clearly established that being the mother of Jesus did not place Mary in any special position of veneration in the divine arrangement. She would need to become his disciple and do God's will in order to be favored equally with his other followers. That she was a noble woman, there is no question; and one of the most outstanding traits of her nobility was her desire to honor and magnify the LORD, and to ever recognize her own lowly position as one of his servants. ☐

Rejoicing in God's Greatness

KEY VERSE: *"She brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."*—Luke 2:7

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-16

JESUS was born in a manger, because, as the record states, "There was no room for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7) There is no need to blame the innkeeper for turning Joseph and Mary away. To him they were no different from others. His inn was filled to capacity, so what could he do? He did not consciously turn away the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

The circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth are in a way paradoxical. While he was born in a stable, an angel announced his birth. It would be supposed that the birth of one important enough to have it announced by an angel would first of all have been made known to the religious rulers of Israel; but God chose humble shepherds instead as the ones to whom the angel would proclaim that happy message, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is

Christ the Lord."—Luke 2:10,11

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." (vss. 13,14) Notice this does not say goodwill *among* men, but *toward* men. The thought is that through the birth of Jesus, God's goodwill was being expressed toward men.

God's goodwill toward men will be still further manifested in the establishment of his long-promised kingdom in the hand of Christ, the great king who will rule "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." (Ps. 72:8) In that kingdom the dead will be raised to life, and tears will be wiped from all faces—a further manifestation of God's goodwill toward his human creation. The birth of Jesus was a definite evidence that all he had promised to do would be accomplished.

But why did this highly exalted one from heaven visit the earth in such humble form, and under circumstances so lacking in splendor and glory? The apostle answers, saying that Jesus was made flesh "for the suffering of death." (Heb. 2:9) As a man was "a little lower than the angels," so Jesus partook of the same nature, that he might be the exact correspondence of the perfect Adam. Yes, Jesus was made flesh for the suffering of death, not to be a *human* king over the nations; for the main purpose of his first visit was accomplished when he tasted death "for every man."

It was the death of the man Christ Jesus that opened the way for the restoration of the lost inheritance of life and rulership. This is what the apostle meant when he wrote, "We see *not yet* all things put under him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:8,9) This statement by the Apostle Paul assures us that in due time all things will be put under Jesus, not as a man, but as a glorious divine being.

In Isaiah's prophecy of Jesus' birth we are assured that of the "increase of his government and

peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, . . . to order it and to establish it." (Isa. 9:6,7) God's promise to David concerning his throne is prophetically described as the "sure mercies of David." (Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:34) As the LORD explained, he would be merciful to David, and would not take away his throne as he had taken it from Saul.—Ps. 89:1-4

The kings of Judah were all the descendants of David, and despite the wickedness of most of them, he did not transfer the kingdom to another family. When Zedekiah was dethroned, David's throne did not have an occupant for a time; and the kingdom became inactive. Jesus was next in line, the truly rightful heir.

But Jesus was killed, and there was none to "declare his generation." (Isa. 53:8) He had no son to inherit the kingdom. From the natural standpoint this would have meant the end of this royal line. But God had a way. Paul tells us about it in Acts 13:34—"As concerning that he raised him [Jesus] up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he hath said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David"—made sure by raising the king from the dead! It was the greatness of God that accomplished this! ☐

Celebrating the Savior's Birth

KEY VERSE: *"Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people."*—Luke 2:30,31

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Luke 2:25-38*

ABOUT forty days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary went up to Jerusalem to have their young child presented to the LORD. While they were in the Temple, a man named Simeon was directed by God through the power of the Holy Spirit to recognize Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah and Savior of Israel. But no great public announcement was made. Simeon, an obscure man, not in the public eye, simply took Jesus in his arms and spoke the words of this outstanding prophecy to Joseph and Mary. No doubt others in the Temple hardly noticed what was going on. But what Simeon saw in this tiny child was of greatest consequence. He saw the Savior of the world!

The name Jesus means 'one who saves', 'a savior'. But God's plan for saving the world of mankind from sin and death is so all-comprehensive that in order to help us understand all its implications the Bible assigns many other and varied titles to Jesus, each de-

noting in its own way some particular viewpoint in connection with the manner in which salvation is brought by him to the human race. One of these titles is Priest. A priest's work was two-fold—to offer sacrifice, and then to extend blessings to the people based upon the sacrifice offered.

Thus it is with Jesus. He has already served as priest for the offering of sacrifice, in that he laid down his own life on Calvary's cross. He offered himself, and will therefore be the rightful one to extend the blessings of life to the people, those blessings which he purchased by his own precious blood.

Jesus is also appointed by God to be King of earth during a thousand-year kingdom, the purpose of which will be to reestablish the will of the Creator in the minds and hearts of his earthly creatures.

The Scriptures also assign to Jesus the title of Judge. As a judge, Jesus will be a blessing to the people.

All came under condemnation through Adam, and the vast majority go down into the tomb without even knowing that Christ died for them so they might have an opportunity to escape the penalty of death, which by heredity is resting upon them. It is during the Judgment Day that they will be awakened from death, enlightened concerning Jesus, and upon the basis of that enlightenment given an opportunity to accept God's gift, his Son, obey the laws of the kingdom, and live forever.

Jesus is also referred to in the Scriptures as Counselor. Jesus will indeed be a Wonderful Counselor. It will be in this capacity that Jesus will act when he serves as Mediator between God and men. Jesus' work as Counselor will be closely associated with his role as Judge. In both respects he will be dealing with the people for the purpose of effecting their reconciliation with God, and upon the basis of this, giving them everlasting life.

Another title ascribed to Jesus is the Mighty God. This does not mean that Jesus is the Almighty Jehovah, but it does mean that he has been highly exalted in the divine arrangements. The world will recognize that through him the justice, wisdom, love, and power

of the Almighty God are operative for their eternal blessing. Gladly, then, will the people recognize him as God's representative, the manifestation of God's presence in their midst.

The prophecies also refer to Jesus as the Everlasting Father. The term father means 'life-giver', and an everlasting father would be one who gives everlasting life. It will be this that Jesus will do for all those who, during the thousand years of his reign, believe on him and obey the laws of his kingdom.

Jesus, the Savior of the world, will also be the Prince of Peace. The angelic song which heralded the birth of Jesus featured the happy theme of peace on earth. But Jesus will do more than establish peace among nations and within nations. He will as Mediator establish peace of heart through reconciliation with God for all those who, through him, accept the provisions of divine grace and obey the laws of the kingdom in which he will rule as king. When the work of his mediatorial kingdom is complete the human race will no longer be in rebellion against the Creator. And, being in harmony with him and enjoying the sunshine of his favor, they will have life-everlasting—they will be saved at last! ☐

Christian Life and Doctrine

Heavenly Manna

EVERY morning throughout the world, many of the LORD's people open up a little book called, "Daily Heavenly Manna," to read the Scripture text and comment for that day. The selections are very precious, and often have been read so many times over the years, that they are familiar to us. Just as nutritionists tell us that a healthy breakfast is important for making a good beginning each day, so this bread from heaven is intended to give us a good spiritual start each morning. The word manna comes from the experiences of Israel and was all-important to the Israelites, being the mainstay of their diet during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

Israel had been enslaved by Egypt for hundreds of years. Moses was chosen by God to lead them to freedom, and to establish them as a nation in their own land, but, of course, Pharaoh did not want them to leave. Finally, after a series of awful plagues upon Egypt, climaxing in the death of all the Egyptian firstborn—from Pharaoh's own son to the lowliest slave—Pharaoh consented to their departure. But once they were gone, he again changed his mind, pursuing them with his armies right to the brink of the Red Sea. The Israelites were extremely frightened of being captured and taken back into bondage once again; they murmured and complained against Moses and his poor leadership which brought them to such straits! But with God's miraculous help they crossed the Red Sea, leaving behind Pharaoh and his hosts drowned in the depths of the waters.

Only about a month's time had elapsed after the excitement of their remarkable deliverance—beginning with the Passover when the angel of death slew all the firstborn in Egypt, but passed over the homes of the Jews which had been protected by

the blood of the Passover lamb. Then followed their marvelous deliverance, safely passing through the Red Sea on dry land while the sea rushed in on their following enemies. They were now safely on the other side, Pharaoh and his hosts were dead, and they sang the song of triumph. (Exod. 15:1-19) When they had time to reflect on where they were, and what was happening, they realized they were traveling through very desolate country.

All too soon they once again showed their lack of gratitude to God and his provisions for them. "The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full: for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger!" (Exod. 16:2,3) Through their murmurings they were rejecting the wonderful provision the LORD had made for their freedom from slavery through the faithful leadership of Moses.

Earlier they had had a life-threatening problem locating water for themselves and their livestock, but the LORD provided water for them. They had come to a place where there were twelve wells, which took care of their water problems at the time. (Exod. 15:27) But still there was the matter of finding enough food to satisfy the tremendous multitude and their thousands of animals. In essence they said, "Nobody is here to sell us food: there is no vegetation in this area: how are we going to be able to survive? We will starve to death!"

Again we see the longsuffering of the Heavenly Father—how gracious he was, how patient with this faithless nation. When Moses and Aaron sought the LORD he spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh [food], and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God."—Exod. 16:11,12

"It came to pass, that . . . in the morning the dew lay around about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna [which means, 'what is it?']: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat."—Exod. 16:13-15

The LORD faithfully provided for Israel, and they should have been satisfied and grateful for his provisions. Not a single day passed for forty years that they did not have manna to eat to fill their stomachs and to meet their nutritional needs. "The children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land

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inhabited; they did eat manna until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.” (Exod. 16:35) Without this marvelous, miraculous provision for food they would surely have died in that forsaken wilderness.

Information is provided to us in the Scriptures concerning what this manna was like. First, we are told that it was deposited at night, like the dew. It was white, which indicates that it was not a growing tree, or plant, grass, grain, or herb. It was not something that grew out of the earth naturally, as the many green plants the LORD had provided in the beginning for all animals and for man to eat, as the basic source of food supply. (Gen. 1:29,30) This food was white in color, indicating that it came from heaven.

In fact, in Psalm 78:23-25, it is called “angels’ food.” The thought is that the source of this bread was the Almighty, sent by him to earth through his angels. Jehovah “opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the corn of heaven. Men did eat angels’ food: and he sent them meat [manna] to the full.” Manna has been described as being like coriander seed, which is a globular, white, aromatic fruit. It is *like* it, but it was *not* the coriander seed itself. “The house of Israel called the name thereof manna: and it was *like* coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was *like* wafers made with honey.” (Exod. 16:31) In another account we are told, “The manna was *as* coriander seed, and the color thereof as the color of bdellium.”—Num. 11:7

It took patience and effort to gather this tiny, grainlike food every day. We are told, “The people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.” (Num. 11:8) This information indicates to us that manna had all the basic ingredients for a good as well as a tasty diet. It undoubtedly had a proper balance of carbohydrates, protein, and fats for a nutritional diet.

Jehovah's instructions were that manna was to be gathered each morning. It was forbidden to gather enough for two days. "Notwithstanding they hearkened not to Moses; but some of them left of it until the [next] morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them." (Exod. 16:20) The exception the LORD made was, that on the day before the Sabbath they were to gather twice as much for their families as they usually ate in one day's time. Twice as much manna fell, and it did not spoil overnight. It was perfectly proper for them to hold that supply over to the next day. In fact, if one went out on a Sabbath day, there would be no manna on the ground.

This certainly is proof that manna was not a phenomenon of the region and not a natural cycle. Six days they would find it, and every seventh day they would not find it! This was a tremendous miracle! Without it, Israel would have died.

Another, even more wonderful, exception concerning the manna was a portion which the LORD instructed to be put into a golden pot, which vessel was then placed in the Ark of the Covenant. The manna preserved in the golden pot never spoiled in all the centuries that Israel had possession of the Ark of the Covenant. This was a representation of immortality—divine life.—Heb. 9:4

How great was this miracle! And did Israel realize how great it was? Using modern terms as a description, it would be the same as if the LORD would have a freight train pull up to a siding with two hundred large hopper cars, and then all the people of the nation of Israel would come and get their portion. The LORD instructed them to take only the amount they would eat that day. There were approximately two million people traveling through the wilderness. And, under these circumstances, all would have to line up to get their supplies of daily provender. Every day two hundred huge hopper cars full of manna would have to be shuttled into place!

Or to use another illustration of an aircraft landing in an inaccessible region, it could take as many as two hundred jumbo jets to supply all these people with food! And do not forget that on the day before the Sabbath day there would have to be four hundred freight cars or four hundred jumbo jets, because they had to have two days' supply of food provided!

Israel did know that this was a great miracle which God performed for their salvation. Centuries later they referred to its magnitude to belittle the miracle Jesus performed when he fed five thousand people. The record of this is found in John 6:1-65.

Jesus had come to a desert place. Thousands of people followed him because they wanted to hear him speak. As the day wore on they became faint from hunger, but they did not have any food with them. Jesus provided their meal by finding among those in the crowd a boy who had five loaves and some fish, and performing a miracle, multiplied this small amount of fare until enough food was provided to satisfy 5,000 people!

The people were so impressed by this miracle that they reacted by saying, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." They tried to take him by force to make him a king, but he quickly escaped and went into a mountain by himself. He skillfully eluded them because he knew that it was not time for him to become king.

Jesus was destined to be their king, but not at that time, because he had come for a different purpose. But these people were not to be denied—they sought him and found him. "When they had found him . . . they said, Rabbi, why camest thou hither?" Then Jesus told them, "I say unto you, Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

Jesus' appeal was to those in the multitude who had hearing ears. There were a few there who would ultimately become his

faithful footstep followers, but the great majority were only interested in the fishes and loaves he could provide, and he let them know that he was very much aware of that fact. As a consequence of this line of exchange between these people and our Lord Jesus, they implied that the miracle of the loaves and the fishes he had performed was not that great a miracle in their eyes! They compared it to how Moses, for forty years fed their fathers in the wilderness: "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." (vss. 30,31) They could have added that Moses fed two million people, while Jesus only fed five thousand!

But our Lord replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven: but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." (vss. 32,33) They had no comprehension of what he was talking about. When he mentioned the bread from heaven which would bring life, they said, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." (vs. 34) Then Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."—vs. 35

He tried to teach them that the manna in the wilderness was simply a picture—a type or shadow (Heb. 8:6; 10:1) of the true bread of life: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (vs. 51) He knew this was not something they could understand, comprehend, or believe. And because of these hard sayings, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked with him no more."—vs. 66

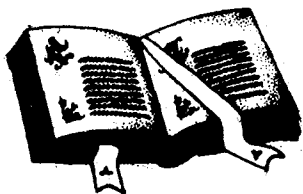
But, how wonderful it is that God has blessed our eyes that they can see, and our ears that they can hear, and that we have an understanding of what Jesus was talking about. We can get the lesson from the beautiful picture of the manna, and how without

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it we would die. The manna represented Jesus' flesh, sacrificed for the life of the world; his perfect humanity laid down in death for all mankind. Just as God sent down the manna from heaven every day for Israel, so Jesus left his heavenly home and came down to earth to become the true manna—the bread of life—for you and me, and all who believe on his name.

We need our heavenly manna to sustain us as we travel through the wilderness on our journey toward Canaan. Without it we will not be able to survive. There are many lessons to learn from our study of the manna, but the primary one is to appreciate the ransom. The manna pictures the ransom first and foremost. Therefore, before we can take even the first step on our wilderness journey we must have an appreciation of the ransom and what it does for us. We cannot appreciate it enough. We will never be able to completely understand what a sacrifice it was for the Heavenly Father to send his Son to earth to die (John 3:16); nor what it meant for our Lord Jesus to lay down his perfect life for us in order that we could come out from under the Adamic condemnation and find everlasting life!

The manna did not represent only the ransom, however. It also represents all that is contained in the Word of God. This is shown in the experience of Jesus, when he was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness after his baptism in Jordan by John. The adversary's first temptation consisted of telling Jesus to turn stones into bread. He was hungry—he had not eaten for forty days and forty nights. Our Lord's reply to the devil was: "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4) Jesus was quoting Moses (Deut. 8:3) who was reminding Israel how God had provided manna for them to eat.

In these words our Lord tells how dependent we are on the whole Word of God. Let us learn well this all-important and vital lesson of the manna which God has emphasized in his Word. Starting with the first verse we quote: "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.—Deut. 8:1-3

*While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down, and glory shone around!
"Fear not," said he; for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled minds,*



Seventy Times Seven

AS WE study the Scriptures we find great emphasis placed upon the quality of forgiveness. Obviously our Heavenly Father considers it important to point out in his Word that he is a forgiving God, and that his entire plan for the recovery of mankind is a plan involving forgiveness. This facet of God's mind and heart was probably never completely understood or appreciated by his intelligent creation until the permission of evil began. No doubt this is one of the principal reasons why angels are so interested in how he is working out the matter of bringing back into harmony those who have estranged themselves through disobedience.—I Pet. 1:12

As the divine principles were set forth throughout the ages by the prophets, it is said that those writers desired to understand the things they wrote. (Dan. 12:8,9; I Pet. 1:10-12) Their small glimpse of this new and wonderful aspect of the Creator stimulated in them a keen interest in the outworking of his plan for man! Just how was it to be accomplished? How could he "be just and yet the justifier" (Rom. 3:26) of those who were sinners? They were observers, too, of the fact that there was "no place where earthly failings are more felt than up in heaven," as the poet so wisely wrote. We have come to appreciate this fact also, because God so often expresses in his Word how he feels about his earthly children, even though sinners.

In the Book of Exodus we are told that Moses wanted to know more about God. This is not unusual of those who have come into relationship with God to any degree, and their search has led them to conclude that the knowledge of God and his character is immeasurable. Moses actually asked to see God, but the

LORD told him that would be impossible. He said, "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live." (Exod. 33:20) He did, however, show himself to Moses in the only way he can be revealed to humankind, and that is through a description of his character. He declared himself with these words: "The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." (Exod. 34:6) These words are the epitomy of the united testimony of the Bible. Everything we read in the Scriptures confirms that this is indeed an accurate characterization of our God.

In his statement to Moses, the LORD emphasized another significant point about himself—that he is a merciful God, "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will in no wise clear the guilty." (vs. 7) The point is made that the forgiving quality of our Creator is not only a manifestation of his loving desire to favor his faithful people, but that he loves even those who are out of harmony with him. And so his method of dealing is an expression of harmoniously combined attributes, since it involves his justice as well as mercy and forgiveness.

We can readily see the importance of the principle of justice coming into play in the matter of salvation. If God simply forgave those who sinned out of the goodness of his heart and said, "I forgive you; go and sin no more," it is clear that a door would be open for great laxness, and lowered appreciation for his high standards of righteousness. If he so dealt with one sin, to be consistent he would have to with all others alike, and the lofty principles of life which he has set for his people, would tend to be degraded. It would no doubt be said by those who erred, "Sure, I made a mistake, but God will forgive me," and the principle of justice, which is so vital even in human relationships but especially so with God, would lose its essence.

This principle of justice is so fundamental that God says it is the very foundation of his throne: "Justice and judgment are

the habitation [establishment] of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face," (Ps. 89:14); this is how he rules. And so, the Bible stresses the fact that while he is a God of mercy and forgiveness having a great desire to forgive all sinners, he will by no means clear the guilty.—Exod. 34: 7

In verse seven we are reminded of how justice worked after the fall in Eden as far as the human family was concerned. The LORD said he visited the sins of the fathers upon the children of Adam, and upon their children, and then again upon their children; and this has continued all the way down to our time. We read, "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Sin and its sentence of death was passed on to all through inheritance from one generation to the next.

The clear message of the Bible is that God is a God of mercy, and that his entire plan of salvation is based on forgiveness. However, it has been said by some that forgiveness was but little demonstrated in God's past dealings with men. In the beginning he surely did not forgive Adam, but administered a severe sentence for his transgression. But the Bible makes manifest that, in the end, God intends to forgive Adam. In fact, all that yield themselves to the New Covenant principles will be forgiven. The Prophet Jeremiah wrote concerning the New Covenant, "I [Jehovah] will forgive their iniquities and remember their sins no more." (Jer. 31:34) God's plan for the future age is designed to express his forgiveness and to bring into his favor all who have repentant hearts for having transgressed his law.

We generally view God's actions during the Jewish Age as being very exacting—a harsh representation of justice: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. (Exod. 21:24) But when we study more deeply we are impressed by the elaborate arrangements God had made for the remission of sins under the Law. See Leviticus, the fourth and fifth chapters. We have come to recognize these as pictures or as prototypes, of the New Law Covenant of

(Continued on Page 37)

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Banff CFHC-1340 11:45 a.m.
 Brooks CIBQ 1340 10:15 a.m.
 Canmore CFHC-1450 11:45 a.m.
 Lethbridge CJOC-1220 7:15 a.m.
 Wetaskiwin CJOI-1440 7:45 a.m.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Castlegar CKQR-780 8:45 a.m.
 Duncan CKAY-1500 9:00 a.m.
 Duncan CKAY-1500 7:30 p.m.
 Grand Forks CKGF-1340 9:00 a.m.
 Langley CJUP-800 AM 9:30 a.m.

LABRADOR

Churchill Falls CFLC-FM 97.9 7:15 a.m.

MANITOBA

Winnipeg CKJS-810 9:00 a.m.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Yellowknife CJCD-1240 9:00 a.m.

ONTARIO

Hamilton CKOC-1150 7:00 a.m.
 Leamington CHYR-710 5:00 p.m.
 St. Thomas CHLO-1570 10:45 a.m.

QUEBEC

Montreal CFMB-1410 5:15 p.m.

SASKATCHEWAN

Rosetown CJYM 1330 10:00 a.m.
 Weyburn-Estevan CFSL-1190 8:45 a.m.

YUKON

Whitehorse CKRW-810 9:30 a.m.

OVERSEAS BROADCASTS**BRITISH ISLES**

Dublin Christian Broadcasting 9:00 p.m.
 Radio Caroline-Tues. KHZ 962 8:45 p.m.

BRITISH WEST INDIES

Grand Cayman Radio Cayman 9:30 a.m.

CEYLON

Columbo-Sat. Radio Sri Lanka 7:15 p.m.

HONG KONG

Radio Villa Verde-Fri. 6:00 p.m.

ITALY (Italian)

Europa Radio Milano 83.3-FM 11:30 a.m.

Euro Tele Radio Calabria-Fri. MHZ 102 5:30 p.m.

Radio Corleone Centrale

FM-88-500 FM-92 11:00 a.m.

MEXICO (Spanish)

Culiacán Ranchera XEQC 8:30 a.m.

NEW ZEALAND

Dunedin 4XD 11:15 a.m.

Whakatane IXX 6:45 a.m.

NIGERIA

Radio Africa-Wed. 8:00 p.m.

PANAMA

Panama City HOQ 1250 10:30 a.m.

PERU

Lima-Sat. Radio Unión 880 AM 2:00 p.m.

PHILIPPINES

Manila-Sat. DZAM 1028 KHz 7:15 p.m.

SOUTH AFRICA

Joubert Park-Thurs. SWAZI Music
 Radio 1400 & shortwave 49 & 60 9:00 p.m.

SPAIN (Spanish)

Radio Gerona-Mon. 9:45 p.m.

TONGA

Nuku' Alofa-Mon. 10:15 a.m.

URUGUAY (Spanish)

Montevideo Radio El Espectador 810 9:15 a.m.

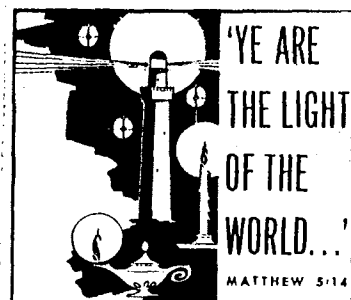
VIRGIN ISLANDS

St. Croix WSTX 970 9:00 a.m.

SHORTWAVE BROADCASTS

(Beamed to Africa, Europe, U.S.)

Eastern U.S. (Sat.) WRNO 15.20 12:45 p.m.



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WE REGRET that we are unable to furnish the day and time of many of the broadcasts for the following stations. Where they are known, they have been noted:

CONNECTICUT Waterbury WCAT Channel 13- (Tues.) 6:00 p.m.	MISSISSIPPI Jackson WAPT
FLORIDA Miami WKID Jacksonville Channel 17	MISSOURI Springfield KOLR
GEORGIA Atlanta WATL	NEW MEXICO Roswell KSWs
ILLINOIS Champaign-WBHW Springfield	NORTH CAROLINA Hickory WHKY
IOWA Cedar Rapids KTS-13 Mt. Vernon-WMVL Cable 7:00 a.m. Lisbon (every weekday)	OHIO Dayton WHIO
MICHIGAN Ann Arbor-Sun .WIHT-31 12:00 noon	TEXAS Lubbock KCBD
	WEST VIRGINIA Logan-Mon. Channel 12

Satellite Cable Broadcasts

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the future Millennial Age. The Apostle Paul makes this connection repeatedly throughout the Book of Hebrews and Galatians.

In the fourth and fifth chapters of Leviticus are found descriptions of various ways in which sins could be remitted. The first of these begins in the sixteenth verse of the fourth chapter, and ends with the twentieth verse, stating that those who carried out the specified means of having the priest make an atonement for them would have their sin "*forgiven*." It was a forgiving arrangement; it was not necessarily an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. However, it was requisite that first the sinner acknowledge his trespasses against the Law and admit that he was a sinner. This was accomplished when one went to God through the priest in the prescribed way, with an appropriate offering.

The LORD honored this arrangement he had instituted through the Tabernacle. Paul stated that although it did not make

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the "comers thereunto perfect" (Heb. 10:1) and therefore sacrifices were necessarily repeated over and over again, the LORD did in fact forgive them. On a national level during the Day of Atonement, the sins of the entire nation of Israel were forgiven for the ensuing year. But through human weakness, personal sins and trespasses continued to be committed, for which offerings subsequent to the Day of Atonement were made throughout the year by the faithful.

The Law Covenant also provided for sacrifices other than sin offerings. There were peace offerings, thank offerings, offerings for trespasses which occurred through ignorance, and gift offerings to the LORD. All of these subsequent sacrifices of the Law we can well understand as appropriate types when we project them into the kingdom age and view them as applying to the people of earth offering themselves in consecration to do the will of God. How thankful they will be that the LORD has made an arrangement of better sacrifices whereby they can receive everlasting forgiveness—not offerings of actual animals or doves or meal cakes, but of their human hearts desiring to do perfectly the will of God.

Yes, the Law did express God's forgiveness of sin. In Leviticus 4:26, ending the description of yet another type of sacrifice, we read concerning the one bringing the offering, "It shall be *forgiven* him." Verse 31 says, "It shall be *forgiven* him." Verse 35 says, "It shall be *forgiven* him." Right on throughout this chapter the statement is continually repeated that once an acceptable offering has been made forgiveness would come to the bearer. Undeniably, forgiveness is the underlying principle behind God's method of salvation.

So we find that God is the Great Forgiver. He prepared the way of justice at great cost to himself in order that while his mercy might be freely expressed, yet he would in "no wise clear the guilty." He made the greatest sacrifice possible, the offering of the life of his own Son. Jesus, in recognition of this fact, made

this powerful and venerated statement: "*God* so loved the world that he *gave* his only begotten Son."—John 3:16

Jesus throughout his ministry continually emphasized the great importance of forgiveness, and the need of recognizing this as a fundamental quality of God's character. In his sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave his disciples a new concept of the Law. He made a contrast between Israel's view of the Law which dominated the Jewish Age, and the high appreciation which his disciples must learn to observe in the Gospel Age. He stated, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.*" (Matt. 5:43,44) These words state that in order for us to look at our enemies as does God, we will have to transform our point of view to conform to God's. God so loved his enemies, those who were estranged from him and his laws, that he sacrificed the dearest treasure of his heart—his Son. This higher concept of God's law must be recognized and appreciated by his children who are striving to be made worthy to fill the position of those selected to express God's forgiveness to the world during the Millennial Age.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul said the tables of the Law, which principally expressed the letter of the Law, were not adequate to teach God's righteous principles in the next age. (II Cor. 3:3) He is now rewriting the tables of the Law, not in stone, but in the hearts of his people with his Holy Spirit. Heart appreciation is required to express the Law in the same way that Jesus did: "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Love is the real essence of the Law.

Therefore the LORD is in the process of developing new teachers, new instructors for the Millennial Age—ones who will have that understanding which, when passed on to the world of

mankind, will cause it to be written in their hearts and in their inward parts, drawing them back to God.

To be prepared to function in God's plan for this great work of salvation, we must become like him. This is vital. God set no lesser one than himself as an example of how we should view the great principle of forgiveness. In his sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his disciples with these words: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—Matt. 5:48

In this same sermon, Jesus laid great stress on the matter of Godlike forgiveness, when he taught them to pray. (Matt. 6:9-13) His prayer to our Heavenly Father incorporated the important theme of forgiveness: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Our Master, emphasizing the importance of this thought, explained, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses." (vss. 14,15) What a sobering thought!

No doubt it was as a result of pondering these words that Peter later came to Jesus with a question. "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" (Matt. 18:21,22) Seven times seemed sufficient, and perhaps even magnanimous, to Peter. But Jesus said, No, that is not nearly enough forgiveness. To be like your Father in heaven, you must go beyond those earthly-minded limits; in fact, there are no limits!

Jesus replied to Peter, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven!" The certainty that no one would tally up 490 offenses against himself, evidences the fact that there is no limit on forgiveness. As many times as someone, in sincerity, asks for forgiveness, it should be granted, even as God has set no limit on his forgiveness. We have all enjoyed our Heavenly Father's forgiveness far beyond the 490 offenses which Jesus mentioned.

Jesus then followed up his statement with a parable that expresses the matter well from God's standpoint. (Matt. 18:23-35) It is another parable which Jesus begins with the statement: "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto . . . , " indicating that here was a lesson for those who are called to be the children of God.

"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants." One servant owed him a tremendously huge debt—ten thousand talents. How descriptive of the human family and their relationship to God in the present fallen and sinful state. In like condition we come to God, realizing how impossible it is for us to pay our great debt of sin and unworthiness of life.

In the parable the servant was brought before the king to see if some method of working out his debt could be devised, but it was clear the man did not have anything with which to pay. Neither does the human race have anything to offer God as payment for their great debt owed to their King. Therefore, the king "commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made." Likewise the debt of sin under the sentence pronounced upon Adam included his entire family, the whole world of mankind, selling them into a condition of servitude and slavery.

The servant pleaded for patience, but the king was aware that the servant could never pay the money he owed. However, Jesus explained, "The lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." By these beautiful words our Master taught us something which he knew well about our Heavenly Father and his compassion. God is moved with compassion toward the human race and their inextricable plight of sin and resulting death.

As in the parable, we, too, go before our Great King, Jehovah, bowing down before him, realizing our helplessness, and pleading for forgiveness. God, in his great mercy, having been

moved with compassion, even long before the foundations of the earth were laid (Eph. 1:4) made provision through Christ to remove all our debt: "According as he [God] hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." And once again, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

We now are the ones who have been forgiven. All the ransom benefits of Jesus' blood have been applied to us. We now stand free and justified before our God, as did the forgiven servant of the parable. But Jesus' story had a sad ending with a powerful lesson for the forgiven ones. This servant had debtors himself. He began to press for payment from one of them who obviously owed very little and was extremely poor. His debtor also pleaded for patience, but the servant was too hard-hearted to listen, and had him thrown into prison.

We can well imagine Jesus showing his displeasure with the servant's ingratitude and lack of mercy. By expressing the king's feelings with the words, "His Lord was wroth," he tells us how God would feel about a circumstance of this sort. The king was justly "wroth," calling him a "wicked servant," and taking away his favor. Jesus said, "So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."—vs. 35

It has been written, "To err is human; to forgive divine." The Word of God well confirms this as fact. His plan is a plan of forgiveness. Those who aspire to serve in his kingdom must themselves, of necessity, be forgiving. ☐

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"— Gen. 18:14

"There is nothing too hard for Thee!"— Jer. 32:17

"With God nothing shall be impossible!"— Luke 1:37

Christian Life and Doctrine

Priorities

"I press ['stretch forward', Weymouth] toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

—Philippians 3:14

A GOOD definition of the word priority is, 'that which comes first in a person's way of life', or, 'what is most important to the individual'. This word is used quite frequently in the business world, as well as in the ordering of a person's daily life. At the time of the Second World War the word priority gained frequent usage in the military. Certain orders were issued which were labeled "Top Priority—Confidential." These orders had to be acted on immediately. They were given **first importance**.

We speak of getting our priorities 'in order'. Since priorities change from time to time, it is helpful to review them occasionally, and determine what adjustments we must make: what we consider our current top priorities, and what may have become our lesser priorities.

The status of our personal affairs generally changes during the course of our lifetime. What is a priority when we are young changes as we mature; and is altered yet again in old age. But in our Christian lives there is one thing that never changes, and which we should call our *first priority* at all times. This is, as our text suggests, the making of our calling and election sure. The Apostle Peter wrote, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."—II Pet. 2:10

This Scripture speaks of an on-going process of development in the life of a Christian. First he comes to an awareness

that God is drawing him to run for the prize of the high calling. (Phil. 3:14) This is a tremendous idea to grasp, to realize that we are offered the opportunity of "being made partakers of the divine nature." (II Pet. 1:4) The Apostle Paul expressed the call in these words: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—Rom. 12:1

In Matthew 16:24, our Lord stated his invitation in these words: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." The next step for the Christian is to respond affirmatively to this call. Those of us who have assented to the invitation have had our top priorities established for us: to make our calling and election sure; to take up our cross, denying ourselves, and to follow in the Master's footsteps. This is the beginning of our walk in the narrow way.

Let us consider Jesus, first of all, for he is our best example of establishing proper priorities in life. What was our Lord Jesus' *first priority* in life? In Psalm 40:7,8 we read a prophecy concerning him: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." When he went to John at thirty years of age at the river Jordan to be baptized, he began to carry out that priority. It was the most important thing in his life, and for the following three and one-half years of his walk on earth it remained so.

We find in the Bible record of his early childhood, that the knowing and doing of God's will was already first in his life. At the tender age of twelve, his parents took him to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover in order that he could be dedicated at the Temple as a son of the Law. (Luke 2:40-52) After the ceremonies were over, the group, including Jesus' parents, left with the caravan for home, thinking that he was somewhere among the large company traveling together. They were one day's journey away from Jerusalem when they found that he was not in the caravan. Where was he?

They traveled back to Jerusalem to look for him, and after searching for three days they found him in the Temple. He was sitting in the midst of the doctors of the Law, both hearing them and asking questions. All that heard him were astonished at his understanding—at his questions and his answers. They were amazed! His mother asked him, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”—vs. 49

Although only twelve years of age, he was well aware of his first and only priority—to learn how to serve God acceptably. It is interesting to note that these are our Lord’s first recorded words: “I must be about my Father’s business!” So, throughout his life, from the age of twelve right down to the time of his death on the cross at thirty-three years of age, his top priority continued to be to carry out his Father’s will in the laying down of his life in sacrifice.

On the occasion of Jesus’ baptism, John the Baptist heard God’s voice from heaven speaking to his Son, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17) How we long to hear these words spoken to us by our Father, also. It is certain that we will, if we follow the example of our Master, making his priorities our priorities, faithfully even to the end of our lives. We, too, will hear the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”—Matt. 25:21

One example given to us in the Scriptures on the matter of setting priorities is in Luke 10:38-42. Here we have the story of two sisters, Martha and Mary. They lived with their brother, Lazarus, in a town just outside Jerusalem, called Bethany. The account reads: Jesus “entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his

word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Martha was the homemaker, and she was concerned about providing properly for the guest whom she had invited into her home. She was engaged in cooking and laying the tables, which was a lot of work for just one person to do, and she needed help. But Mary was enthralled with the Gospel message of the kingdom. Her joy was to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of him. That was her top priority. Martha's priority, at the moment, was to prepare the meal and take care of the physical comfort of our Lord.

Nothing is to be taken away from Martha for her desire to serve. Both Mary and Martha deserve equal praise for their interests, because one was a doer, and the other was a learner. However, later on, after their brother, Lazarus, had died, our Lord, in speaking to each one separately, found that their faith in him and their belief in the resurrection which he taught was just as firm in the heart of one as in the other. Actually, they had both been learners! If we had all 'Martha's' around us, we would have lots of good food, and service, but the spiritual aspect of our fellowship would be somewhat less. We need both the 'Mary's' and the 'Martha's', and together we find a proper balance. Each one has their own particular priority, but both are needed in the service to the LORD and the brethren.

Turning to John 21:1-17 we have another lesson in establishing priorities. Soon after his resurrection, our Lord made a number of appearances to the apostles to verify the fact of his having been made alive as a spirit being. After a while, these appearances became fewer in number, and finally stopped completely. The Apostle Peter became quite discouraged, and con-

fused as to what direction in life to take. He decided to go back to his former occupation of fishing, which he had abandoned to follow Jesus for over three years. So he and several other disciples went fishing. But things did not go very well. Although they worked diligently all night, in the early morning they started back to shore, having caught nothing.

Then Jesus appeared again. They saw him simply as a man standing on the shore, and did not recognize him. He advised them to cast their nets again on the right side of their ship. They did this and drew in a net full of fish! This event made the disciples recall a similar experience with their Lord and Master; and John, the beloved disciple, then recognized the man on shore as Jesus. Exuberantly, Peter jumped overboard and swam quickly ashore to greet his Lord. He was so happy to see Jesus once again! Jesus said to his followers, "Come and dine."

Over a breakfast of fish and bread which the Master had prepared for them, Jesus gave Peter much-needed instruction about his future work, and what his top priority in life should be. It was *not* to continue in the fishing business! Jesus said to Peter, "Feed my lambs. . . Feed my sheep," and later, "Follow me." (vss. 15,16,19) This was much-needed encouragement to Peter. Despite his rejection of our Lord at the time of his trial and crucifixion, Jesus gave his pledge that Peter would have an important position as an apostle whose work would be the establishment of the Early Church. As such his work, words and example of life would strengthen all who would later walk in the steps of Jesus throughout the Gospel Age. The record of the Bible bears out that Peter was faithful to this injunction.

The history of another young man has been recorded in the Bible as an example for us. He began on what he thought was to be his main interest or first priority in life at an early age. He felt certain he had been called by God to stamp out a new sect which had sprung up in Jerusalem and was beginning to spread throughout all Israel—the Christian faith! His name was Saul of Tarsus.

Many years later we find this man, renamed Paul, standing before King Agrippa of Israel in the company of Festus and Felix, who were high Roman officials in the land, giving witness to them how his original course in life had been so dramatically changed. Paul started out by saying to Agrippa, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." (Acts 26:9-11) This, as he stated, was his priority before his conversion. It was the work he had dedicated himself to do, and, as a zealous Pharisee, he actively engaged in this interest. He had dedicated himself to the utter destruction of Christians, whom he considered to be enemies of God and his Law.

But suddenly his priorities changed! "Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord?

"And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.”—vss. 12-19

Almost instantly, his priority reversed itself: instead of persecuting the church and destroying the Christians, he became one of them! He followed the instructions precisely, which came to him through additional visions and revelations from God. Paul wrote concerning these things in his letter to the Philippian church. First he described his position as ‘Saul of Tarsus’, and then went on to outline his new objectives in life.

He wrote concerning the fact that he had been “circumcised the eighth day, [was] of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.”—Phil. 3:5-8

History tells us that Paul came from a wealthy family. His father, although a Jew, was, nevertheless, a general in the Roman army. Paul inherited from him his Roman citizenship, which entitled him to many privileges. The apostle sacrificed many earthly sanctions which were due him through inheritance and worldly position, to become a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, and counted them as not worthy of being considered.

He continued recounting his stand to the Philippians, saying, “I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto *the* resurrection of *the*

dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”—vss. 8-12

In his reference to *the* resurrection of *the* dead, Paul meant the “*first* resurrection,” which is described in Revelation 20:6. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Paul continues: “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” How wonderfully to the point is this expression of his top priority—in fact, his only priority! Just one thing! “This one thing I do. Forgetting those things which are behind!”—he turned his back upon the things which he had counted dear before his conversion! All else he counted as dross compared to the opportunity of receiving the highest of rewards, the first resurrection!

This is the prize that has been set before us, also! To obtain it requires a daily striving to live up to our covenant of sacrifice by every means we can, in whatever way the LORD directs. Like Paul, all that we have—our zeal, our enthusiasm, our abilities, great or small talents, our assets, our time and energy—all must be pressed into the LORD’s service. Only by so doing can we be certain of receiving that which has been set before us, the fulfillment of our hope of the high calling. “Ye are called in *one hope* of your calling.” (Eph. 4:4)—there is nothing else. We have been given a heavenly hope, to be made partakers of the divine nature!

And so, through the truth, the Holy Spirit began to work its influence in our lives, and more and more we discovered that ideas, positions, and possessions once uppermost in our lives diminished in importance. They become secondary to the truth and

our consecration vows. More of our time is taken up in study, and service to the brethren, and the promulgation of the Gospel. These become increasingly the most important things in our lives. They become our first priority!

What once was our vocation now is our avocation, our vocation now being occupied fulltime in the work of God. There are lesser priorities, of course, which require us to responsibly meet and provide the necessities of life. But let them not deter us from the heavenly hope set before us. Let us always remember that the making of our calling and election sure is our top priority. No matter what experiences might come, no matter what the trials of life may be, let us keep in mind the one goal before us.

If we do continue faithfully pursuing our top priority until the end of life's pathway, we will indeed hear the words of our LORD: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy LORD."—Matt. 25:21 ☐

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts

December 1—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."—Matthew 22:39 (Z. '99-72 Hymn 167)

December 8—"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."—John 15:18 (Z. '01-300 Hymn 299)

December 15—"The LORD is my shepherd."—Psalm 23:1 (Z. '02-365 Hymn 288)

December 22—"If a man therefore purge himself, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."—II Timothy 2:21 (Z. '02-319 Hymn 208)

December 29—"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."—Ecclesiastes 11:6 (Z. '02-71 Hymn 275)

Christian Life and Doctrine

Lessons from the Past

"Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."—Jude 11

THE Apostle Jude is here calling our attention to three Old Testament characters whose courses in life were wicked. By considering what they did that was wrong, we can learn lessons that will help us to avoid displeasing our Heavenly Father.

Cain murdered his brother, Abel. In Hebrews 11:4 we read, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Abel evidently meditated on the promise made by God that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. God also provided coats of skins for Adam and Eve, which indicated that somehow or other God would arrange a way of reconciliation.

To show God that he desired to get back into harmony with him and righteousness, Abel offered a sacrifice consisting of the firstlings of the flock. His choice of the animals instead of the fruit of the ground indicated his faith that God would provide a Redeemer. From the standpoint of his heart's desires, he was, in God's estimation, righteous. God testified of the acceptance of Abel's gift, probably by fire coming down from heaven and consuming the sacrifice, so that there was no doubt about it in the minds of both Abel and Cain.

On the other hand, Cain evidently had not given very much thought to the matter of which sacrifice would be pleasing to God. He may have thought that he would be the seed to bruise the

serpent's head, and was, therefore, quite disappointed to see that Abel was preferred. A careful reading of Genesis 4:3-9, shows that Cain had not committed sin by offering fruits or vegetables as a sacrifice. But when he saw that Abel's sacrifice was acceptable and his was not, then he should have offered a sacrifice like Abel's. Instead, he allowed jealousy and anger to burn unchecked in his heart. The account reads:

"In the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?"

Cain not only committed the sin of hating and murdering his brother, but in his reply to God, he added lying and insolence. Prof. James Moffatt translates verse seven as follows: "If you are sullen, sin is lying in wait for you, eager to be at you, but you ought to master it." The sin of hatred and anger is likened here to a devouring beast lying at the door of Cain's heart. Instead of driving it away, he permitted this devouring sin to enter his heart.

The Apostle John very vividly draws the lesson for us, in I John 3:12,15: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Oh, how careful we should be to see that there is no hatred in our hearts for the brethren. It is not

enough that we love merely some of the brethren dearly. Loving some of the brethren does not give us the privilege of hating others.

Let us now consider Balaam, who is referred to in Jude 11. His sin was that of greedily seeking temporal reward. The Apostle Peter also holds up Balaam as an illustration of those who are unfaithful to their covenant with God, saying that they "have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet."—II Pet. 2:15,16

Balaam was more interested in what he would get as a reward for delivering a message than in what the message contained. He was willing to permit error to be mixed with the truth, if he could only gain by it. Every Christian should be on guard along this line. We should never be willing to teach falsehoods or cooperate with others who teach errors. The world is still in darkness, and the darkness hateth the light. Let us not mix darkness with light, in order to receive the honor and support of the world as a reward.

If we were to analyze Balaam's motives, we would find them partly good and partly bad. If he could have gained the money and honor for himself without sacrificing the truth, he would have gladly avoided the error. It is a picture of willingness to sacrifice a measure of truth, in order to gain some selfish, temporal advantage.

Numbers 22:19 gives us a glimpse of how Balaam hoped to get God to change his mind regarding cursing Israel, so that he could get his reward: "Now, therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more." But in verse 32, we read of God's disapproval of his course: "The angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast

thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me."

Can one have the spirit which may cause him to run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward? Yes, every Christian is commissioned to be a minister of the Gospel, hence he should be on guard along this line. One could be guilty of this sin by compromising the truth in a measure for some temporal reward, or personal gain.

Let us now consider what Jude calls the gainsaying of Core, or Korah. Korah was a servant of the LORD and yet, notwithstanding, he was displeasing to him. Mixed with all his zeal for holiness, were certain evil traits. One fault was his boasting of holiness, which certainly is not a sign of holiness! Then again, there were his envy and strife against Moses who was God's appointed leader and one possessed of ample ability for such leadership. Korah wanted to carry on God's work, but he ambitiously desired to be in charge of that work. He lacked faith in God's selection of Moses and others chosen for leadership.

The word gainsaying means to talk back, contradict, to refuse to cooperate with, to pull the other way, to obstruct. Jude, in the text we are considering, is using this gainsaying of Korah as a picture of the stubbornness of some of this Gospel Age, who envy the positions of those whom the LORD has set in the body as it pleaseth him. (I Cor. 12:18) One of the first lessons Paul gives the fully consecrated is that they do not think of themselves more highly than they ought to think.—Rom. 12:1-10

Reading Numbers 16:2,3, we see that there were two hundred and fifty princes associated with Korah in his rebellion. Because there were so many prominent ones in the movement, they felt justified in their stand. But the number of prominent leaders alone does not of itself prove that a cause is right.

Numbers 16:2,3,8,9, reads: "They rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of re-

noun: And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? . . . And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the Tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?"

It is interesting to note that the leaders in this revolt were members of the tribe of Levi. As Moses pointed out, they should have been pleased with the opportunities of service they already had, instead of thinking that they were abused because Moses did not step aside and ask Korah to take his place, and then pass out positions of prominence to his associates. They shut their eyes to God's part in placing the leaders and that it was an honor to be used of the LORD to any degree and in any position.

Jehovah showed his disapproval of the rebellion as recorded in verses 32 and 35: "The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up. . . . They . . . went down alive into the pit. . . . And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."

Many in Israel blamed Moses for this punishment on Korah and the two hundred and fifty princes. Note verses forty-one and forty-nine where Jehovah showed his disapproval of those who support such gainsayers: "On the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD. . . . Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah."

How can we avoid the gainsaying spirit? First, by nipping in the bud any tendency in that direction. These partly willful sins are referred to in Psalm 19:13,14, as presumptuous sins, which lead to the great transgression. This great transgression is the second death sin of those who willfully follow in the ways of Cain, Balaam, and Korah. David says, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my Redeemer."

There is a danger that, to some extent, we may do things which in the beginning, at least, we recognize to be wrong. Paul speaks of the possibility of having our "conscience seared with a hot iron." (I Tim. 4:2) Let us keep our conscience both educated and tender. Let us watch that we do not, even in the little things, talk back to God, but as joyful, willing sacrificers submit our wills fully to his will and thus avoid any presumptuous sins.

As we consider Cain with his hatred for his brother, righteous Abel; Balaam with his greediness; and Korah with his gainsaying, let us turn to the LORD and ask him to fill us with his Holy Spirit, so that we may have a warm love for the brethren, an unselfish zeal for God's name, and a "meek and quiet spirit" which will always delight in the doing of God's will.—I Pet. 3:4

—Contributed

EARNEST WATCHFULNESS

I want a principle within, of jealous godly fear;
A sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near;
I want the first approach to feel of pride or fond desire;
To catch the wandering of my will, and quench the kindling fire.
Quick as the apple of an eye, O God, my conscience make;
Awake my soul when sin is nigh, and keep it still awake. ☐

Voices from the Past

BROTHER R.A. KREBS,
Pilgrim



Overcoming Hindrances

***"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with
so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every
weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us."***

—Hebrews 12:1

WHAT are the weights which hinder our progress as Christians? We might mention just a few: anxiety, discontentment, discouragement, self-satisfaction.

Faith in God teaches us that whatever he designs is for our good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28) He chooses our experiences and it is for us to submit cheerfully to his wisdom. Hymn 321, Hymns of Dawn, is much to the point: "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to him in prayer."

Can we not trust such a God to provide all our needs, who gave the dearest treasure of his heart, that you and I might have life, and that more abundantly? There is just one thing we should be anxious about, and that is how to keep ourselves in the love of God. Even Jesus was anxious concerning the doing of the will of God perfectly. He feared that in something he had not made good. But the LORD assured him that his service was completely acceptable, and "he was heard in that he feared." (Heb. 5:7) Surely if he feared of coming short of doing God's will perfectly, how much more should we fear. (Heb. 4:1) Let us consider some of our hindrances along our Christian pathway:

Discontentment

Paul wrote, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." (Phil. 4:11-13) He had to learn this lesson, and how much more we need to learn it. Our attitude should be, as the hymn, "He Leadeth Me," states so beautifully, "Content whatever lot I see, since 'tis my God that leadeth me."

Discouragement

To yield to an attitude of discouragement would imply a lack of confidence in God. The apostle admonishes us, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." (Heb. 10:35) Should the child of a king be discouraged because of hardships, ill health, losses or reverses? "Why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"—Matt. 6:28-30

If Jesus fed five thousand souls with a few loaves and fishes, is he not able to supply our needs? Our Father is the great God and sustainer of the universe, can we not trust him fully to provide for our necessities?

Self-Satisfaction

St. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "I count not myself to have apprehended." (Phil. 3:13) "If any man consider that he has attained a satisfactory spiritual state, from that moment he may date the beginning of his spiritual decline. No present attainment can be satisfactory to a sincere follower of Christ who studiously endeavors to copy the perfect pattern. It is only when we turn our eyes away from Christ that self-complacency can be exercised; for in full view of the pattern our shortcomings are ever manifest."—*Daily Heavenly Manna*. Comments for June 11

Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." (Heb. 12:1) What is this besetting sin? We believe we are safe in saying the besetting sin is lack of faith, confidence, heart reliance on God. The apostle said, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23) This shows that much of sin is a lack of confidence in God.

Conclusions

The Scriptures lay great stress on this quality of faith. Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you." (Matt. 9:29) The Apostle John said, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (I John 5:4) St. Paul said, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. 11:6) Again, "The just shall live by faith: if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."—Heb. 10:38

"Let us run with patience the race set before us," with constancy, fidelity. (Heb. 12:1) Faith means to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (II Tim. 2:3) It represents an element of character, not merely a mental assent to the fact that God exists. When one approaches such firmness, such fixity of character, he is nearing the graduating point. This is the very purpose of our schooling. Therefore, fretfulness, discontentment, discouragement, headiness, and willfulness find no place in the life of a well rounded-out Christian. □

Encouraging Letters

Wearing Out Books!

Dear Sirs: Please send me these books. They are the best books I have ever read. I have worn out these reading them over and over again and again: 2 "The Creator's Grand Design"; 2 "Book of Books"; 1 "Atonement Between God and Man". Thank you.—GA

Radio Caroline Listener

To "Frank and Ernest" and co-workers. Thank you very much for your very enlightening and most inspiring radio broadcasts on Radio Caroline, 963 A.M. They give me and my mother a great deal of comfort. May I take this opportunity to request some of your free literature. Please send us whatever is possible—a variety—so that we may help others at this end, and share them with fellow Christians. Please find small donation enclosed. Please pray for us so we also may do good work. Thank you again for helping millions to meet back

with our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless! Yours faithfully and sincerely.—England

Full of Hope

Hi! Thank you for the books, "God and Reason", and The Dawn, August 1988 (Sample). Never have we felt so full of hope and look forward even more to God's kingdom. Thank you.—WA

New Meaning to the Gospel

Please send me the booklet, "The Truth about Hell." I would like to thank you for the revealing and informative information you produce. It is much needed and really gives new meaning to the Good News of the Gospel.—NC

Interested In the Age of Man

Dear Brothers: I came across your radio broadcast a few weeks ago, and though the program was brief I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed it. The

topic especially interested me and that is why I am writing you today. Your topic that evening dealt with the probable age of the human race and how the scriptural account was supported by scientific data. There was a book mentioned, entitled, "Creation." Please do send me one. Thank you for your ministry; may God continue to bless you. In His Service.—*Canada*

New Subscriber through 'Parade'

Dear Madam or Sir: I discovered your company through the Parade Information Center. I was very delighted with your send-out package. I especially liked the magazine, The Dawn. I am enclosing \$1.00 for a yearly subscription to this Christian magazine. Also enclosed in this letter is a card for the booklet, "God's Plan." Thank you. I know I will enjoy these products. God bless.—*GA*

Caught Up In God's Love

Dear Sirs: I continue to grow in the Word of the LORD in-

spired by your words and pictures. I get so caught up in the love shared by God to us that often it brings tears to my eyes. I hope and pray that your message will continue to flow forth. I believe the stories that you tell on the Bible Answers telecast are the truth. Yours in Christ.—*MO*

A Reader for 18 Years

Gentlemen: Enclosed you will find my check for \$2.00, one for renewal of my subscription to The Dawn, and one for a year's subscription as a gift to a new person. Have been taking your little magazine now for about 18 years and read almost every word in it. A splendid book for the price, and would recommend it to anyone to read. I remain, your subscriber.—*MS*

Wishes All Could Hear

Thank you for the wonderful Bible literature and truths. I wish everyone could have an opportunity to read and to hear the wonderful programs you present. Thank you again so very much.—*LA* ☐

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Obituaries

The following brethren have recently finished their Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to the families and friends in the loss of these dear ones. We appreciate information concerning any brethren to be included in this list.

Sister Ellie Hall, Fresno, CA—September 25. Age, 98.
Sister Mary Zerod, Detroit, MI—September 29. Age, 78.
Sister Mary Hnatowich, Winnipeg, Man.—October 1. Age, 79.
Sister Rebecca Barton, Salem, OR—October 8. Age, 93.
Brother Wallace Wnorowski, Orlando, FL—October 16. Age, 94.

Speakers' Appointments

Ministering the Glorious Gospel of Christ

J.B. Brown
Fresno, CA December 11

G.M. Jeuck
Allentown, PA December 11

Conventions

These conventions are listed at the request of the classes who are sponsoring them.

CINCINNATI, OH, December 11—At the Harp's Home, 2609 Merittview Lane.

Phone: (513) 825-4112

PHOENIX, AZ, December 30, 31, January 1, 2—Quality Inn, 2420 W. Thomas Rd. Contact: Mrs. Mildred Enteman, 542 W. Southern 85041. for information and reservations. Phone: 276-3267 or 254-7766

ST. PETERSBURG, FL, January 8—Majestic Park Homes, Inc., 8300 Seminole Blvd. (Alt. 19) Contact Mrs. John Slavich, 3401 Rochelle Ct., Clearwater 33519

Phone: (813) 786-3795

LOS ANGELES, CA, January 15—Masonic Auditorium, 248 E. Olive Ave., Burbank. Contact: Michael Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

Phone: (213) 454-5248

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