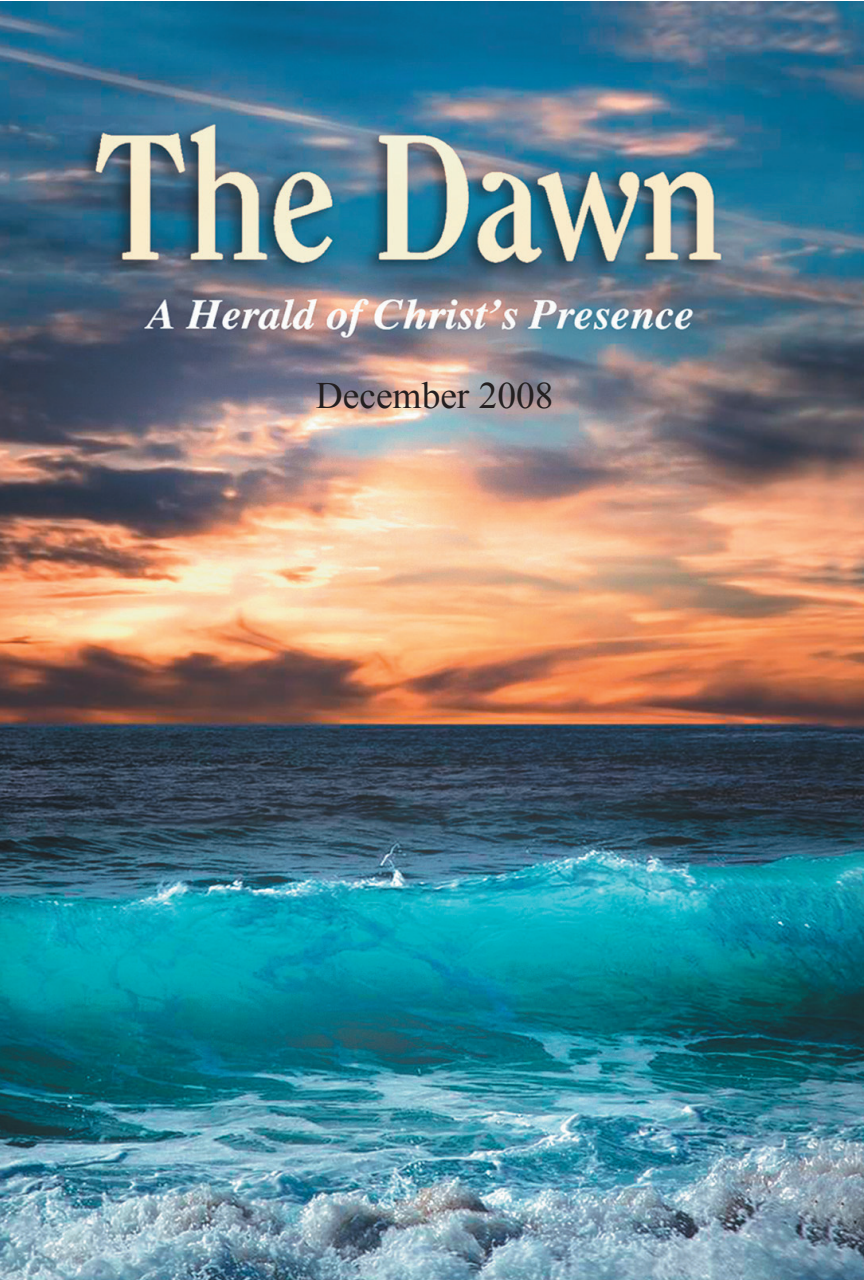


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To This End Was I Born

“Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

—John 18:37

AS CHRISTMAS AND THE

annual holiday season draws near once again, the attention of many Christian people is directed toward the most meaningful and precious life ever lived on this earth. The marvelous birth of our dear Lord Jesus as a perfect man was the Heavenly Father's grandest gift to the sin-sick and dying human family. Although his life has been broadly studied, the true meaning of Jesus' earthly ministry and sacrificial death will not be fully understood and appreciated until it is manifest to the whole groaning creation during the time of his future kingdom. At that time, mankind will realize the merit of his shed blood given on their behalf, and experience their delivery from the penalty of death here on a restored earth. Although students

of the Bible do not agree that December 25th is the actual date of our Lord's birth, we do recall his wonderful ministry with his proclamation, 'To this end was I born.'

In today's world, the celebration of Christmas has become the most popular holiday season throughout the entire year. There is a joyful spirit prevalent among many people that cannot be seen at any other time. The holiday season is also unique in that it is often the only time when family and friends have an opportunity to come together. However, in today's hurried world and the rapidly changing events of our time, there is also an accompanying atmosphere of feverish activity, anxiety and commercialization. Subsequently, there is less attention given to the true meaning and purpose of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as the ultimate Savior of mankind.

LEARNING OF HIM

When reflecting on the life and ministry of our dear Lord Jesus, there are many important and essential standpoints from which we may consider him. We observe that there are special qualities of his character that we should emulate, and essential elements of his teaching that we should study. The Apostle Paul addressed the significance of this matter in his letter to the brethren at Ephesus. "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."—Eph. 4:14,15

We must give careful attention to every phase of Jesus' life of faithfulness to the will of his Heavenly Father, and the meaningful truths that he taught.

BEARING WITNESS

In our featured text, Jesus confirmed in his statement made to Pilate that one of the main purposes of his birth was that he might bear witness to the Truth, and that those who were striving to understand his teachings would be blessed by his ministry. He also spoke the great truth of his own kingship, and the entire plan of God which was centered around him.

When Pilate asked the Master whether or not he was the king of the Jews, Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36) Jesus was speaking the greater truth of his future kingdom, and, as he proclaimed, all who are drawn to the Truth are attracted to it by that wonderful kingdom message. That kingdom will be established on the basis of righteousness, and those who would devote their lives to its ultimate purpose would become joint-heirs with him in his future kingdom. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." (I John 4:17) One of the ways in which we may become more like the Master is in our desire to walk in newness of life with him, and to cooperate with him in connection with the wonderful arrangements concerning his future kingdom.

JESUS NOT UNDERSTOOD

Throughout the present Gospel Age, countless numbers of people have believed in Jesus and his teachings. All of these Christians have no doubt known something concerning our Lord's earthly ministry, and to whatever extent his life has influenced their lives they have been blessed accordingly. But few have truly understood him and the important role he played in the Heavenly Father's ultimate plan and purpose for the reconciliation and recovery of the whole sin-sick and dying human family, who are under the Divine sentence of death. He has not been fully appreciated for giving his life for the sins of the people, and neither has he been seen as earth's future king under the establishment of his future kingdom for blessing all mankind. Few indeed are those faithful followers who have been inspired by his ministry and the prospect of reigning with him in that kingdom of truth and righteousness. This little flock have been willing to devote their entire lives to the grand work of his kingdom and its many and varied provisions.

THE LITTLE FLOCK

When attempting to make a distinction between the mass of churchgoing Christian people and the little flock of truly consecrated followers of Christ, we note Jesus' parable of the 'wheat and tares' in which he illustrates this important distinction. We read, "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."—Matt. 13:24,25

The “children of the kingdom” to which Jesus refers in this parable are those who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit of the Lord, and are inspired by the kingdom hope and message. (vs. 38) The “children of the wicked one” are those who put their trust in man-made institutions of this present evil world, instead of devoting their lives to the Heavenly Father with the hope of sharing with Christ in his future kingdom. In the Master’s answer to Pilate in our featured scripture (John 18:37), he pointed out, ‘To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world.’

THE KING OF PROMISE

Jesus was the future king of promise, the one through whom the Father’s plan to bless all families of the earth was centered and that would ultimately be accomplished. It was to this great truth that Jesus bore witness, and he was the great light that shone in darkness. God sent forth his Son into the sin-sick world, and he gave his perfect human life as a willing sacrifice for the sins of Adam, and his human posterity. As earth’s righteous king, the Master would destroy this present evil world based on the proud institutions established by fallen man, and set up a “new heavens and a new earth” based on principles of righteousness.—II Pet. 3:13

For this great truth Jesus died, not merely because he cherished it in his heart, but because his entire life was governed by it. His total commitment to his Heavenly Father caused him to refuse the devil’s offer of giving him all the kingdoms of this world. We read, “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth

him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”—Matt. 4:8-10, Deut. 6:13

Our Lord knew that it was not God’s plan that he should set up his reign through the kingdoms of this world that are established on selfishness and pride, but that he would receive these kingdoms in due time from his Father, as the psalmist foretold. “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”—Ps. 2:6-9

WHAT IS TRUTH

When Jesus told Pilate that he had come into the world to bear witness to the Truth, Pilate then asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38) Although Jesus did not give a direct answer to the Roman ruler, he tells us, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) Truth was the theme of all God’s holy prophets of old. Jesus’ teachings were concerned directly or indirectly with their teachings, and it is the basis of the apostolic writings in the New Testament.

The writings of the revelator also included the glorious theme of the Lamb that was slain, and

exalted to Mount Zion with a hundred and forty-four thousand who are exalted with him. (Rev. 14:1) Together they will live and reign for a thousand years for the blessing of the whole world of mankind.

BEING SET APART

By the truth of God's Word we are sanctified, or set apart, for Divine service. The Apostle Paul encourages the Lord's people, and says, "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. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Rom. 12:1,2

We present our bodies as a 'living sacrifice' to our loving Heavenly Father and endeavor to be transformed by the 'renewing' of our minds by the Holy Spirit. This renewing takes place in our mortal bodies and is an evidence of the Truth in our lives.

FAITHFULNESS TO THE TRUTH

Our consecration to God and service of the Truth is demonstrated by our continued faithfulness to it. This is what occurred in the life of Jesus, and it is also shown in our willingness to die with him and to share in his death. We demonstrate our willingness to die with him by devoting our lives, and time, strength, and means in bearing witness to the Truth. No matter how faithful we may be in emulating Jesus in other ways, we must bear witness to the Truth as he did in order to be counted worthy to live and reign with him.

In our proud and selfish world, faithfulness in bearing witness to the Truth has resulted in death. Darkness covers the earth, and the darkness hates the light. Darkness and error are the opposing forces of evil that stand against light and truth. Throughout the present Gospel Age, error has been enthroned in the halls of fame and the temples of learning. Honored centers of education have often been channels of error regarding the Truth and ultimate plans of God. Jude reminds us, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) The Apostle Paul tells us that Satan is the great enemy of the Truth. “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—II Cor. 4:4

CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM

When speaking of our Lord’s ministry, John recorded, “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?” (John 7:48) When the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees learned that their recognized leaders frowned upon our Lord and his teachings, their minds were closed to anything he might have to say. However, “the common people heard him gladly.” (Mark 12:37) The repository of Divine Truth has always been in the hearts of the humble and meek followers of the Master. These are the faithful little flock and children of the kingdom who have seen the vision of God’s wonderful

plan for a new world, and have told the people that all human plans and institutions will fail. Nothing but the Divine kingdom will ever solve the problems of our fear-filled and chaotic present world. The children of God have received no help from the world when speaking of God's purpose, but on the contrary have often been handicapped by its opposition.

The Truth has been carried from heart to heart throughout the present age, and it has been as a light in a dark place. It has not enlightened the dark world, but it has served as a beacon light to point others to Christ and to show them the way by which they might enter into and enjoy the wonderful mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT

Through the witness of the Truth as taught by Jesus and continued by his consecrated followers from generation to generation throughout the age, each one of the prospective joint-heirs of the kingdom have been separated from the world of darkness. The Apostle Peter explains, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [purchased, *Marginal Translation*] people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I Pet. 2:9

The knowledge of God's glory will ultimately fill the earth. Isaiah has written, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9) However, as long as Satan, the prince of darkness, continues to blind the minds of the people, the work of testifying to

the wondrous plans of God will not dispel the darkness. In Jesus' day, he was as a great light shining in a dark place, but only a few saw the light. The rest were blinded and walked on in their darkness. These blind servants of the prince of darkness included not only the vast majority of the people, but the religious and civil rulers as well. But Jesus, the Prince of light, was not deterred from letting his light shine.

JESUS' ENDURANCE

In the great economy of God's plan, this witnessing for the Truth has been the means both for calling his people and testing them. It tested Jesus and demonstrated his loyalty to the Heavenly Father and the Truth. It was a demonstration of faithfulness which called for endurance against Satan's attacks, and ended in the giving of his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

The prophetic words of Isaiah speak of his faithful endurance. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with

the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”—Isa. 53:5-9

TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH

Jesus had faithfully borne testimony to the great truth of his coming kingdom, and because of his faithfulness he was crucified. But in the Divine providence his witness continued, and a few days earlier he declared that the testimony concerning his kingdom would surely be given. Luke records his response to some Pharisees who had witnessed the enthusiastic joy displayed by the multitude who had gathered together to sing praises unto God, “Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.” (Luke 19:38) “And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”—vs. 40

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

When writing to the Hebrew brethren, the Apostle Paul pointed to the earthly life and ministry of our Lord Jesus, and said, “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” (Heb. 7:26) It was not Jesus’ life of perfection that caused him to receive the animosity of the world, but rather his testimony to the Truth. In Jesus’ day the giving of a witness to the Truth was limited almost entirely to the spoken word. In the case of the Master, the spoken word was made more powerful by his miracles that demonstrated the authority by which he spoke. The testimony of the

written word was limited to a few copies of Old Testament manuscripts. These enabled the more earnest ones to verify the truthfulness of the words spoken by Jesus which he urged them to do. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."—John 5:39

OUR BELOVED JESUS

"He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."—Luke 4:16-19; Isa. 61:1,2

When his earthly ministry had been accomplished, our beloved Jesus said to Pilate, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world."—John 18:37 ■

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Mary's Commitment

Key Verse: “*Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*”
—*Luke 1:46,47*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 1:26-38, 46-55

We recall that the chiefest messenger remaining in the courts of the Heavenly Father—the angel Gabriel—visited her, and told her “Blessed art thou among women.” (Luke 1:28) The fact that Mary was honored by the Lord above all other women, in that she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus according to the flesh, would prove her nobility of character and her purity of heart. Jesus signifies saviour, or liberator—“For he shall save his people from their sins.”—Matt. 1:21

The proclamation concerning the birth of Jesus to his mother, Mary, was especially important because this child was begotten by Divine power, though Mary was still a virgin when she brought forth her son. He was to be the “Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:32), thus fulfilling the promises made respecting the Messiah. He would come to fulfill the promise made to Abraham, “In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 28:14) Jesus is the promised seed from David’s house, the rightful heir of the throne, referring to the dignity, power, and authority of office which David

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL POETIC expression of love and devotion is shown here by this statement made by Mary. It further shows that Mary was full of faith and the joy of the Lord, happy to be an instrument in carrying out his wonderful plan.

We recall that the chiefest messenger remaining in the

exercised. The throne of David is the emblem or symbol of David's reign, or kingdom. It serves as a type, or picture, of the reign or kingdom of David's son and Lord. He is also called the "seed" of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), and the "seed" of the woman.—Gen. 3:15

The narrative of Jesus' miraculous conception has the support of the oldest Greek MSS—the Sinaitic, Vatican, and Alexandrian in Luke. The life principle by which Jesus was conceived came directly from the Father in heaven. He was then able to be "that holy thing" (Luke 1:35), because he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (Heb. 7:26) He was 'holy' because his life did not come from Joseph, or through Adam. He was not contaminated; he knew no sin, while all other men are sinners. (II Cor. 5:21) His life came directly from heaven (Heb. 1:5), and although human, he was free from both Adamic sin and its penalty. Remember also that he was the seed of the woman, and not the seed of man. Therefore, to trace his genealogy we must go back through Mary's line to see that he had the full authority to take on the role of king. "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."—Luke 1:32,33

This was a great responsibility for Mary, and she took on the role willingly. The mind of Jesus' mother, instead of being antagonistic to his perfect development, cooperated fully with it. The hope to be the blessed mother of the long promised 'seed' seems to have filled the heart of this special woman with an increase of joy, and devotion. "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy."—Luke 1:48-50,54 ■

Elisabeth's Commitment

Key Verse: *"It came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."*
—Luke 1:41,42

Selected Scripture:
Luke 1:5-24, 39-45

JUST AS IN THE CASE OF

Mary, as we have previously studied, Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias and the soon to be mother of John the Baptist, also had a Divine influence concerning the birth of her son. Similarly, with regard to Sarah (Gen. 18:9-14), Hannah (I Sam. 1:5-27), and the Shunammite (II Kings 4:14-17), the miraculous intervention of the Divine power quickened the natural forces where they had been dormant, inoperative or entirely suspended.

Elisabeth "was of the daughters of Aaron." (Luke 1:5; I Chron. 24:1) She, along with her husband, "were both righteous before God, walking in all

the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1: 6) We know also that Elisabeth and her husband were advanced in years, and they were childless. It was the will of the Heavenly Father that the situation in their lives was about to change.

An angel of the Lord soon appeared to Zacharias as he performed the duties of his office as a priest in the Temple. God had once again sent Gabriel on another very important mission. He had come to answer their petitions, saying, "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." (vs. 13) Because of his lack of faith in God's power, Zacharias would be unable to speak until eight days after the birth of his son. At this time of the traditional naming of a newborn, he would write down that his name would be John, and his speech immediately returned to him.

While Zacharias was filled with doubt and fear at hearing this message, it was not so with regard to Elisabeth. After she conceived according to the promise, she remained in hiding for five months, saying, "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men." (vs. 25) She did this because of her attitude of trusting in God that his will would be done in her life, and that she would be accepting of his will, and committed to it.

As we know, she would give birth to one who would come to prepare the way of the Messiah. As our theme text tells us, upon meeting in her house with Mary, 'the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.' She recognized this to be a sign from God and a reminder that his will was being accomplished.

Elisabeth then boldly declared that Mary should be blessed, and her child also among men. She then showed her humility in stating, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (vs. 43) What a wonderful privilege and great blessing was granted to Elisabeth, and she willingly accepted it and carried it out in a loving, pleasing way whereby bringing glory to God. ■

Shepherds Glorify God

Key Verse: *“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”*

—Luke 2:20

Selected Scripture:
Luke 2:1-20

from God’s messenger, that they should “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.”—vs. 10

The angel went on to proclaim that, during that day, there had been born in David’s city, “a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” (vs. 11) This event serves as a lesson to remind us that fear is one of the most dominant impulses with any revelation from the Lord. Men realize that they are imperfect, and may instinctively fear further condemnation and trouble. It is also a lesson for the true children of God today, as it was for the angels at that time, to assure the world that God is more powerful than all their fears. Only the true Christian has that “perfect love [which] casteth out fear.”—I John 4:18

IMAGINE THE MIRACULOUS

event that had just occurred on this special night, and which the lowly shepherds had the privilege of witnessing. They were gathered at night watching over their flocks in the pastures around the city of Bethlehem. An angel had come to them appearing as we read in the words “the glory of the Lord shone round about them.” (Luke 2:9) Their initial fears were soothed by the assurance

The ‘good tidings’ refer to the Gospel, for it is a good message, which assures the deliverance and blessing of the entire world of mankind. In a greater sense, it refers to the coming of Messiah’s kingdom that we are assured will be established. It will be a time of love from the Heavenly Father when all “the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.”—Isa. 35:5

The phrase “good will toward men” (Luke 2:14), is a declaration of what God purposes to do, and it will include “the times of the restitution of all things.” This coming time of great blessing was spoken to us by “the mouth of all of his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:20,21) We realize that it was a prophecy of God’s purpose to bring all of this about through the newly born child. The steps toward this would include the birth of Jesus, his death on the cross, his resurrection and ascension, and the selection of the church. The messianic kingdom will complete the prophecy.

After the “heavenly host” of angels left them, and with the songs of rejoicing still fresh in their minds, the shepherds desired to go to see this wondrous thing. (Luke 2:13-15) They had recognized that the angels and their message came from the Lord God. They, with one accord, desired to visit this “babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” (vs. 12) We are told that they made haste to go to the city of David and, when they arrived, they excitingly told all whom they came in contact with the wonderful things which were told to them by the angels. “All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.—vs. 18

It was a grand truth, and one that was sent through these humble, but trustworthy, human agents who were honored instruments in God’s hand. They then returned to their flocks, fully assured that the promised seed had really come as God had foretold. ■

John the Baptist Proclaims God's Message

Key Verse: "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."
—***Luke 3:8***

Selected Scripture:
Luke 3:1-20

'fathers,' or patriarchs, and in a greater sense the world of mankind, whom fleshly Israel represented. This would also typify that all would have the opportunity to come into a condition of harmony with God, which would be similar to that of the fathers. It, as we know, would be a condition of harmony and peace with God.

JOHN, FROM THE BEGIN-ning, was proclaimed to be one who "shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." (Luke 1:15,16) In fulfillment of this, he would come to prepare the way of Messiah by performing a reformation work in preaching repentance from sin and baptism for the remission of sins, declaring that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

His preaching was used to declare that harmony was to be restored between Israel and the

John indeed would serve as a forerunner, introducer, or picture of our Lord. He was a great man, preacher, and prophet. He may be thought of as one of the most honored of all of the prophets in that he was chosen to introduce the Son of God to Israel and the world. John would come “in the spirit and power of Elias.” (Luke 1:17) He was not actually the prophet Elijah returned to the earth, as some had thought to believe. He did do a great work for fleshly Israel, introducing or proclaiming to them Christ in the flesh. As the man Christ Jesus was introduced by the man John doing an Elijah work, so the glorious Christ must be preceded by a great Elijah, making all ready for the returned Lord. This class of footstep followers now calls attention to the present Christ as a true and faithful witness during this Gospel Age.

John’s was “the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” (Luke 3:4) But his mission was not successful to his nation, and profited only a few of the people. Our key verse is telling us that the people and nation were being cautioned to not be deceived by the thought that they were God’s specially chosen, elect people, as spoken by the prophets. Through pride they thought that as God’s people who lived by the Law, he would fulfill everything in his plan through them. When John says to them, ‘of these stones,’ he means that God was able to choose others that they considered as far from the possibility of being Abraham’s children as if they were the literal stones at their feet.

The true ‘children’ of Abraham, who would have Abraham’s faith and loyalty of spirit, were to be taken now not only from Jewish believers, but also from among those whom the Lord was seeking from the Gentiles. This was necessary to complete the elect number of Israelites indeed. These ‘children’ would make up the seed of Abraham, through whom all of mankind would be blessed in the coming kingdom. ■

Free from Bondage

*“The creature itself
also shall be
delivered from the
bondage of
corruption into the
glorious liberty of
the children of
God.”*

—Romans 8:21

IN HIS LETTER TO THE

brethren at Rome, the Apostle Paul confirms that the faithful followers of our Lord Jesus have been delivered from bondage and are now set free as the children of God. This continues to be a special blessing to those who

are now living during the closing years of this present Gospel Age. As the apostle pointed out, “We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”—vs. 22

CONDITIONS APPLY

From the Scriptures, we learn about liberty and those who enjoy its freedom. God’s Word also speaks about its contrasting principle of bondage, and those who are held in its grasp. However, liberty is not always desirable, nor is it always pleasing to the Lord. Personal liberty cannot be expected without certain conditions or considerations being

applied. Neither can it be affected when it is not in accord with the Scriptures.

We know that earth's first parents—Adam and Eve—were permitted to exercise their liberty, but because they failed to obey God's righteous laws that had promised them life, they were condemned and sentenced to death. Later, while God's typical people Israel were held as slaves in Egypt, they longed for liberty and to be set free from bondage. In God's due time, we know that he did set them free. However, their freedom did not imply that they had a right to do whatever they pleased, and they were soon brought under the restraints and conditions of the Law Covenant. This proved to be a burden to them because of their inherited sin, which God's law condemned.

A JUST LAW

The apostle explains that the Law which was established upon righteousness proved to be a yoke upon the necks of the Jews. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."—Rom. 7:12-14

God's law was spiritual because it came from him. Had the Israelites been able to measure up to its standards, they would have enjoyed the promised rights and liberty in their obedience to it. There was a short period in Israel's history during which time they were without any leader, whether

judge or king. We learn from the scriptural record, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."—Judg. 17:6

SERVANTS OF CORRUPTION

The Apostle Peter speaks of some who attempt to distort the doctrine of liberty. "When they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."—II Pet. 2:18,19

Peter is here pointing out that there is a liberty that is displeasing to God. It is a liberty that appeals to the lusts and desires of the flesh. Those who preach in this manner appeal along the lines of the fallen flesh, and suggest in subtle ways that it is not necessary to be bound by the restraining will of God. The apostle warns about such corruptible teachings.

ALL HAVE GONE ASTRAY

It was necessary for Jesus to die in order that man might be redeemed from death, and that the human family might enjoy full liberty under the perfect laws of God. The Prophet Isaiah addressed this, when he wrote, "He [Jesus] was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."—Isa. 53:5,6

The prophet speaks of the principle of full liberty and the will to do as one pleases, as iniquity. However, in this connection we note that Jesus proved worthy to be man's Redeemer because he was at all times totally obedient to his Father's will. During the closing and terribly agonizing days of his earthly ministry, we read, "He came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. . . . And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke 22:39,41,42) He knew that he must submit himself to the doing of his Father's will instead of his own. This confirms the Divine purpose for his coming to earth. "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."—John 6:38

FREE IN CHRIST

The liberty of which the Scriptures speak is freedom from the enslaving cords of sin and death. The children of Israel were given opportunity to be free from this condemnation by keeping the terms of the old Law Covenant. They were unable to do this because of sin and inherited weaknesses of the flesh, which resulted in their being brought under the additional bondage of the Law. Within the Early Church, some taught that believers must still remain under the Law. However, through faith in Christ they had been set free from the condemnation of the Law. Paul made this matter clear in his letter to the brethren at Galatia. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us

free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”—Gal. 5:1

This scripture has been improperly used to substantiate the arguments of those who offer the brethren freedom and encourage them to go their own way. They suggest that the ideal state of the Christian is one in which all are free to think and to act as they please. The best defense against this suggestion is when the followers of Jesus are in tune with the Divine will and are glad to give up their own preferences to do the will of God. Those who are thus devoted to God enjoy true liberty and are set free from bondage.

Such freedom is not completely obtainable this side of the veil, for the mind of the flesh strives against the mind of the Spirit. This causes the Spirit to be hampered in carrying out the entire will of God. This restraint is referred to in our featured scripture as the ‘bondage of corruption.’ From this bondage every true Christian longs to be delivered in order to be entirely free to serve the Lord, the glorious liberty of the children of God. It will be enjoyed beyond the veil by those who have humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God, and who have learned to love his will. In their resurrection bodies, they will then have the ability to do the will of the Heavenly Father perfectly, with no cords of imperfection to restrain them.

TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE

In the scriptural record, we read, “He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. . . . Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on

him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:29,31,32) In the family home, its members must to some extent be subject one to another. Each one is free to do as he pleases as long as it will contribute to the best interests of all the others. However, absolute freedom without applying certain conditions would prove to be unworkable, and this would be true in any field of human experience or endeavor.

The Truth that Jesus was talking about included freedom to do the will of the Heavenly Father. He was always concerned about the spiritual welfare of those who followed him and, on behalf of his disciples, he prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) During Jesus’ earthly ministry, the word of truth was contained in the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament. This was the volume of the book that Jesus agreed to obey at the time of his baptism and consecration at Jordan.

PROPHETIC WORDS OF DAVID

Jesus recognized certain prophecies and other writings as applying to himself and the purpose of his earthly ministry. In prophetic words, the Psalmist David wrote, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, 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.” (Ps. 40:6-8) The Apostle Paul quoted from David’s words in his letter to the Hebrew brethren.—Heb. 10:5-7

SANCTIFYING INFLUENCES

The followers of our Lord have been blessed with the New Testament Scriptures that enlarge and elucidate that which had been written many centuries earlier. Thus is the Truth made plain for those who are being called during this Gospel Age. The Truth not only makes us free, but it is sanctifying. God's Word acting in our lives serves as the ultimate accomplishment of his will. The Truth separates us from the blinding influence of error and then sets us apart to do the will of God. It liberates us from the bondage of sin, and makes us the bondservants of Jesus Christ. "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men."—Eph. 6:6,7

The freedom which Jesus offered his followers through the Truth was not a personal liberty to chart their own course in life, but he wanted them to be free from the traditions of men. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30) His yoke would be easy and light to bear because they would learn to love it.

LEARNING OBEDIENCE

When in harmony with the Divine will, the follower of Jesus is controlled by the Father's laws and will. Our obedience is voluntary, and he is dealing with us with the view of our learning to love his will and to delight in doing it. We have freedom

only within the circumscribed limits of the will of God and Jesus. Our Lord Jesus understood his relationship, and did not attempt to exercise personal liberty in his service to his Father and of the Truth. Paul wrote, “[God] hath put all things under his [Christ’s] feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”—Eph. 1:22,23

At times, the preferences of our fallen flesh may run counter to the will of God. The criterion by which the will of God can be properly determined is in his Word. If we find ourselves attempting to circumvent the Divine requirements, we have not fully learned to appreciate our privilege of being bondservants of the Lord. We would then be guided by the reasoning of the flesh while believing that we were merely exercising our liberty in Christ Jesus.

At times, there may be experiences associated with the will of God that we find grievous until we learn to recognize and love them. In the arrangements of the various ecclesias, there are elected servants, and the apostle thus admonishes, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” (Heb. 13:17) The apostle also exhorts, “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”—chap. 10:24

PAUL’S WARNING

The proper exercise of love for the brethren in our association with them may present difficulties at times. Through our association with the Lord’s

people, close friendships may develop which are proper unless we permit them to influence our judgment or our course of action with respect to the doing of God's will. Paul cautioned the brethren at Ephesus, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."—Acts 20:29,30

Unfortunately, Paul's warning has been true throughout the present Gospel Age. In the church at Ephesus, some who began to speak perverse things may have become the special friends of others in the ecclesia. This serves as a lesson for all of the Lord's people throughout the Gospel Age. We want to keep in touch with our friends because we love them and we don't want to give them up. However, it is possible to injure them by a course of action that is contrary to the will of God.

The most effective way to help those who may have erred is to maintain our position based on scripture, and by our example of faithfulness assist them to return to the right course. The Apostle Paul would not have encouraged the faithful brethren to go along with those who had erred, as if nothing had happened. It would have merely encouraged them in their wrongful actions. Such behavior would have been in defiance of the expressed will of God, and as spoken through Paul his beloved apostle.

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you,

and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”—II John 9-11

EXERCISING RESTRAINT

The importance of restraining our personal preferences is a matter that existed in the Early Church, an example being that of eating meat that had been offered to idols. The more developed Christians understood that the meat had not been defiled by its being presented in sacrifice to an inanimate god, and they felt at liberty to eat it. No doubt it could be bought at bargain prices, and its use would be an economic advantage to those who were not offended by it. However, this was an excellent opportunity to restrain from exercising this manner of liberty.

On certain occasions, the rule of love must supercede liberty. Paul realized that if he ate meat that had been offered to idols, some brethren who believed it was not proper to do so might be weakened by his exercise of liberty. He explains, “Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”—I Cor. 8:11-13

A MEANINGFUL LESSON

The law of God calls for sacrificing self-interests especially on behalf of our brethren. This serves as a restraining cord that limits the exercise of our

own personal liberty. It will be found to apply in many situations with which we may be confronted from time to time. Even where there is no specific command of scripture to explain the will of God in a particular circumstance, this principle shows us the proper course to take. Our words, actions, and attitude may affect our brethren, particularly the ones who may be only recently walking in the narrow way, and who are not yet well grounded in the Truth. The general welfare of our brethren should include control of what we do, where we go, and what we say.

The false idea that Christian liberty allows us freedom to do anything that we want is something to be guarded against. As members of the body of Christ, we are not free to say or do those things that may injure another member. Our liberty must be restrained to meet the viewpoint of the babes in Christ. Our flesh may at times rebel against such restraint but, as we learn to love God's will, we will rejoice in the privilege of setting aside our own liberties and preferences that others might be blessed.

EVERY THOUGHT

Vigilance is necessary to not misuse our liberty which is in Christ. "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations [reasonings, *Marginal Translation*], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."—II Cor. 10:3-5

This lesson should impress upon our hearts and minds the folly of believing that as followers of Christ Jesus we are no longer subject to certain restraints and restrictions. To be truly free is to become so oriented to the will of God that its every detail is a delight to our hearts. The Apostle Paul has pointed out that, so far as the mind of the flesh is concerned, we have no liberty; for our every thought is to be brought into captivity to the will of God. As bondservants of Christ, we are to have no plans of our own that will in any way run counter to the will of God.

BUILDING ON FAITH

We are given further instructions concerning our development as New Creatures in Christ by the Apostle Peter, who wrote, “Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.”—II Pet. 1:5-7

We are free to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, and especially unto the household of faith. We are encouraged to let our light shine forth that others may have an opportunity to be blessed by the Truth. “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) We have freedom to send forth the word of life, truth, and the wonderful promises of salvation to all who may have a hearing ear.

LIMITATIONS

We do not have the freedom to walk after the flesh, nor to speak or act in any way that may even remotely be injurious to our brethren and others. We cannot render evil for evil, or reviling for reviling. Neither are we free to do as we please according to the preferences of our fallen flesh.

When we learn to love the will of our loving Heavenly Father, the only limitation or restraint that we may find burdensome would be the hampering of the imperfections of the flesh. These imperfections alone would prevent us from rendering our total and absolute obedience to our Heavenly Father and our dear Lord Jesus for the wonderful blessings that we have received. Because of these fleshly cords of bondage, we often groan while we strive to keep our sacrifice on the altar until it is fully consumed.

In the resurrection, we will be delivered into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. At that time, we will be able fully to render the absolute obedience which we are trying to do now. May the anticipation of that future liberty spur us on now to greater faithfulness, love, and zeal as servants of our dear Lord and Master. ■

“In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.”

—II Timothy 2:20,21, New International Version

Sanctification of the Spirit

***“Elect according to
the foreknowledge
of God the Father,
through
sanctification of
the Spirit, unto
obedience and
sprinkling of the
blood of Jesus
Christ.”
—I Peter 1:2***

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE

Apostle Peter speaks of those who have been called out of the world during the present Gospel Age by our loving Heavenly Father. This special class of Christians are being developed as New Creatures in Christ Jesus by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit of Truth.

They are now prospective members of the body of Christ, and the apostle addresses them as the ‘elect according to the foreknowledge of God.’ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you [for us, *Marginal Translation*], Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”—vss. 3-5

THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

In his letter to the church at Rome, the Apostle Paul wrote of the wonderful wisdom and foreknowledge of our loving Heavenly Father. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—Rom. 8:29,30

If we desire to be among those who have been elected and are in harmony with the arrangements of God's foreknowledge, we will need to become copies of God's dear Son. It has been divinely predestinated, or foreknown, that only those who have been called and justified may be counted among the brethren of the firstborn class. The number of individuals that have been called to this special class has been established by God in advance, and they were given the opportunity to meet his foreknown conditions and be faithful to him in their calling.

We are encouraged to be conformed to the image of God's Son. Paul, who was a chosen and special servant of the Father, acknowledged the importance of growing in the likeness of our Lord. When writing to the brethren at Corinth, he said, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."—I Cor. 9:26,27

SETTING APART

Sanctification means to be set apart for God and to the work of his service in the Truth. Our part is the consecration of ourselves to do his will and points to a life of total dedication to our loving Heavenly Father. It is a commitment of all our time, strength, and means to his purpose, and the giving up of our own will and accepting his will. The act of consecration indicates the true expression and desire of our heart to be sanctified and set apart.

From the time this first important step toward sanctification is taken, God begins to work in us. Paul speaks of our consecration as the working out of God's will in our lives. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."—Phil. 2:12,13

In our featured scripture, Peter spoke of God's part of our consecration vow as a 'sanctification of the Spirit.' This means that our Heavenly Father works in us to bring about our sanctification through the influence of his Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: . . . for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:15-17) The Master also prayed to his Heavenly Father on behalf of his faithful body of followers, saying, "Sanctify them through thy

truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”—John 17:17-19

POWER OF THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the power or influence of God’s mind and thoughts over our consecrated lives, and he does this through his written Word of Truth. The entire Word of God is a work of the Holy Spirit, and its influence in our lives is the sanctifying work. It is the power of his Word of Truth that is working in us, and by which we are sanctified.

Jesus never was a sinner, and therefore sanctification cannot mean a turning from sin to righteousness. It is rather a setting apart to God and to the doing of his will. In the Master’s earthly ministry, we are provided with a wonderful example, and we should study, meditate upon, and copy his life’s ministry in our own lives of sanctification.

IT IS WRITTEN OF ME

We have noted that Jesus said, “For their sakes I sanctify myself.” (John 17:19) He was sanctified through the Spirit and by the Word of Truth as we are. Also, his sanctification began at the time of his consecration even as ours does. The Apostle Paul recorded the fact that when Jesus made his consecration he expressed his desire to do all that was written of him. “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book [Ps. 40:7,8] it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”—Heb. 10:7

It was in carrying out this consecration that our Lord's sanctification was accomplished. It was 'in the volume of the book' that he found the complete expression of God's will for him. The Father's will was that he should lay down his life in sacrifice for his church and for the whole world. Thus his sanctification was for the sake of his church, because it led him to sacrifice his life for them. The making of our calling and election sure depends upon our being conformed to his image. We are guided by the same Word of Truth that revealed the Heavenly Father's will to him, and it has the same meaning for us.

UNTO OBEDIENCE

In our featured scripture, the Apostle Peter wrote, 'through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.' He thus indicates that obedience to the Divine will is a basic principle through which our sanctification is accomplished. It was because of Jesus' obedience to his Heavenly Father that he said, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30) He had the same purpose as the Father, and a desire to do his will.

Fullness of sanctification was what the Master wanted to see developed in his followers. To this end, he prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (chap. 17:21) It is absolute obedience to the Divine will that makes us 'one' with the Heavenly Father even as Jesus was at one with him. This is the exacting condition upon which we may hope to be among the elect of God.

THE PERFECT EXAMPLE

The only perfect example of a sanctified life that we have to guide us is that of Jesus. Even the great Apostle Paul admonished us to follow him only to the extent that he followed the Master. The will of God that is expressed through his Word is the same for us as it was for Jesus, and we are to be conformed to his image. It is important that we look to him and be guided by the perfect example of his wholly sanctified life.

Jesus possessed a perfectly balanced character. He was patient, longsuffering, gentle and kind. At the same time, he was resolute and firm in his stand for truth and righteousness. These are all godlike characteristics and will abound in every sanctified life. In themselves, they are not necessarily evidences of sanctification, because sanctification is much more than righteous elements of character. When God created our first parents, he implanted in them his image, and despite six thousand years of a downward trend from original holiness there are some in whom traces of the original likeness of God may still be found.

In Jesus' life, there was not a single trace of imperfection or sin to mar the beauty. In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Hebrew brethren, he wrote concerning Jesus, "Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7:26) Because of this, Jesus answered Philip when he asked to see the Father, saying, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

(John 14:9) The Father's character was fully displayed in the life of his beloved Son.

In addition to our Lord's righteous character, his sanctification was a setting apart to carry out the Divine will with respect to his Father's plan of salvation for the sin-sick and dying human family. This phase of his sanctification required much more than living a righteous life. The Father's will for Jesus was that he must die as man's Redeemer but, in the laying down of his life, he was to be a servant, and share with God in respect to various details of his ultimate plan and purpose of salvation. Jesus was to lay the foundation for the Gospel church by the selection and training of the apostles. He was to bear witness to the Truth amidst the crooked and perverse generation of his day. It was by his faithful preaching of unpopular truths and exposing popular errors that he incurred the enmity of the religious rulers of his day, an enmity that finally resulted in his death.

PLANTED IN HIS LIKENESS

Our sanctification calls for the same kind of service that was rendered by our Lord Jesus. Like the Master, we too are called upon to lay down our lives in sacrifice. God's will for us in this respect is identical to what it was for the Master. Paul speaks to this, saying, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:5) In thus laying down our lives in sacrifice, we too may serve the brethren. Jesus served the brethren of his day, and we may serve one another by building one another up in our most holy faith.

We are also commissioned by the Holy Spirit of God to bear witness to the Truth, as a necessary part of our sanctified life. This is not a matter which our Heavenly Father has left optional with us, nor is it relatively unimportant. If our consecration to do God's will is from the heart, then every expression of his will should be considered as a command which leaves us no alternative but to obey. If we are truly emptied of self, and the influence of his Holy Spirit is not obstructed in our lives, we will delight in every phase of the Divine will even as Jesus did.

FORETOLD SUFFERINGS

In our featured scripture, Peter's reference to sanctification of the Spirit is the main theme of his epistle. In the opening chapter, he wrote to the scattered brethren, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (I Pet. 1:11) He makes it clear that the church participates in those foretold sufferings, as well as in the promised glory. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."—chap. 4:12,13

In this manner, sanctification of the Spirit means the same for us as it did for Jesus. For him it meant suffering and death, and then the promised glory to follow. These two objectives of sanctification are addressed in our text, 'Unto obedience and the

sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.’ We are first sanctified unto obedience, and that sanctification through the Word of Truth leads to the death of the flesh.

BLOOD OF SPRINKLING

In connection with our subject “Sanctification of the Spirit” the Apostle Peter includes the important point that it is unto a ‘sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.’ Our standing with the Heavenly Father during the present Gospel Age of acceptable sacrifice, is only by virtue of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. There is also to be a future work of sprinkling the blood, and we are now being sanctified or set apart for that service. Paul addressed this in his letter to the Hebrew brethren, when he said, “To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”—Heb. 12:24

All of the body members of the Christ—those who suffer and die with him—will share in that grand work of Christ’s future kingdom. “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” (II Cor. 5:18) The apostle spoke earlier of these, saying, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”—chap. 3:6

MEDIATORSHIP

Part of the ministry of the covenant was one of sacrifice, and it is this phase of the ministry in which the truly sanctified followers of the Master participate while they lay down their lives in

sacrifice to God. However, there is a future ministry of glory that follows the work of sacrifice. That will be at the inauguration of the New Covenant for the blessing of all the families of the earth. This glorious work was typified by the mediating of the Law Covenant by Moses and, in connection with that mediatorial work, there was a sprinkling of blood. Paul explained, "When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people."—Heb. 9:19

EARTHEN VESSELS

In this type, there is an illustration of the manner in which those followers of Christ who are being sanctified during this Gospel Age will participate in the future work of sprinkling the blood of Jesus Christ. Part of the blood which Moses obtained from slaying the oxen was poured upon the sacrificial altar. This shows the manner in which our sacrifice is made acceptable to God. The other half of the same blood was sprinkled on the book, and all the people, which served to seal the Law Covenant.

The basins in which Moses poured the blood were typical of the faithful members of Christ's sacrificial body, those who are now being sanctified unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. The typical vessels had no blood of their own, but had to be filled with the blood of the oxen which Moses slew. This represents the life that we now have by faith in Christ and his blood. It is only in his blood that we can attain life. We add nothing to the merit of his sacrifice.

MANKIND'S SALVATION

When our sanctification work has been completed, it will lead to full harmony with God and to absolute oneness with him and with Jesus. We will become the agency by which the merit of Christ's blood will flow out to the people under the administration of Christ's future kingdom. Concerning the Christ class the Prophet Isaiah foretold, "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages."—Isa. 49:8

God will use his sanctified people who are being called during this Gospel Age—Jesus and his faithful church—as the instruments for establishing the New Covenant for the blessing of the human family. The ultimate objective of our being sanctified and our being set apart is not merely for the service of God now, but more particularly for the glorious service of the kingdom of Christ.

God's purpose through the Christ class is the blessing of all, and we strive to meet the foreordained qualification of the elect to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son.

There is but one way in which this can be done, and that is by being emptied of self and being filled with the Holy Spirit of God. This cannot be accomplished in a moment, but is the work of a lifetime. If we are yielding to the influences of the Spirit, we should daily find ourselves rejoicing more and more in the will of God, even though this may mean our loss of earthly friendships and desires. As earthly interests are set aside, our heavenly joys increase,

and that is the joy that has been set before us. It furnishes inspiration to continue faithfully in the narrow way of sacrifice, and we are assured that if we endure to the end we will share Christ's glory in his kingdom. Together with him we will have the grand privilege of imparting the blessings of life to all the willing and obedient of mankind. ■

*Jesus, the very thought of thee,
Brings comfort, peace, and rest;
O! how I long thy face to see,
And be forever blest.*

*No voice can sing, no heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than Jesus' name,
The Savior of mankind.*

*O hope of every contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
To those who ask, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek!*

*But what to those who find? Ah! this,
Nor tongue nor pen can show!
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but his loved ones know.*

*Jesus, our only joy be thou,
As thou our prize wilt be;
In thee be all our glory now,
And through eternity.*

—Hymns of Dawn

I Am The Way

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
—**John 14:6**

WHEN JESUS MADE THE statement recorded in our key scripture, he implied that his disciples should follow him in a way that would separate them from the general course of the world. This distinction was further made by our Lord in Matthew 7:13,14, when he said, "Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (the entire world of mankind). He continued, however, saying, "Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

In this phrase 'I am the way,' Jesus was speaking about a way that began to be prepared at Jordan and was finished on the cross. The Apostle Paul in Hebrews 10:20 identified it as a "new and living way, . . . consecrated for us" through the blood of Jesus, and we sometimes speak of it as 'the way of the cross.' This is the only way available that leads to life, and there is no other way to come unto the Father except by the way of the cross of Christ.

NARROW WAY ESTABLISHED

While it is true that the Jews had an accommodation for a period of time to approach God through

the Mosaic Law, nevertheless that arrangement did not lead to life because they could not meet the conditions and requirements of that Law. In fact, when Jesus opened up the 'new and living way' to them they, as a nation, rejected him. Only a few believed and became sons of God and entered upon this way at Pentecost. (John 1:11,12) A few years later the Lord turned to the Gentiles to take out of them a "people for his name." (Acts 15:14) Today, as we near the end of the Gospel Age, in the closing days of the harvest, this same new and living way is still open. Many have been found joyously traveling this way and can testify to the great blessings, spiritual satisfaction, and peace of mind that has come as a result. How blessed indeed has been the lot of these, and we rejoice that this way is still open for others to enter upon.

The expression 'the way' is interesting to notice. Early Christians were called those of 'the way.' The Greek word translated 'the way' in our text means a road, implying progress in a journey toward a specific destination. How fitting this thought is to those who are following in the footsteps of the Master.

The early followers of the Master were not called Christians until after the time of Paul's conversion. In Acts 11:26, we are told that they were first called Christians at Antioch. Notice that they were not called "Bible Students" at that time, because they did not have the Bible as we have it today. The epistles and records of the New Testament gospel were mostly written well along in the ministry of the apostles, and most of the churches were established long before they had the benefit of the various letters that were sent to them. Even in this

there was very little chance for individual study of these letters as there were few copies, and they were read to the churches. No doubt many of the brethren then took notes, those that could write, as we often do today, so they could study these important truths later.

The Early Church depended largely upon the books of “the law and the prophets” (Acts 13:15)—the Old Testament—and there were likely very few copies available even of these. As a result, the doctrinal and spiritual instruction of the brethren then came largely through the oral teachings of the apostles, and the teachers they ordained in all the churches.

THE WAY OF LIGHT AND TRUTH

Prior to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the disciples were referred to by others as those of ‘the way.’ In Acts 9:2, Saul used this expression when he sought to bring bound to Jerusalem any that he found of “this way.” The *Marginal Translation* says “the way.” Jesus used this expression many times himself. One reference is in Mark 10:52, when Jesus restored the sight of a blind man, and it says “immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.” This has been the experience of each one of the Lord’s footstep followers. We are reminded of the hymn that says, “Once I was blind, but now I can see; the Light of the world is Jesus.” What a blessed day it was in our lives when the Lord took away our blindness and we began walking in the light of Jesus in the way.

This way is the way of Truth. In Psalm 119, we have a beautiful testimonial of David that expresses

the heart sentiment of all those who are walking in the way. Notice how the expression ‘the way’ is used in these verses. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. . . . I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.” (Ps. 119:1,30-33) This is the spirit of our consecration, and means that we must not only know the Truth, but also be “doers of the word” (James 1:22), keeping the statutes of the Lord even unto the end of the way.

THE HOPE OF THIS WAY

When Jesus said “I am the way,” he simply meant that the High Calling of God could be attained only by following in the way that our Master first trod—in his footsteps. This phrase describes a difficult way, a rugged and narrow way, which leads to life—immortal life—in the heavenly kingdom. This way also leads to the wonderful opportunity to share with our glorified Master in administering the earthly phase of his kingdom, in uplifting and blessing all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:18

Thus, these two incentives are always before us in this way—the hope of the Divine nature, being made like our Lord and seeing him as he is, and the work of blessing all the families of the earth. This is what the Apostle Paul spoke of in the 6th chapter of Hebrews, verse 19, when he said, “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within

the veil.” In the typical Tabernacle, what was within the veil that represented our hopes? It was the contents of the Ark of the Covenant—the Golden Pot of Manna, immortality; Aaron’s Rod, Divine authority; and the tables of the Law, the New Covenant.

LESSONS FROM ELIJAH AND ELISHA

Our hopes embrace both the heavenly and earthly phases of the kingdom. These two aspects of our calling were illustrated in one of the experiences of Elijah and Elisha, recorded in II Kings 2:1-8. “It came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul

liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.”

In these events, Elijah represents our Lord Jesus, and Elisha the church, and we have provided a fundamental lesson regarding our calling of God. Here we see Elijah being sent by the Lord to Bethel, Jericho, and to the Jordan, just prior to his being caught up with a chariot of fire and a whirlwind. The meaning of Bethel is ‘the house of God,’ and surely our Lord Jesus had a great desire and hope to be with his Father in his heavenly kingdom. This prospect was one of the great joys set before him that made it possible for him to endure the cross. Elijah was then sent to Jericho. (vs. 4) In the Bible, Jericho pictures the world of mankind. Surely another of the great joys set before our Lord was the prospect of going unto the world as the seed of promise, to eventually bless all the families of the earth.

For these two hopes to be realized, concerning both the heavenly and the earthly phases of the kingdom, Jesus had to also go to the Jordan. (vs. 6) The Scriptures clearly show that the salty and poisonous waters of the lower Jordan, below Galilee, toward the Dead Sea, represent the curse upon mankind who are all represented as being in the Dead Sea condition—dead in Adam. When Jesus came to the Jordan and was baptized of John, he was picturing the fact that three-and-one-half years later

on the cross he would provide a means, through the merit of his blood, of ‘smiting the Jordan’—smiting the curse and rolling it back from off the faces of all people. In this picture, Elijah’s mantle was used to do the smiting. According to the *Revised Standard Version* (II Kings 1:8) his mantle was of haircloth, either of the sheep or the goats, and would seem to represent the merit of Christ’s sacrifice being applied first on behalf of the church at the beginning of the Gospel Age, the church being pictured by Elisha in this instance.

There was another smiting recorded later in the second chapter (vs. 14), using the same mantle. Elisha there seems to represent the Christ, glorified, as the second sprinkling of the merit occurs on behalf of the Jericho class, the world of mankind. We remember how Elisha, after smiting the Jordan, crossed over and purified the waters of Jericho, and in verse 21, we read, “I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.” This is a beautiful kingdom picture!

CONSIDER CAREFULLY THE WAY

Let’s consider, however, the purpose of our reference to the first 8 verses of this chapter. Concerning each of these 3 places, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘tarry here, . . . for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel,’ Jericho, etc. Our first impression might be that Elijah did not want Elisha to go with him when he said, tarry here. This was not the case at all. The Hebrew word translated tarry here means to ‘sit down’ and ponder, to consider carefully whether you want to go with me or not. Elijah knew how

rugged was the way, the narrow winding trail through the wilderness and the dangers that were at every hand, and so he wanted Elisha to make up his own mind without any coercion on his part. In each instance, Elisha said to Elijah, 'I will not leave thee.' Think of the joy that came to Elijah when Elisha responded so enthusiastically.

Similarly, our hopes are the same as our Master. We are called to be joint-heirs with him in the Father's kingdom. We want to go to Bethel, to be with our Lord and see him as he is. We want also to go to Jericho, and realize the great joy of dispensing the blessings to mankind—wiping the tears from off all faces, and magnifying the name of our God in all the earth. These hopes will be realized if we are willing also to go with him to the Jordan in consecration, and there, through faith in the precious blood of Christ, be lifted up out of the condemnation in Adam, to newness of life in Christ.

This is a very important consideration and the Lord wants us to 'sit down' and count the cost also. He wants us to give careful thought to the matter of following in his footsteps. The decision must be wholly ours. Surely it brought great joy to our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Master when we, after considering the ruggedness of the way, the dangers unknown, and the sacrificing required, made our decision, enthusiastically, and said to our blessed Master, "I will not leave thee."

THE LORD IS WITH US IN THE WAY

Now, we are traveling on this lonely and narrow way through the wilderness of this present evil world, toward these wonderful hopes set before us.

Our Master is with us, for he has promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Heb. 13:5) Yes, he has hold of us by his own right hand, and is showing us the way, day by day, and we hear him speaking to us through his Word, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it.”—Isa. 30:21

‘This is the way’—here we have those words again. For many of the Lord’s dear people it is indeed a lonely way, according to the flesh. We have no real fellowship with the world. Many of the Lord’s people are scattered, being isolated and having few opportunities for fellowship with others of ‘like precious faith.’ Let us remember, though, that we are never really alone. The Lord is with us constantly, and the light of his countenance is shining upon us, illuminating our pathway, no matter how isolated or alone we may be. We must allow that light to shine out in our lives that we might be a blessing and a righteous influence and example to those about us. If we are faithfully serving God, even if it be just in our own little corner, we will not have time to be lonely to the point of discouragement. We know this is true, having witnessed it in so many faithful followers of Christ from the past.

AN EXAMPLE OF FAITHFULNESS

One such example took place many years ago. There was an elderly sister in Christ who had been confined to a nursing home for many years. She was in constant pain, almost entirely deaf, and otherwise in very poor health. Brethren kept in close contact with her through correspondence, as she was very isolated, and could be visited only occasionally by those able to travel a great distance. Writing was

very difficult for her and painful, but the letters she did write were a beautiful expression of a consecrated child of God. On one particular occasion, some had an opportunity to stop and visit her, receiving a very great blessing as a result. The account of their visit was as follows: "When we entered the nursing home—and she did not know we were coming—we inquired where her room was, and were directed into this one wing of the rather large home. All of the bedrooms went off from one large sitting room where the patients congregated, watched television, read magazines, etc. At one end of this room, we found this dear sister, with her own special chair and a table beside it with her Bible, the volumes, and many small Truth booklets spread out, and she spent her time witnessing to and reading to anyone who would listen. When she had witnessed to everyone in that wing, she would ask to be transferred to another area where she would have others to witness to."

What a glorious example! Yes, she was alone, but she was not discouraged, because she was busy serving, praising and glorifying God. Jesus, too, had similar experiences. In Gethsemane, how glad he would have been if just one of his disciples had stayed with him, but they all fell asleep. Let us determine that we, as our Lord's disciples, are not going to 'fall asleep' on our brethren. There are those who especially need our fellowship and encouragement, and the Lord will bless such for their faithfulness in this.

MANY ASPECTS OF THIS WAY

Jesus said, 'I am the way.' It is a way of loneliness at times. It is a way of peace. It is a way of

great exultation and joy. It is also a way of sacrifice. It is a way of patience and longsuffering. It is a way of devotion and service to our God. There is no higher aspiration than to serve God, who is proving us in little ways this side of the veil. It is a way of humility, because this great treasure that we have is still in this earthen vessel. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."—II Cor. 4:7-10

We must see and understand the great responsibility we have toward our brethren, all of those similarly striving to serve the Lord. If we lay down our lives for our brethren, the Lord accepts it as being done unto him. If we neglect or criticize our brethren, speak evil of them, or cause divisions among them, the Lord accepts that also as being done unto him. We must think very seriously about this, and use our influence to heal any wound that might have occurred in the body of Christ. "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." (Heb. 12:12,13) The flesh will use every opportunity to assert itself in our lives, but we must keep it under and allow our relationship to the Lord and to our brethren to be controlled by the higher standard of the New Creature.

The Christian way is a difficult and narrow way. Jesus said, ‘narrow is the way’ and few there be that find it. The Lord’s truly consecrated followers have found it, but if we try to make this way too broad we will lose it. The terms and conditions of this narrow way were predetermined before we entered—we cannot adjust them to suit ourselves. Paul gives us these words concerning the way we have chosen. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”—Rom. 8:28-30 ■

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Edith C. Gresham, Gainsborough House,
England—December 13, 2007. Age, 91

Brother Paul Eckles, Sacramento, CA—October
10. Age, 93

Brother Len Fraikin, Orlando, FL—October 13.
Age, 58

Brother William Lyscott, Brooklyn, NY—October
14. Age, 79

Sister Constance F. Nadal, Gainsborough House,
England—October 18. Age, 94

Sister Amy Draper, Southlake, TX—October 19.
Age, 90

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There Shall Be Peace

*Earth knows no peace while nations hate,
And thrust and kill, and watch and wait
For night to come that they might throw
Death dealing bombs on all below.*

*Earth knows no peace, tho peace they cry.
They sign their treaties while men die.
Their widows mourn and say "O when
Will peace come to this earth again?"*

*The few control for selfish gain.
The laborer doth cry in vain.
It is thru trouble man must learn
The judgments of the Lord are stern.*

*A voice now speaks, mankind is awed—
"Be still and know that I am God."
The Master who once calmed the sea
Has come again earth's King to be.*

*The angel hosts sang at his birth,
"Good will to men and peace on earth."
It echoes down thru all the years
To give us hope and calm our fears.*

*God's promises are true and sure,
His Word forever shall endure.
Lift up your heads for strife shall cease,
O'er all the earth THERE SHALL BE PEACE.*

—Poems of the Way

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

Tim Alexander

Chicago, IL December 27,28

R. Goodman

St. Augustine, FL December 7

M. Nekora

Chicago, IL December 27,28

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

DECEMBER 4—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"—Luke 11:13 (Z. '01-271 Hymn 205)

DECEMBER 11—"My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways."—Proverbs 23:26 (Z. '01-324 Hymn 208)

DECEMBER 18—"The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."—Hebrews 13:6 (Z. '02-45 Hymn 307)

DECEMBER 25—"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—Luke 2:10,11 (Z. '03-457 Hymn 345)

CONVENTIONS

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

CHICAGO CONVENTION, December 27,28—Elk Grove High School, 500 W. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. Contact J. Farrell. Phone: (630) 469-9511

PHOENIX NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, January 3,4—La Quinta Inn, 2510 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix, AZ 85203. For hotel reservations, contact L. Williams. Phone: (602) 993-0800, ext. 5582. Other information, contact J. Zardja. Phone: (602) 363-2612

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 13,14, 15—The Clarion Hotel, 2600 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact K. Ajise. Phone: (916) 421-0755

SOUTHWEST WINTER CONVENTION, February 28-March 1—Sunnyslope High School, 35 W. Dunlap Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85021. Contact S. Humphreys. Phone: (623) 322-9082

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 7,8,9—Clarion Hotel-Altamonte Springs, 230 West State Road 436, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714. Phone: (407) 862-4455. Specify "Florida Bible Students" for special rate until February 20. Other information, contact J. Wesol. Phone: (407) 699-1829

FRESNO PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 27,28,29—Vagabond Inn Executive, 2141 N. Parkway Drive, Fresno, CA 93705. Contact B. Wilson, 2103 N. Price, #112, Fresno, CA 93703. Phone: (559) 255-2241

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 4,5—Macomb Community College, Building “K”, 14500 Twelve Mile Road, Warren, MI 48088. Contact P. Nemesh, 2183 Babcock Drive, Troy, MI 48084. Phone: (248) 649-6588

The Stable of Bethlehem

*‘Twas not a palace proud and fair
God chose his Son’s first home;
No dazz’ling pile of grandeur rare,
With pillar’d hall and dome;
Oh no! a stable, rude and poor,
Received Him at his birth;
And thus was born, unknown, obscure,
The Heir of Heaven and Earth.*

*No band of anxious menials there,
To tend the new-born child,
Joseph alone and Mary fair
Upon the infant smiled;
No broidered linens fine had they
Those little limbs to fold,
No baby garments rich and gay,
No tissues wrought with gold.*

*Come to your Savior’s lowly bed,
All ye of humble heart,
And learn with bowed and humble head
The lesson ‘twill impart;
‘Twill teach you not to prize too high
The riches vain of earth—
But to lay up in God’s bright sky
Treasures of truer worth.*

—Poems of the Way

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

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

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

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

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

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35