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The Vanishing Honeybee: Omen of Our Time

*“The earth also is
defiled under the
inhabitants
thereof.”
—Isaiah 24:5*

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE Prophet Isaiah points to the devastating effects of fallen man’s irresponsible and careless behavior because of

sin. The Old Testament Hebrew word that has been translated ‘defiled’ means to soil, and is variously translated profane, corrupt, or pollute in other versions of the Bible. In the context, the prophet also speaks of earth’s inhabitants who profane the laws of God and ignore his holy standards of righteousness.

In recent years, the threat of pollution and its effects has become a major subject of concern as we witness the earth’s air, soil, and water resources being contaminated. As these natural treasures become polluted at increasing levels, long-established wildlife habitats are also being disturbed in many parts of the world. Some of these disruptions are directly affecting the human family and the

food we eat. Concern has also been growing as the United States is turning to importing more of its food from foreign sources, some of which may be questionable.

NATURE'S MARVEL

Honeybees are scientifically known as *Apis mellifera* and are closely related to wasp and ant colonies. They are not native to North America, but were introduced here by early colonists who brought them from England, first to Virginia in 1622 and then to Massachusetts in 1630. They spread from there to other locations throughout the United States by natural swarming and by beekeepers. They are found on all of earth's continents except Antarctica, and in every habitat where flowering plants are found. Some of these habitats are now being threatened.

These marvelous little creatures have been especially adapted by the Creator for feeding on either nectar or pollen, depending upon their specific body needs at the time of their feeding. Bees are particularly noted for their function in the pollination of flowering plants as their hairy little bodies pick up pollen from one plant and transport it to another.

BUSY BEES

The familiar expression 'busy bee' describes the sterile female hive workers, and takes on new and added meaning when considered in the light of the important role they perform in the well-being and happiness of the human family. They also provide a vital link in the human food chain. Honeybees and flowering plants work in harmony with each other

as they carry out this elaborate and very important function. During the process, honey is produced that is also a valuable food commodity.

In a honeybee colony, there is a queen bee that lays her eggs in a honeycomb cell that has been prepared for her by the worker bees. She may lay as many as 3,000 eggs in one day during her peak season. Her life span is usually two to three years. The workers make the wax for the hive, build the honeycomb, and clean up the hive. They also maintain the temperature in the hive by fanning their wings. Worker bees collect nectar to feed the baby bees that grow rapidly and begin to climb out of their cells when they are fully grown, usually after 16-24 days. The average lifespan of a honeybee during the working season is approximately six weeks.

Honeybees are normally gentle insects and use their stingers only in self-defense when they are threatened or disturbed. Beekeepers who work with them on a regular basis understand and respect their colonies and develop a compatible working relationship with them. It is generally known by researchers who have studied honeybees' living habits that they have the ability to communicate with one another on a high level of sophistication. When foraging bees have found a new source of food they will return to the hive and communicate this information to other worker bees in the colony. One way they do this is by performing an elaborate and so-called 'language dance' that is oriented toward the sun, and indicates both the distance and direction to the newly found source of food. There are also other ways they communicate with each other by way of sound and aroma.

Honeybees eat nectar which is a sugary water solution, and pollen which is a yellow powdery protein, that are both produced by flowering plants. They are attracted to the plants by enticing colored petals, alluring aroma, or by very sweet nectar. When foraging, the bees pick up the dusty pollen from the male anther of one flower, and then transport it to the female stigma of another plant. Fertilization takes place and the seed begins its process of development. Successful pollination increases when there are more bees present during the time of peak flowering.

THE HUMAN FOOD CHAIN

Agriculturalists estimate that one third of the human food supply depends directly on insect pollination and, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, honeybees are responsible for the majority of that pollination. Certain species of beetles, butterflies, moths, and some breeds of birds are also common pollinators. Wind and water may also transport pollen. Recent statistics indicate that honeybees provide pollination for dozens of varieties of the most important fruit, citrus, berry, and nut crops that are commercially grown. These crops are estimated to be worth billions of dollars annually in this country alone, and include cherries, blueberries, apples, peaches, pears, kiwi, cranberries, strawberries, avocados, almonds, and macadamia nuts. In addition, many varieties of vegetable crops also depend upon honey bees, such as asparagus, broccoli, celery, squash, cucumbers, pumpkins, cantaloupe, melons and many other items.

The state of California is the nation's largest producer of food crops, and has nearly 500,000 colonies of honeybees that are operated by 400 commercial and noncommercial beekeepers. In addition to this number, there are over 2,000 others who keep bees as a hobby, usually at or near their own homes. In California alone, the annual almond crop depends upon approximately 1.3 million colonies of honeybees for pollination and the figure is expected to rise substantially.

Contract beekeepers constantly move their bee colonies around the country as the growing season changes. They concentrate their hives in areas of pollination at appropriate times to enhance and sustain agricultural productivity. Without these wondrous little creatures that are small enough to move into the flowers, collect the pollen and deliver it where it is needed, there would be no fruit. Even cattle, which feed on alfalfa and other flowering grasses also depend on them. Certain crops, therefore, cannot be sustained to produce an adequate food supply for human consumption without them.

VANISHING HONEYBEES

Commercial apiaries have recently reported that large numbers of their bees have been disappearing. They explain that the usual procedure has always been to place their beehives near a flowering field crop for two or three weeks and then return to retrieve them. Now upon their return, they report finding only the queen and a few immature bees, and whatever worker bees that may have survived are too weak to perform their tasks.

Scientists who are studying the situation say that they have found abandoned hives in which the bees have left their hives along with the honey and their broods of baby bees. They are fleeing their hives to die elsewhere. One researcher, commenting on the phenomenon said it was like a mother going off somewhere and leaving her children behind.

Problems are being reported in many places in this country as well as in overseas locations. In many cases, beekeepers have lost half of their bees, and in some cases the percentage is even higher. This is causing serious concern because these insects are highly mobile, and can be quickly moved en masse to locations where crops are in bloom and ready for pollination.

COLONY-COLLAPSE DISORDER

Experts in the agriculture industry have identified the problem of rapidly disappearing adult worker bees over a very short period of time as 'colony-collapse disorder.' They point out that this is occurring during the season when a rapid die-off of workers is not expected, either in late fall or early spring. Insect ecologists are considering the possibility that the disappearance of honeybees may be related to disruptions in their orientation and navigation. Bees are also vanishing in other parts of the world, including many countries in Europe, South America, and elsewhere. It is noted that other insects such as wasps, flies, beetles, and some birds that are associated with pollination are also experiencing decreasing populations.

SEARCHING FOR CAUSES

Researchers have examined thousands of abandoned bee hives, dissected countless numbers of bees, and have tested for viruses, bacteria, mites, pesticides, and many other possible causes of CCD. They are struggling to discover the reason why honeybees are disappearing, and are looking to find a specific reason that may be responsible for the problem. They point out that the honeybee genome has only half as many genes to detoxify poisons and to fight off infections that some other insects have. They are also not equipped to fight poisons or disease because of their peculiar social habits which exposes them to ailments that other closely related species of insects may be affected with. The nature of bees has thus led to the loss of large numbers of genes associated with the immune system.

It has also been suggested that stress may play a part in the disorder. Honeybees are naturally used to having a variety of foods in their diets when left to forage for themselves. When their hives are packed onto flatbed trucks and hauled over long distant routes to pollinate a specific crop, they are thus reduced to surviving on a single source of food. Traveling long distances also exposes them to temperature fluctuations and high levels of carbon dioxide. These factors all contribute to a very high level of stress.

Specimens of bees have been studied by a team of scientists that are associated with the United States Department of Agriculture. They report that a recently discovered virus, known as the 'Israeli acute paralysis virus (IAPV)' which was

first identified in bee colonies in Israel in 2002, was present in more than 90% of the samples. They observed that bees were exhibiting unusual behavior such as twitching their wings when moving around outside of their hives. Those who studied the effects of the virus said this may be a possible indicator for the syndrome, but they acknowledge that it is not likely to be a direct cause.

Other studies show that there is a host of microscopic bugs that afflict honeybees, including the vampiric *Varroa destructor*, which sucks the blood from bees. Although the mites don't kill the bees, their bites leave open wounds for further infections to set in. Investigators report that it is more likely that *Varroa* is working in conjunction with other parasites or pathogens that wear down the bees' immune systems until even the smallest infection can kill them. Also under study is the Tracheal mite, which attacks the bee's respiratory system.

CHEMICAL POISONS

Many causes for CCD have been under investigation including environmental changes that may be related to the breakdown of the bee's immune system. Other possible causes have included exposure to limited or contaminated water supply. One investigator who was studying the effects of the syndrome traveled from one part of the country to the other while collecting specimens of adult bees, young and immature broods, as well as nectar, pollen and honeycombs from both sick and healthy colonies. In a coordinated study of these specimens, over one hundred chemical pesticides that are used to poison mites, funguses, and other pests were

investigated with no apparent link established to CCD.

Scientists have also focused on a new group of pesticides known as neonicotinoids. These are being studied because they have been found to be safe when used in human populations, but have the potential to kill honeybees. They found that using these pesticides leads to confusing the bee's ability to navigate and to become acquainted with their environment, but no recognizable underlying cause of CCD has yet been found.

A study of chemical poisons has been conducted that relates to honeybees' extreme sensitivity to odors, which is about forty times greater than that found in human beings. Scientists explained that when a colony of bees is exposed to a new chemical odor, they create sounds within their hives that can be recorded. Studying these sounds may indicate a change in volume and frequency which gives them a unique audio signature. However, no definite conclusions have been reached so far to connect these recorded changes in sound to Colony-Collapse Disorder.

The wholesale use of powerful pesticides that are used in large scale farming operations to control unwelcome insects, are believed by many beekeepers and researchers to be a direct cause of CCD. Honeybees that are exposed to an overdose of chemicals potent enough to kill other insects could very easily trigger the syndrome. This includes the use of nicotine-based Imidacloprid, an insecticide ingredient produced by Bayer laboratories. When used to control termites and other problem insects, it is known to damage the immune system and

disorient the insect's memory so that they cannot find their way back home. The substance is now banned in France where it has been blamed for triggering declining honeybee populations in that country. However, Bayer has denied any connection to CCD.

ICE CREAM FLAVORS AFFECTED

As evidence of the extent of potential damage to our food industry, we note an interesting news item carried by CNN (February 17, 2008) and submitted by senior writer Parija Kavilanz under the caption "Disappearing Bees Threaten Ice Cream Sellers." The report said that Haagen-Dazs, a premium ice cream maker, has stated that vanishing honeybee colonies in the United States may lead to fewer available flavors and higher prices for their products. The company warned that the tiny honeybee is responsible for this unprecedented problem.

Kavilanz reports, "At issue is the disappearing bee colonies in the United States, a situation that continues to mystify scientists and frighten food-makers." That's because, according to Haagen-Dazs, one-third of the U. S. food supply—including a variety of fruits, vegetables, and even nuts—depends on pollination from bees. Haagen-Dazs, which is owned by Nestle, said bees are actually responsible for 40% of its 60 flavors, such as strawberry, toasted pecan, and banana split. "These are among consumers' favorite flavors," said Katty Pien, director with Haagen-Dazs. "We use 100% all natural ingredients like strawberries, raspberries, and almonds which we get from California. The bee problem could badly hurt supply from the Pacific Northwest."

Pien said Haagen-Dazs is hoping scientists get a breakthrough in this mystery soon. Otherwise, she said, “The company may have to reexamine the flavors that we currently offer our customers. We have to ensure that we have enough supply to maintain our variety.” Additionally, a supply shortage of key ingredients could push up retail prices for its products. Pien said the company is donating \$250,000 to both Pennsylvania State University and the University of California, Davis to fund research into bee Colony-Collapse Disorder (CCD). She said Haagen-Dazs is also rushing to raise consumer awareness about the problem by launching a new flavor this spring called Vanilla Honey Bee. She said, “We’ll use part of the sales from this flavor to help the honeybees. We are taking this very, very seriously because it impacts not just our brand but the entire food industry.”

FLOWERS AND SEEDS

In addition to the food crop industry, there are also numerous commercial flower and seed growers that send their products all over the world. Many of these seeds, plants, and flowers are used to provide areas of recreation in city and town parks, and for beautification around public buildings throughout the country.

It is estimated that one half of all American households have a small garden plot somewhere on their property. Many of these contain both flowers and vegetables. Growing varieties of annual and perennial flowers, planting flowering shrubs and trees as well as many other species is an outdoor pastime that is enjoyed by many home owners.

Others find pleasure in preparing a place to grow a few vegetables. However, most of these gardens depend upon the vanishing honeybee to perform the necessary pollination. This simple act of nature provides us all with a better quality of life.

THE WEAKENED NATIONS

Corruption, violence, and the power to destroy is everywhere prevalent in our polluted and violated world today. The Prophet Isaiah speaks of Satan, who is the author of this tragedy, and writes, “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!”—Isa. 14:12, *New American Standard Bible*

God had once created a beautiful and harmonious environment for mankind and the animal creation that would share it with him, but now we see it defiled beyond measure. The honeybee has suffered much during this progressive degeneration. This has come about by way of countless numbers of diseases, infections, bacteria, and viruses. The list includes exposure to violent environmental and adverse weather changes as well as contaminated water and food sources. Bees have had to cope with forced travel over long distances to do their work, and also to overcome powerful chemical agents that are designed to destroy the immune systems and cause the death of other unwanted species of insects.

In our present society, honeybees are becoming overstressed and overworked. At the same time, they are also being exposed to a variety of debilitating conditions that now cause them to become

disorientated, abandon their hives along with their babies and honey supply, and fly away to suffer and die in some unlikely place that neither scientists nor modern technology has been able to find or to understand.

HARMONY OF A PERFECTED EARTH

We believe that our loving Heavenly Father has full knowledge of the terrible calamity that has come upon his earthly creation because of disobedience to his laws of righteousness. We know that he has a glorious plan to restore the earth to harmony and peace during the future kingdom of his Son, our Lord Jesus. The psalmist says, "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us." (Ps. 67:6) During the administration of that blessed kingdom, sin and death shall be no more, and the whole creation will then rejoice in the ultimate plan and purpose of God.

The Prophet Isaiah also speaks of this wonderful time soon to come. In prophetic language, he says, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' [adder's, *Marginal Translation*] den."—Isa. 11:6-8

Although the honeybee is not specifically mentioned by the prophet in this passage of scripture,

we nevertheless rejoice in the eternal purpose of God that will include the blessing of this tiny creature to share in the glories of a perfected earth. We may trust our loving God to provide a safe and peaceful environment for the humble insect that performs such a wondrous task in the cycle that he has provided for the enjoyment of the family of man.

We continue to look forward with increasing anticipation to the fulfillment and ultimate purpose of our all-wise Heavenly Father that will soon be manifest to the whole world. “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.”—vs. 9 ■



“Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.”—I Corinthians 9:16

We should be prompt to tell others the best tidings we have; sympathy with the groaning creation in the various trials of life should lead us to point to the Lord’s promises respecting the coming Kingdom and the blessings that should then be to all the families of the earth.

Whoever does not thus proclaim daily, on every suitable opportunity, gives evidence either of lack of knowledge or of faith in the revelation, or of selfishness, which the Lord cannot approve, and which if persisted in, will ultimately debar him from a share in the Kingdom.

—Daily Heavenly Manna, May 7

The Temple Rebuilt

Key Verse: *“Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.”*
—Haggai 1:8

Selected Scripture:
Haggai 1; Ezra 5

FOLLOWING THE RETURN of the faithful Jewish remnant to Jerusalem from their captivity in Babylon, the people built an altar in order to worship the LORD. They then commenced erecting a new Temple. However, their Samaritan neighbors conspired against the Jews, and King Artaxerxes of Persia decreed this work should cease. (Ezra 3,4) “In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?”—Hag 1:1-4

Haggai rebuked the Israelites for neglecting the rebuilding of the Temple while erecting beautiful homes for themselves. He explained to them that their crops were small and their general sense of prosperity was lacking because obedience to God should be their highest priority.—vss. 5-7

Our Key Verse directs the Jews to revive their religious interests, and to begin anew with the construction of the Temple if they desired to receive the Heavenly Father's favors and blessings once more.

In order for the Jews to understand clearly that their impoverished temporal conditions were related to their failure to rebuild the Temple, Haggai indicates that what had befallen the people was in the nature of chastisement from God.—vss. 9-11

As a result of the encouragements given by Haggai, Zechariah, and other righteous leaders in Israel, the rebuilding of the Temple was initiated. Despite opposition from Israel's enemies, the Temple was finally completed and dedicated to the LORD with much joy and the offering of sacrifices.—Ezra 5,6

An important lesson to be derived from this study is that just as the nation of Israel was carried away into Babylonian captivity and ultimately released after many years and rebuilt the Temple, the name Babylon also has spiritual significance. Following the death of the apostles, many true Christians were taken captive by sectarian religious systems described symbolically as Babylon, in which false doctrines and man-made creeds not taught in the Bible were formulated. In obedience to scriptural instructions, true Christians have had their eyes enlightened and have departed from symbolic Babylon to study and practice God's Word in all its purity.—Rev. 18:4

Faithfulness in this regard will result in the establishment of the spiritual temple represented in Christ and his body. When this class is completed, it will usher in blessings for all the world of mankind. (Gen. 22:15-19; Gal. 3:27-29) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."—I Cor. 3:16,17 ■

Rebuilding the Wall

Key Verse: *“I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.”*

—*Nehemiah 2:18*

Selected Scripture:
Nehemiah 1:1-2:20

brethren.—Neh. 1:1-11

The king granted him a leave of absence to rebuild the wall at Jerusalem. He also gave him permission to pass through various provinces en route to Judah, as well as written authorization to receive materials for construction of a fortress near the Temple, the city walls, and building a residence for himself.—chap. 2:1-9

“When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.”—vss. 10

NEHEMIAH, WHILE SERVING as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes in Persia, inquired as to the well-being of the Jewish remnant who had returned to Jerusalem following their Babylonian exile. When informed of the hardships his brethren were experiencing and the fact that the city walls were broken down, he committed the matter to fasting, mourning, and prayer. He confessed his sins and that of the Israelites, asking God to be merciful to the Jews and also to prosper his desire to speak to the king in an effort to aid his afflicted

After Nehemiah reached Jerusalem, he took a few men with him at night to survey the ruined state of the city walls to determine what course of action would be best suited to make the needed repairs. This was done under the cover of darkness in order to keep his plans from being revealed.—vss. 12-15

After completing his assessment, Nehemiah determined it was time to share his findings with the various leaders and to exhort them to begin rebuilding the wall. “Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.”—vs. 17

In our Key Verse, Nehemiah properly reminds the leaders of God’s hand in this undertaking, and the officials concurred that they should proceed at once to undertake this task.

“When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.”—vss. 19,20

The opposition of Israel’s enemies in this instance is illustrative of the present distress she experiences from her enemies today. Nevertheless, the Scriptures promise a permanent future deliverance of that nation from those who seek her destruction.—Isa. 35:10

Nehemiah’s life of devotion and fervency in prayer should give all Christians confidence that God will answer their prayers in his own due time and in accordance with their best spiritual interests. “This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”—I John 5:14 ■

Up Against the Wall

Key Verse: “*So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof; for the people had a mind to work.*”
—*Nehemiah 4:6*

Selected Scripture:
Nehemiah 4-6

In our Key Verse, Nehemiah again petitions God to take note of Israel’s plight and also to avenge their cause and bring reproach upon their adversaries. Believers today would probably not pray that their enemies be punished in light of Christ’s admonition, “I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Matt. 5:44) Nehemiah’s entreaty, however, was probably rendered in the spirit of God’s promise to bless those who blessed Abraham’s descendants and to punish those who cursed them.—Gen. 12:1-3

In addition to the pressure and opposition from heathen neighbors, the immensity of the task caused the workers much fatigue in their rebuilding efforts. When fellow Jews living outside of Jerusalem warned of imminent attack, Nehemiah positioned armed men behind the

SANBALLAT AND TOBIAH were vexed by the early rebuilding efforts in Jerusalem and also used ridicule to discourage the Jews as they attended to their task, saying, “What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?”—Neh. 4:1,2

lower portions of the wall while encouraging the leaders to remain steadfast. He exhorted them to remember the LORD'S promises on their behalf.—Neh. 4:7-14

Since the people of Judah were prepared to defend themselves, her enemies abandoned plans for a surprise attack. Nehemiah also arranged for half of the workers to engage in constructing the wall and the remainder stood guard. Such sacrifices and discomfort were necessary in order to complete the work God had directed them to do.—vss. 15-23

In the midst of the rebuilding, there were internal problems such as food shortages and increased taxes placed upon the people by the king. Some individuals had to borrow money from wealthy Jews at exorbitant interest, and some even had to sell their children as slaves. Nehemiah interceded to rectify the situation, urging the return of property gained by usury and to restore a portion of the interest collected on loans of money and food commodities. In all of these proceedings, Nehemiah demonstrated fairness and generosity towards those in need.—Neh. 5:1-19

Despite all the difficulties encountered, Nehemiah ultimately achieved what God set forth for him to accomplish. “The wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.”—chap. 6:15,16

The glorious outcome of doing God's will always brings blessings. For Christians, Nehemiah is a noble example as to the value of persistence in rendering faithful obedience in serving the Heavenly Father. The Scriptures assure us of God's favor if we falter not under adversity. “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”—Gal. 6:9 ■

Call to Renew the Covenant

Key Verse: *“He read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.”*
—*Nehemiah 8:3*

Selected Scripture:
Nehemiah 8

they listened to the reading of the Law of Moses for several hours. Undoubtedly, the priests and Levites were interspersed among the people and explained to them the meaning of what was being read. The people could well understand that they had been living in a manner that was contrary to God’s requirements, and their ini-

A SPIRITUAL REVIVAL WAS

undertaken through the reading of the Scriptures to the Jews who were now established back in their homeland. “All the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.”—Neh. 8:1,2

Our Key Verse describes the attentiveness of the people as

tial reaction was to mourn and weep.—vss. 4-9

The culmination of the day's activities was a feast at which the people gave expression of their love, peace, and joy of sharing their blessings with one another. (vss. 10-12) On the following day, there was a time for special study that involved the priests, Levites, and the leaders. They discovered from God's Word that the Jews were to observe the Feast of Tabernacles later in the month.—vss. 13-15

The celebration foreshadowed a future permanent time of joy, peace, and safety in their land when God's kingdom is established on earth. This feast was celebrated for an entire week. This was the first time the Jews had rejoiced in this manner since the days of Joshua.—vss. 16-18

Various Christian denominations teach creeds that conflict with each other and are not supported by the Word of God. One of many widely held present beliefs is that God will torture unbelievers for eternity in the flaming fires of hell. This is at variance with one of the most widely quoted scriptures in the New Testament—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” —John 3:16

With the many wonderful Bibles in existence today, supplemented by study aids such as concordances and scripturally based tracts, many Christians have had their eyes opened to understand the just and loving nature of the Heavenly Father, and will rejoice in the soon to be fulfilled scriptural promises contained in God's Word. —Jer. 31:34

What rejoicing and renewal there will be on a global scale when all mankind are raised from the tomb. (John 5:28,29, *Revised Standard Version*) It will then be clearly understood that Christ's death satisfied the penalty for sin, not only for believers, but also all mankind.—I John 2:1,2

■

God's Dwelling Place

“The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

—Revelation 21:3

THE WORD ‘TABERNACLE,’

which has been used by the revelator in this scripture, describes the tent that was used by the Israelites during the early time of their history. More importantly, however, it points to the symbolic dwelling place of God. The word tabernacle first appeared in the Old Testament Scriptures that were written by Moses, and identified the ancient Tabernacle which served as the center of Jewish religious life during the time of their sojourning in the wilderness.

A TYPICAL NATION

God gave very specific instructions to Moses concerning the construction of the Tabernacle when he was leading the Israelites in the wilderness while on their way to Canaan—the promised land. He was now revealing his ultimate purpose to them concerning

the destiny of his human creation. He called them his own people, even as the Prophet Amos wrote when speaking for God. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.”—Amos 3:2

These were the same people that God had miraculously delivered from their long years of bondage in Egypt. By becoming God’s people, the Jewish nation would receive many favors and blessings. Their religious observances took on new meaning and would serve as types, or illustrations, that pointed forward to God’s ultimate plan of reconciliation for the human family. Mankind had inherited the penalty of death as a result of Adam and Eve’s disobedience to the Divine Law, and God would provide the means of reconciliation that would require centuries of time to fulfill.

GOD DWELLS WITH HIS PEOPLE

God promised that he would dwell with his people, as first recorded by Moses in the second book of his writings. God told him, “Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.” (Exod. 25:8) God would not be dwelling with the children of Israel physically, but would indicate his presence with them by a supernatural light called the Shekinah light which was in the Tabernacle. It would also lead them during their times of sojourning. The structure was carefully built according to a pattern that God had provided Moses. “According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.”—vs. 9

The Tabernacle of Israel became the most important feature of their religious life. It was a portable

structure 15 feet wide, 15 feet high and 45 feet long, and was built with acacia wood which was overlaid with gold. It was set on sockets of silver which were fastened together by bars of acacia wood, and were also plated with gold. The entire structure was overlaid with an elaborate set of inner and outer coverings that also have spiritual significance.—Exod. 26:1-14

The front entrance was closed off by a curtain that served as a door, and is often called the 'first veil.' There were two compartments inside the Tabernacle, the first being 15 feet wide, 15 feet high and 30 feet long and was called the Holy. The second room was 15 feet wide, 15 feet high and 15 feet long and was known as the Most Holy. A curtain of similar material as that used at the main entranceway also separated the two compartments and was known as the veil, or the 'second veil.'

THE HOLY AND MOST HOLY

The Holy and its furnishings represented the life of the Spirit-begotten child of God who is striving for the High Calling in Christ Jesus during the present Gospel Age. (Rom. 6:4,5) These are justified believers who have given their lives in full consecration to God and are walking in newness of life. The Most Holy compartment, which was beyond the second veil, represented the faithful Spirit-begotten class who will attain the Divine nature in heaven itself. (Rev. 2:10) To enter the Most Holy, the consecrated Christian must symbolically pass under the second veil, which represents death.

CLOUD BY DAY AND FIRE BY NIGHT

When Moses was given instructions concerning the Tabernacle he wrote, “Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.”—Exod. 40:34-38

The Prophet Isaiah also spoke of God’s supernatural presence in the Tabernacle. “O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.” (Isa. 37:16) The cherubims were an integral part of the mercy seat which was located in the Most Holy compartment of Israel’s Tabernacle. The Shekinah light gave them visible evidence of God’s presence with them.

The Tabernacle provided a very unique experience for Israel. Moses and Aaron communicated with God in this arrangement and the priests served as intermediaries between the Heavenly Father and the people. God accompanied Israel in this manner throughout the entire forty years of their wilderness journey. Upon reaching the promised land, the Tabernacle continued to be set up and used as a place of communication.

JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST

The Tabernacle was a temporary structure that illustrates particular features pointing to the calling, testing and preparation of the church class, those faithful followers of our Lord Jesus who are being called by the Heavenly Father during the present Gospel Age. This is a time for laying down our lives in sacrifice to the most high God, and the Apostle Paul puts this in perspective. "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

Paul proclaims, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—Rom. 8:16-18

THE TEMPLE

The Tabernacle was portable and was a shadow of better things to come, but it was later replaced by the Temple which was a stationary structure. The Tabernacle represents the narrow way experiences of the Lord's people during the present age of trial and testing. The Temple illustrates the completed church which has been prepared and found worthy to share with Jesus in extending

blessings to all the families of the earth during Christ's future kingdom.

The Temple was built by Solomon. Although his father David desired to build it and had gathered materials for its building, God informed him that this was not to be. We read, "I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?" (II Sam. 7:6,7) Not only did Israel have the assurance of God's presence with them in the Tabernacle, but he would also be with them in the Temple when it was constructed.

Concerning David's place in these arrangements it is further recorded, "When thy days be fulfilled, and thou [David] shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He [Solomon] shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever." (vss. 12,13) Thus was shown the eternal purpose and will of God in connection with this feature of his Divine plan.

THE LORD'S HOUSE

In prophetic words, Isaiah speaks of the time when the majestic house of the LORD would be established. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be

exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”—Isa. 2:2,3

The prophet continues to describe this wonderful scene. “The LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence [covering, *Marginal Translation*]. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.”—chap. 4:5,6

FOR OUR ADMONITION

The Apostle Paul, when reflecting upon the experiences of the children of Israel, told them, “All these things happened unto them for ensamples [types, *Marginal Translation*]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (I Cor. 10:11) When speaking to the Hebrew brethren, the apostle said that these were a “shadow of good things to come.”—Heb. 10:1

God does not literally dwell in a tabernacle or temple that is made by human hands. Paul made this clear when he pointed to the great temples in Athens when he preached on Mars’ hill. In his dissertation, he explained, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” (Acts 17:24) The Apostle John put

this in perspective when he said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”—John 4:24

The thought of God dwelling with men and they with him is perhaps more clearly understood in light of the psalmist’s words. “LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” (Ps. 90:1,2) This reference speaks of those possessing humble hearts and who earnestly desire to dwell with the Heavenly Father.

The revelator also speaks of this special relationship. “I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” (Rev. 3:20) Our Lord knocks at the door of our heart and, when we permit him to enter in, it indicates our desire to commune with him in spirit and in truth. This is in harmony with God’s promise given to the typical people of Israel. “I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.”—Lev. 26:11,12

SUCH AN HIGH PRIEST

When the Apostle Paul was writing to the Hebrew brethren, he explained to them, “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” (Heb. 8:1,2) Israel’s Tabernacle in the wilderness *(Continued on page 35)*

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(Continued from page 31) was intended to provide us with valuable illustrations which help us to better understand our Heavenly Father's ultimate plan and purpose for the blessing of his human creation.

The Tabernacle has been the object of a great deal of study by Jesus followers throughout the present Gospel Age. These alone have come to appreciate the deeper meaning intended in the Tabernacle, and consider the importance of its elaborate construction features, its measurements, furnishings, the priests' clothing and many other intricate details. The apostle pointed especially to the significance of these illustrations, "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."—vs. 5

The typical sacrifices that were associated with Israel's Tabernacle arrangements portrayed the better sacrifices of Jesus and his faithful followers. The Tabernacle structure was a portable tent and was used to illustrate the temporary nature of the Levitical types. The sacrifices of the present time are also temporary when compared to the wonderful heavenly inheritance that is promised to those who are faithful unto death.

THE PEOPLE BLESSED

Israel's sacrifices took place on the Day of Atonement which pointed to those of the Gospel Age. During the kingdom age Jesus and his faithful body members will serve as priests to help the poor groaning creation in overcoming their inherited fleshly weaknesses, and to earn a standing before

the Heavenly Father. When the blessings of Christ's glorious kingdom begin to flow out to the earthly creation, the Mediator of the New Covenant will help them to attain the necessary heart condition for everlasting life here on a perfected earth. At the conclusion of the typical sacrifices, Israel's high priest dressed himself in the robes of glory and beauty and came out to bless the people. This illustrated our Lord blessing the world of mankind who will strive to obey the Divine law and walk in the ways of truth and righteousness.

ABIDING IN GOD'S TABERNACLE

The psalmist David asks, "LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" (Ps. 15:1) This is an important question, and it is directed toward those fully consecrated followers of Jesus who are abiding in the antitypical tabernacle of God, and will dwell in the 'holy hill' of his glorious kingdom. David's answer explains, "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." (vs. 2) This speaks of the faithful class who have entered into a covenant relationship with the Heavenly Father.

Concerning these brethren, David further proclaims, "He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." (vss. 3,4) These words well describe the child of God who has given himself as a living sacrifice to the Lord, and is striving to carry out his covenant faithfully even unto death.

(Rev. 2:10) The psalmist concludes, “He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”—Ps. 15:5

A HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

The Apostle Paul put this in perspective in his letter to the brethren at Corinth. He said, “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”—II Cor. 5:1-4

Our human bodies are temporary dwelling places for the Spirit-begotten New Creature in Christ Jesus. In the meantime, a new and glorious spiritual body is promised to the faithful, and this body cannot be made with human hands nor by human power.

A PLACE PREPARED

When Jesus approached the end of his earthly ministry, he assured his followers that he was about to leave and prepare a special place for them. He said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye

may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”—John 14:1-4

The Heavenly Father’s ‘house’ encompasses all Creation, and there are numerous and varied kinds of beings. Provision has been made for each of these planes of life that is suited for their particular nature. Jesus was explaining to his disciples, however, that God’s New Creation required a new and special place on the plane of Divine nature, and Jesus was going to prepare this for them. When writing to the Hebrew brethren, the Apostle Paul explained, “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”—Heb. 9:24

Our Lord Jesus had thus presented the merit of his sacrificed life on behalf of his faithful followers for their benefit and blessing during the present Gospel Age. The whole world of mankind will receive the benefits of his earthly ministry and death during the future administration of his kingdom. For this we continue to wait in joyful anticipation.

At that time, it will truly come to pass, “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”—Rev. 21:3-5 ■

The Knowledge of Good and Evil

“The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”
—Genesis 2:8,9

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT features of God’s plan is the concept of the knowledge of good and evil. Its importance encompasses all planes of intelligent existence. Having an appropriate understanding of this subject goes beyond a surface appreciation of a good act versus an evil one, or a good word versus an evil one. A complete understanding of good and evil gets to the core of our, and all intelligent creation’s, innermost thoughts, motives, and will. We suggest here five progressive steps necessary

for a proper and complete understanding of good and evil.

1) Knowing the outward manifestation—the action or word—as to its goodness or lack thereof.

2) Knowing the thoughts and motives which prompt good and evil actions.

3) Measuring both the actions (step 1) as well as the thoughts and motives (step 2) which prompt them against the standard of the Scriptures—the Divine standard.—Heb. 4:12

4) Based on comparing actions, thoughts, and motives to the Divine standard, being then able to quickly and consistently distinguish and discern between what is truly good versus that which is otherwise evil. Put another way, developing a trained consciousness, or conscience, of good and evil.—Heb. 10:22; 9:14

5) Applying such discernment, understanding, and consciousness, through experience, to the development of a character which, over time, tends more and more toward good, both as to motives and thoughts and will, as well as to actions, deeds, and words.—James 1:22-25

These steps are what will be required for all mankind to learn in Christ's coming kingdom if they are to attain perfection and, hence, everlasting life on the earth. For those currently seeking to follow in our Lord's footsteps, however, it is critical that we be doing these things today in order to make our calling and election sure. Two conditions at present make this effort a challenge: first, because we are sinful by nature it is not natural, nor is it pleasant according to the flesh, to follow the five steps outlined. The flesh rebels against the idea of examining actions and motives, and measuring them against the Divine standard. Further, the flesh does not like to change, as it is truly an 'old man,' set in its ways and content with the status

quo. (Eph. 4:22) The second reason why this process is especially difficult now is that, for the most part, it goes against the trend of the world around us. A correct understanding by the world today of the principles of good and evil is terribly lacking, and is surely part of what is leading it further and deeper into the ‘time of trouble,’ which, if not shortened, the Scriptures tell us, would result in man’s own destruction of himself.—Matt. 24:21-22

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

To understand how to apply the steps of truly knowing good and evil requires that we review how these principles came into being in God’s plan as it relates to man. Much of this is laid out for us in the opening chapters of the Bible, Genesis 2 and 3. In chapter 2, as the narrative of Creation is given, we have the first veiled hint of these principles. The record states that in the midst of the garden paradise God prepared for man’s dwelling were two trees bearing most unusual names. Verse 9 states, “Out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” Our focus here is not on the ‘tree of life,’ so we will skip discussion of it at this time, but what of this other tree, the ‘tree of knowledge of good and evil’? What kind of literal tree it was doesn’t really matter, and we are not told. We do know that it bore fruit, which we will see is of significance. The true import of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was in what it symbolized. From this verse alone it is not possible to know the full extent of

the symbol, as all it really indicates is that this tree in some way pointed figuratively to two principles—good and evil—and that it would be important for man to have knowledge of them.

Later, in the same chapter, we find a second reference to this tree, in which God instructed man to not eat of it. These verses state, “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (chap. 2:16,17) Here again it is evident that the import of what God instructed Adam was as a figurative reference to the ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil,’ although it was a literal tree. The command itself was clear, and not figurative at all—Do not eat of the fruit of this tree, else you will die. This second reference clearly adds the thought to this symbolic tree that both good and evil have results and consequences.

We must keep in mind that at this point we have no record that Adam knew fully the principles of good or evil, or their consequences. He had seen and experienced good, but not evil, and so was inadequate in some respects to completely fathom the import of what God had told him. Yet he did have an understanding, we believe, of life versus death, because he had surely witnessed both take place among the lower animal creation. He had no doubt seen the propagation process of the lower creation, and the beauty of a newly born animal life. He also surely knew, perhaps even being told by God, that the lower animals were not created to live forever as was man, and he likely had seen the

death (in a natural and peaceful manner) of various members of the animal creation. He knew, therefore, from observation, what death was—oblivion, nonexistence, a returning to the dust of the earth. Knowing this, he had sufficient knowledge to understand that a failure to comply with God’s command to not eat of the tree would result in his experiencing the same fate—death and resulting oblivion—which he had seen in the lower animals. Adam knew of God’s goodness, he knew what life and death were, and being created in the image of God, he must have known that it was important to follow the commands of the very one who had created him.

SATAN’S LIES

In Genesis, chapter 3, we have the record of Satan’s temptation, through the serpent, of our first parents. How Satan used the serpent, and what form it took, are not detailed in the scriptural account, only that it was ‘more subtle’ than any of the other creatures in the garden. After Eve correctly stated the penalty that had been pronounced if they ate of the forbidden tree—death—Satan told the first of several lies. We read in verse 4, “The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.” Satan did not deny the commandment God had given, and which Eve had correctly repeated to him. However, he blatantly denied the punishment that had been stated would result from disobeying God’s commandment. This is the great lie which not only was part of his deception of mother Eve, but it is the lie that has permeated religious beliefs of every variety for thousands of

years, even to this very day. The Lord's consecrated people, begotten with the Spirit of Truth, are a part of the small minority on earth today who correctly understand the true nature and reality of death.

To Satan, the open and bold statement he had just made was perhaps designed partially to catch Eve's attention, and to lure her into the more subtle nature of what he said next, as recorded in verse 5, "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Satan here suggested that eating of the forbidden fruit would bring them much wisdom and knowledge, so much that Adam and Eve would become gods (Hebrew *Elohim*), just like their Creator and, as such, they would certainly know intuitively, just as God does, all the principles of good and evil. According to Satan, the fruit of the tree itself would give them that knowledge, and they would never need fear to fall into sin because such intuitive knowledge would surely result in their avoidance of sin and hence its consequences. He even boldly said in this verse 'God doth know' that all these things would result if they but ate of the fruit. These were all lies of our great Adversary, Satan.

Satan has used these additional lies down through the ages, causing fallen and deceived man to believe that he knows himself, without any help from God, what is good and evil. The results of this have been disastrous. Such thinking has, through the centuries, produced a continued lowering of the standard of righteousness, to the point now in this present time of trouble much of mankind cannot make a proper distinction between good and

evil. This has occurred because man has taken God out of the equation for the most part, taken away his Divine standards, and replaced them with their own faulty ones, which have at their source the lies of Satan.

FALLING TO TEMPTATION

Going back to the account in Genesis 3, we now see the full extent of Satan's temptation, not just his one blatant lie, but also the other subtle ones. Continuing the account, verse 6 says, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." The first thing we notice here is that nearly all of Eve's attention was drawn to the fact that the tree and the fruit looked good to the eye of the flesh. Perhaps she thought of Satan's statement that she would not surely die and reasoned that such a goodly tree and such beautiful looking fruit could not possibly cause death if eaten. Satan's statement seemed plausible. What's more, the tree seemed to have a particularly attractive, almost mysterious, aura about it which made it stand out from all the other trees and be desired as a result. Of all the trees in the garden, it seemed to be the one that could perhaps bring wisdom and an understanding of good and evil, just as it was so named. The more Eve pondered all his statements, the more she evidently felt that the serpent must be right. Everything he had said made sense to her, and so she, and her husband with her as the account says, took of the fruit and did eat.

OBEDIENCE THE REAL TEST

The beginning of Genesis 3:7 says, “The eyes of them both were opened.” Was Satan right after all? He indeed had said their eyes would be opened to gain the wisdom necessary to be gods, and know intuitively good and evil. Although this verse does say that their eyes were both opened, what they were opened to was not wisdom at all, but their nakedness, not just literally, but figuratively their nakedness before God as having been disobedient to his commandment. They were guilty, and they knew it immediately. This is what their eyes were opened to see. Their conscience was seared. They knew they had done evil rather than good in the sight of their Creator. They were now just beginning to learn, in a much different way than Satan had promised in his lies, of the knowledge of good and evil.

In reviewing the experience of Adam and Eve, for all the wiles of Satan expressed through the serpent, and in spite of all the lies he told, the fact remains that simple obedience to God’s instruction was the real test to our first parents. God gave a command, and there was no need to try and rationalize or dilute it. It didn’t matter what the tree looked like, or its fruit. It didn’t matter what the name of it was. It didn’t really matter what the penalty was, or even whether Adam or Eve believed the penalty would be carried out. What only should have mattered was that God, the Creator, had given a command to his creation, one that was simple, easy to understand, and easy to keep. Simple obedience was all that was needed, but was absolutely what God required. This principle of obedience,

and, we might add, heart-obedience, has been and always will be the ultimate test for all of God's intelligent creation which must be passed in order to attain life on any plane. Obedience lies at the very core of truly understanding good and evil. Eve, as well as Adam, in all their rationalization and thinking concerning the beauty of the tree, its desirable fruit, its attractiveness, and their skepticism of the penalty, missed what the true test was, and thus failed it—the test of obedience. It is this lesson which the Lord's people now, and all mankind eventually, must learn if they are to truly come to a full knowledge of good and evil.

LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH

As we walk in this narrow way, we must learn the principles of good and evil, and then strive to have our character molded along those properly understood lines, which are, as Paul says in Romans 12:9, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Let us look again at the five steps identified at the outset, and provide a touchstone with reference to each.

1) Knowing the outward manifestation, the action or word, as to its goodness or lack thereof.

Let us continually examine our actions, words, and deeds daily, to see if they are truly good, or if they are perhaps tainted with even just a small measure of evil. If they are, let us always remember to ask the Lord, and others if necessary, for forgiveness for any evil word said or deed committed.

2) Knowing the thoughts and motives which prompt good and evil actions.

Let us examine our hearts and motives to see if they are founded on good and pure intents. The Scriptures state, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23) “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.”—Ps. 139:23

3) Measuring the actions, as well as the thoughts and motives which prompt them, against the standards of the Scriptures, the Divine standard.

Continue to look to the standard contained in the Scriptures as the measuring rod of our actions as well as our motives and thoughts. Do not water down the standards of good, nor compromise the seriousness of evil, by human reasoning or rationalization. Use the Word of God as that powerful two-edged sword, which pierces “even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”—Heb. 4:12

4) Based on comparing actions, thoughts, and motives to the Divine standard, being then able to quickly and consistently distinguish and discern between what is truly good versus what is otherwise evil, and develop a trained consciousness of good and evil.

Let us more fully realize that by doing this we are partaking of God’s Word as meat rather than milk, as stated in the words of Paul in Hebrews 5:14, “Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” In this verse, we see a direct connection between the meat of God’s Word and the discernment of good and evil, and that this can only happen if we by

‘reason of use,’ or habit of use, continue to exercise our spiritual senses. Only then will God’s Word be that meat which gives us discernment of good and evil.

5) Applying such discernment, understanding, and consciousness, through experience, to the development of a character which, over time, tends more and more toward good—both as to motives, thoughts, and will, and also to actions, deeds, and words.

Let us continue to realize that all of this is a lifetime work. It will not be done in a day, a month, or a year. It cannot be done perfectly, nor will we always be pleased with our progress. Let us remember, however, that we have a great High Priest and Advocate, Jesus, and also a Heavenly Father, both of whom love us as a parent loves their child. They desire as much, yea, even more than we do ourselves, that we be successful in this endeavor, so “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Gal. 6:9) Notice the scripture does not say we shall reap if we are perfect, or we shall reap if we do righteously 75% of the time, or stay clear of evil 80% of the time. No, we shall reap ‘if we faint not,’ if we continue pressing on.

ALL MANKIND TO KNOW GOOD AND EVIL

If we are faithful even unto death, if we fully come to a knowledge of good and evil, and develop the resulting character likeness of our Lord, we will have the most blessed privilege imaginable, that of assisting the remainder of mankind in the next age with the remaining part of their learning

experience with good and evil. We will have the opportunity of helping them see and experience the contrast between the evil that they once knew and experienced in this life as a result of man's fall, and the good they will be showered with through the blessings and teachings of the New Covenant in Christ's kingdom. Then, having fully eaten of the tree of the knowledge of BOTH good and evil, mankind individually will be able to stand before their Creator whole, fully developed through experience, their eyes truly opened to God's character, and their being and character fully perfected and worthy of everlasting life.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil will have then accomplished its figurative work and exist only in memory, and the only remaining tree in the midst of man's restored earthly paradise will be the other symbolic tree spoken of in Genesis 2:9, the "tree of life." Revelation 22:14 speaks of this glorious time and condition at the end of the kingdom, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." We pray that this time will soon come, that all may truly have an accurate knowledge of good and evil and have learned its eternal lessons. ■

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He is Faithful

IT HAS BEEN said that the distress of a crumbling civilization today is caused by broken promises. Human promises are not always intentionally broken, but circumstances arise which make it impossible to fulfill them. Man is not the master of his own destiny. He cannot foresee the future, nor can he judge even his present ability accurately. Hence he often finds it impossible to do what he has promised. This is not true with God.

Paul writes concerning God that “he is faithful that promised.” (Heb. 10:23) We can depend upon the integrity of God. He does not change his mind, for with him there “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning”—he is the “same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” (James 1:17; Heb. 13:8) Nor is there any need for God to change his mind. He can foresee every eventuality that may arise, and is fully able to meet it. God is faithful to his promises, and abundantly able to fulfill them in keeping with the richness of his grace.

Have you been disappointed in your friends, your neighbors, your business associates, your fellow workers in the factory or office? Many of the Lord’s people have experiences along this line. At times we may even become disappointed in some of our own brethren in Christ. These experiences are discouraging, but God permits them for a purpose. He wants us to lean more fully upon him rather

than trusting to the arm of flesh. It is when our trusted friends fail us that we should turn to him, and do so with the full assurance that ‘he is faithful that promised.’

To realize that those experiences in life that perplex and hurt are not evidences that the Lord has deserted us, but is permitting them for our good, helps us to bear up under trial. Even so, we feel our weakness. Courage will falter at times, and we need to be on guard lest we become weary in well doing. Were we left to fight our battles alone we would be certain to fail. The Father’s love will not permit this, for his promise is, “Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.”—Ps. 31:24 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MAY 1—“The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister.”—Matthew 20:28 (Z. ’03-407 Hymn 28)

MAY 8—“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.”—I John 2:25 (Z. ’03-175 Hymn 78)

MAY 15—“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”—Habakkuk 3:17,18 (Z. ’03-94 Hymn 119A)

MAY 22—“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.”—II Timothy 1:7 (Z. ’97-170 Hymn 90)

MAY 29—“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”—John 14:27 (Z. ’97-306 Hymn 252)

General Convention Bulletin

July 19-24, 2008—Johnstown, Pennsylvania

THE 2008 GENERAL CONVENTION returns once again to the lovely facilities of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. Air-conditioned hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style apartments (also air-conditioned) with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air-conditioned) in other facilities will be available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge in his own sleeping bag if both beds are occupied. If a child is alone in a bedroom sharing the bathroom with other adults, the double occupancy rate will apply to all family members.

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

The convention will provide one shuttle bus leaving the Pittsburgh airport in the early evening for the college in Johnstown on Friday, July 18. There will be one shuttle bus leaving the college in the early morning hours for the Pittsburgh airport on Friday, July 25.

Once again there will be special programs for young people of all ages. Five different age groups, beginning at age 3 up to age 25, will have daily studies, fellowship, recreation and other activities designed especially for them. Well qualified brethren have been selected to coordinate each of these groups.

A complete pricing table and registration form is provided for your convenience immediately following this announcement. We encourage you to finalize your plans now to attend this year's General Convention, and to register in the near future. ■

	Ages	18 & up	**13-17
Breakfast		\$6.00	\$5.00
Lunch		7.00	6.00
Dinner		9.00	8.00
Total, three meals		\$22.00	\$19.00
Lodging (per night)			
*dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$25.00	\$20.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$20.00	\$18.00
*single occ (LLC)		\$45.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$25.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals			
*dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$275†	\$240†
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$175†	\$140†
*single occ (LLC)		\$395†	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$215†	n/a
If no breakfasts, deduct—†\$30 *Air conditioned **100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group			

General Convention Registration

1425 Lachman Lane — Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

E-mail: Nekora@aol.com (310) 454-5248

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 18, 2008				
Saturday, 19th				
Sunday, 20th				
Monday, 21st				
Tuesday, 22nd				
Wednesday, 23rd				
Thursday, 24th				

Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts)

Check: private bath **or** shared bath
 double occupancy single occupancy
 interested in APTS

Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)

Address:

Saturday, July 19

Chairman: Allan Allers, *Boise ID*

- 9:30 Morning Devotions
- 9:45 Orientation by College
- 10:00 **Welcome Address**
O. B. Elbert
Delaware Valley PA
- 10:45 Intermission
- 11:15 Discourse
Michael J. Balko
Orlando FL
- 12:00 Close of Morning Session
- 2:00 Discourse
David Rice
San Diego CA
- 2:45 Intermission
- 3:15 Discourse
Samuel Prasad
India
- 4:00 Intermission
- 4:30 Discourse
George Tabac
Chicago IL
- 5:15 Close of Afternoon Session
- 7:00 **Lessons from Israel's Feasts:**
Feast of Unleavened Bread
Ed Byrd, *Pittsburgh PA*
Feast of Weeks
Mark Nemesh, *Detroit MI*
Feast of Tabernacles
David Christiansen, *Seattle WA*
- 8:15 Songs in the Night

Sunday, July 20

Chairman: Russ Marten, *Chicago IL*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse Ray Charlton
Australia

10:30 Intermission

11:15 **Theme Discourse—Romans 13:12**

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”

Wade Austin, *Portland OR*

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony Ken Fernets
The Dawn

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Tim Thomassen
Albuquerque NM

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Erwin Kalinski
Chicago IL

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **“One Hope of Your Calling”**
—Ephesians 4:4 Stephen Jeuck
Orlando FL

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Monday, July 21

Chairman: Richard Doctor, *Milwaukee WI*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse Edmund Blicharz
Orlando FL

10:30 Intermission

11:15 Discourse D. Pushparaj
India

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse Rick Sconyers
Orlando FL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony Carlton Chandler
Portland OR

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Mike Balko
Dawn Pilgrim

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Panel Discussion**

ISRAEL: 2008 and Beyond

Len Griehs, *Delaware Valley PA*
James Parkinson, *San Gabriel Valley CA*

8:00 Songs in the Night

8:15 Elders' Meeting

Tuesday, July 22

Chairman: Frank Nemesh, *Detroit MI*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 **Baptismal Discourse**

Homer Montague
Highland Park NY

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Immersion Service**

Immersioner: (TBD)

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony Robert Goodman
Orlando FL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Adam Kopczyk
Australia

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Jonathon Freer
Sacramento CA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

Wednesday, July 23

Chairman: Austin Williams, *New York NY*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Convention Business Meeting

Robert Gorecki
New York NY

10:30 Short Recess

10:45 Convention Business Continues

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Brian Montague
Highland Park NY

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony

Jerry Moore
Milwaukee WI

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

George Balko, Jr.
West Newton PA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Abraham, the Friend of God**

—**James 2:23**

Byron Keith
Seattle WA

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Thursday, July 24

Chairman: David Blencowe, *Vernon BC*

- 9:30 Morning Devotions
- 9:45 Praise and Testimony Ernie Kuenzli
Orlando FL
- 10:30 Intermission
- 11:00 **Symposium: The Harvest of the . . .**
- Jewish Age:** Richard Suraci
New Haven CT
- Gospel Age:** Bernd Eckholt
Jersey City NJ
- 12:00 Close of Morning Session
- 2:00 Discourse Ray Luke
Jersey City NJ
- 2:45 Intermission
- 3:15 Discourse Arbur Fernets
Vernon BC
- 4:00 Intermission
- 4:30 Discourse Doug Rawson
San Francisco Bay Area CA
- 5:15 Close of Afternoon Session
- 7:00 **Closing Discourse** Robert Gorecki
New York NY
- 7:45 Melodies of Praise
- 8:30 Love Feast

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M. Balko

Buffalo, NY May 17,18

K. Fernets

Buffalo, NY May 17,18

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

T. N. Alexander

Chicago, IL May 24-26

B. Keith

Los Angeles, CA May 24-26

T. Alexander

Los Angeles, CA May 24-26

E. Kalinski

Detroit, MI May 3,4

M. J. Balko

Jacksonville, FL May 4
Los Angeles, CA 24-26

T. Krupa

Chicago, IL May 24-26

D. Christiansen

Chicago, IL May 24-26

E. Kuenzli

Jacksonville, FL May 4
Chicago, IL 24-26

O. B. Elbert

Los Angeles, CA May 24-26

B. Montague

Jacksonville, FL May 4

R. Goodman

Los Angeles, CA May 24-26

R. Suraci, Jr.

Los Angeles, CA May 24-26

S. Jeuck

Jacksonville, FL May 4

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 Janina Fietz, Germany—March 8. Age, 91

Sister Francis Morgan, Charleroi, PA—March 9.

Sister Irene Altuvilla, Palo Alto, CA—March 28. Age, 94

Brother Jozef Jakosz, Poland—March 31.

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.

INDIA CONVENTION AT OOTY, May 2,3,4—Hotel Charing Cross, Ooty, Tamil Nadu, India.

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 4—Embassy Suites Hotel, 9300 Baymeadows Road, Jacksonville, FL 32256. Phone: (904) 731-3555. Contact E. Blicharz. Phone: (407) 260-8083

INDIA GENERAL CONVENTION, May 9,10,11—Corporation Community Hall, Sindhi Colony, Fraser Town, Bangalore, Karnataka, India 560005. Contact B. Alexander, phone: 080-65608862 or B. Ravi Das, phone: 080-65639785

BUFFALO CONVENTION, May 17,18—Holiday Inn, 5440 Camp Road, Hamburg, NY 14075. Contact R. Morin. Phone: (585) 322-7459

CHICAGO MEMORIAL DAY CONVENTION, May 24,25,26—Elk Grove High School, Elk Grove Village, IL. Contact J. Farrell. Phone: (630) 469-9511

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 24,25,26—Holiday Inn, 150 E. Angeleno, Burbank, CA 91502. Contact R. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 982-7253

WARRI, NIGERIA CONVENTION, June 7—Contact A. Awhotu, 23 Udu Road, Enerhen, PO Box 1854, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria. Phone: +(234) 805-414-5090; (234) 805-483-7556

ASSOCIATED BIBLE STUDENTS OF PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 20,21,22—Holiday Inn, 2752 NE Hogan Drive, Gresham, OR 97030. Contact R. Evans. Phone: (360) 750-7366

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, June 28,29,30—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK, Canada. Phone: (306)764-7692

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 19-24—(See Registration Information on pages 53-55 of this issue.) University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, PA. Contact M. Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone: (310) 454-5248

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 3-8—Nowy Sacz, Poland. Contact T. Machacek. Phone: (219) 662-8107

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, August 16,17—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Moore, 2176 South 71st Street, West Allis, WI 53219. Phone: (414) 541-8937

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 12,13,14—Bevil Conference Center & Hotel, Huntsville, AL 35816. Contact J. Cothren, 1300 Huntsville Hills Drive, Huntsville, AL 35802. Phone: (256) 852-8505

*Precious sons of Zion!
Like gold refined and pure.
Esteemed as earthen pitchers,
Moulded to endure.*

*Precious sons of Zion!
True branches of the vine.
At one with Christ our Master,
In spirit and in mind.*

*Precious sons of Zion!
His bride we're called to be,
To share his throne of glory
And reign eternally.*

—*Poems of the Way*

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DAWN PUBLICATIONS

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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