

The Dawn

A Herald of Christ's Presence



The DAWN

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God's Plan for Man— As Shown in His Covenants

***“The secret of the
LORD is with them
that fear him; and
he will shew them
his covenant.”
—Psalm 25:14***

God has a plan for man that will result in the blessing of all the families of the earth, and which, when it is complete, will have restored the race to God. If we were to

study the Bible merely to prove a pre-adopted creed, we would never find the jewels of truth that are hidden in its pages. However, if our sincere effort is to learn the purposes of God, and if we come to the Bible with an open mind and an honest heart, we will find the divine plan for human destiny clearly revealed in its pages.

The covenants of God give a complete outline of his glorious plan of the ages. These covenants, as they are recorded in the Bible, cover the whole

course of human history from paradise lost to paradise regained. This article discusses some of the covenants between God and man as they are recorded in the Bible. Understanding these covenants will help us to appreciate our place in the great divine program for the salvation of the world. As we behold the stately steppingstones of our God in the unfolding of his plan for man, our faith will be increased and our hope for his kingdom will grow greater and more real.

God's covenants as recorded in the Bible are given in various ways. Some are in the form of a unilateral promise or pledge on God's part. Others are structured as bilateral agreements or contracts between God and individuals, nations, or the entire human race. Some of God's covenants include divinely established ordinances with rewards for faithfulness and punishments for unfaithfulness. In all cases, however, God's covenants with his human creation are for the ultimate purpose of their eternal blessing.

The Covenant in Eden

The first covenant between God and man was made in the Garden of Eden. It is recorded in Genesis 2:15-17: "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And 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."

Life or death depended on the keeping of this covenant. It called for obedience to God's law. Adam

broke this contract through his disobedience. (Gen. 3:6) He lost his covenant relationship with God. He was sentenced to death. The Bible says, "In his favour is life." (Ps. 30:5) No one can live forever without God's favor, regardless of the fact that many believe in the erroneous doctrine of inherent immortality. It is only by being in the favor of God that man has life. Man's eternal existence depends upon his being in covenant relationship with God. Satan said, "Ye shall not surely die." (Gen. 3:4) A modern version of this would be: "You will appear to die, but your soul shall really be alive someplace else."

Speaking of Satan, Jesus said, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44) On the other hand, God told Adam simply and clearly the result of disobedience: "Thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:17) From the evidence all about us, God, not Satan, was telling the truth. Certainly, Adam is dead, and the Bible tells us that in Adam, "all die." (Gen. 5:5; I Cor. 15:22) Thus we all must face the decision as to whether it was God or Satan who told the truth in this matter of life and death.

It is evident that not only Adam lost his communion with God, but all of his progeny as well have been born out of covenant relationship with him. It is written, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12) After Adam's transgression, however, God did not turn the human race over to Satan for its complete and

utter destruction. This fact was first made clear by the statement in Genesis 3:15, where we are given an assurance that the seed, or offspring, of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. This was a glimmer of hope to our first parents that sometime in the future a restoration of their covenant relationship with God would be made possible.

Covenant with Noah

The next covenant made with man after his expulsion from Eden was given to Noah. This covenant furnishes great assurance that "the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men." (Ps. 115:16) This covenant is clearly stated in Genesis 9:11-17: "I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have

established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”

In this account God tells us that the rainbow is the token that the covenant will be kept and that the earth will never again be destroyed by a flood of waters. We may ask: Why was a rainbow chosen as the token of guarantee of God’s covenant? To appreciate this simple truth is to have our faith increased. According to the Bible, it had never rained upon the earth before the flood. In Genesis 2:5,6 we are told, “The LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, ... But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.” One of the reasons Noah was perhaps mocked, as he built the ark in preparation for the coming flood of waters, was that those living at that time had never seen rain fall from the clouds.

The reason there was no rain before the flood is scientific as well as scriptural. In Genesis 1:6-10, the record of creation tells us that the “firmament” separated two great bodies of water. We are told that God called the firmament heaven—that is, an expanse of sky. The waters below the heavens were on the earth, and as the dry land appeared, they were separated into great bodies of water called seas, just as we find them now. The waters above the firmament were in the form of a ring of aqueous matter that surrounded the earth before the flood. It is not strange for planets to have rings surrounding them. Saturn has rings that are made mostly of water in the form of ice. Other planets have rings made up of materials other than water. The ring that surrounded the earth before the flood was created during the time that the earth

was being prepared for man's habitation, when the intense heat of the planet threw off in the form of vapor vast quantities of moisture. This moisture surrounded the earth as a veil. It caused a hothouse condition to exist upon the earth.

This theory of earth's creation is held by many scientists and biblical scholars alike. Many have been puzzled as to why the mastodons and other warm-blooded animals were able to live in what is now the Arctic Zone. The hothouse condition that existed upon the earth before the flood made all parts of the earth equally habitable.

In Genesis 7:11,12 we have the record of the breaking of the ring above the earth in these words: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights."

"The windows of heaven were opened." The waters above the firmament came within the gravity pull of earth and were released in the form of a deluge of rain. The hothouse effect, especially at the poles, ended abruptly, and ice caps formed. The flood had come in fulfillment of the word of God given to Noah. The mastodons and other animals were trapped with incompletely digested food in their stomachs and intestines. They are preserved even till this day as a testimony.

We now know why God chose a rainbow as a token of his covenant. As long as there were waters above the firmament, the earth could not enjoy the sun's direct rays. It requires the direct rays of the sun to cause a rainbow, for a rainbow is the reflection

and refraction of the direct rays of the sun shining upon moisture-laden air that breaks the light into the different prismatic colors. The existence of a visible rainbow proves that there is no more a ring of waters above the earth. It also assures that there never can be another globe-covering flood. God chose the rainbow as the token of his covenant to man because it is an absolute guarantee that another flood of such magnitude is an impossibility.

Covenants with Abraham and Israel

God made his next covenant with Abraham. This covenant affects every family upon the earth. It is simply stated in these words, "In thee [thy seed] shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) Various details of this covenant were repeated to Abraham on several other occasions, also to his son Isaac, and to Isaac's son Jacob. (Gen. 26:4; 28:14) Here is a wonderful assurance to all men, for the covenant called for two things: First, that Abraham would have a seed or offspring, and second, through the seed of Abraham, blessings would come to all the families of the earth.

A little more than four centuries after making his covenant with Abraham, God entered into a covenant with the children of Israel, the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. It is known as the Law Covenant. It was entered into at Mount Sinai. After being given the statutes of God's law, Israel was told, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, ... which if a man do, he shall live in them." With one accord they said, "All that the LORD hath spoken will we do." (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5; Exod. 19:8) The children of Israel accepted the terms of the Law

Covenant. In this covenant they thought that they had found the way to everlasting life, and all that was necessary for them to do was to keep the terms of this covenant.

God made a picture of these two covenants—the one with Abraham, and the other with the nation of Israel—in the wives of Abraham as recorded in Galatians 4:21-28: “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.”

Why was the Law Covenant made? It has held the nation of Israel in bondage. As yet no Jew except Jesus has ever kept it perfectly. It has been beyond the reach of their ability. The Law Covenant was made for several reasons, but the primary one is that mentioned by Paul in Galatians 3:24, which states, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.” The Law Covenant was perfect. However, no Jew, with the exception of Jesus, has ever kept the law given to Israel. An

imperfect man cannot keep a perfect law. Similarly, no son of Adam can keep God's perfect law because all are "shapen in iniquity" and conceived in sin. (Ps. 51:5) All are imperfect. The law that the Jewish people thought was unto life, they found was unto death. It condemned them under sin. (Rom. 7:10; Gal. 3:22) It showed them that they were imperfect and that God's perfect law was beyond their ability.

The Law Covenant proved that imperfect humans, whether Jew or Gentile, cannot keep God's law. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12) Therefore the Law Covenant was, as previously noted, a "schoolmaster" leading to Christ as mankind's Savior and Redeemer. Our Lord Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (Heb. 7:26) He kept the law of God. This demonstrated his perfection as a man and therefore proved his ability to die as a ransom for Adam and his race.

God's law of justice required a perfect life to be given for a perfect life lost. (Exod. 21:23) Adam lost perfect life due to sin. He died and the whole race has died in him. Christ, a perfect man, was obedient to the law of God. He died, not as a sinner, but in place of the sinner, Adam. Christ's resurrection by the mighty power of God gives us assurance that the whole race will live in him. (Acts 17:31) "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," and be given an opportunity to be restored back to human perfection lost in Eden. (I Cor. 15:22) The Law Covenant was given to show the need of a Savior and Redeemer. Through Christ

Jesus, all mankind will once again have the privilege of life and communion with God.

Development of a Seed

The covenant with Abraham spoke of a “seed” through which all the families of the earth would be blessed. The events recorded in the Old Testament show that neither Isaac nor Jacob was the seed referred to that could bring about the blessing of all mankind. The New Testament tells us that the seed was Christ: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” (Gal. 3:16) Christ, the seed of Abraham, is to bless all the families of the earth according to the covenant. He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, and brought the fulfillment of the promised blessings closer. (Heb. 2:9) The plan of God is not haphazard. It is based upon the principles of justice, wisdom, love, and power, for all the attributes of God unite in the harmonious fulfillment of his plan for man.

When the Master was born the angel said, “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.” Then the heavenly host declared, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:10,11,14) Nearly two-thousand years have passed since Christ died on Calvary, and the promised blessings have not yet come to earth. There is a reason for this. It is found in the covenant that makes the Gospel church a joint-heir with Christ as the “seed” that

will bless the world. This great truth, overlooked by many, should thrill the Christian with the prospect that it brings: "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. 3:28,29

The work of the present age since Pentecost has not been the conversion of the world. The world has not been reconciled to God. Rather, this age has seen the development of the "seed" of Abraham, which includes Christ and those who belong to him. It is the privilege of the true Christian today to "shew forth the praises of him" who has called us "out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I Pet. 2:9

A New Covenant

In due time the faithful church will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4,6) That will begin the work of blessing all the families of the earth in accordance with the promise of God. This will be the work of a New Covenant. Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:8-12 foretell this covenant and its blessed results for all the families of the earth: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Here is an assurance that man will be brought back into covenant relationship with God. The promise will be fulfilled, and God's law will be put

again in the minds and in the hearts of the people during that thousand-year reign. All enemies will be put under Christ's feet, and the last enemy, Death, will be destroyed. (I Cor. 15:25,26) Only the willfully disobedient will be cut off in death.—Acts 3:23

All the willing and obedient of earth will bend their knees in worship and every tongue will “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:11) We rejoice that God has a plan for the recovery of the race—yea, for the blessing of all the families of the earth under the New Covenant! This plan will reach its culmination in what the apostle describes as “the dispensation of the fulness of times” when God will “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”—Eph 1:10 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

SEPTEMBER 3—“I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”—Hosea 6:6 (Z. '03-220 Hymn 177)

SEPTEMBER 10—“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”—Ephesians 4:29 (Z. '99-70 Hymn 136)

SEPTEMBER 17—“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”—Colossians 1:27 (Z. '03-375 Hymn 238)

SEPTEMBER 24—“I keep by body under, and bring it into subjection, lest ... I myself should be a castaway.”—I Corinthians 9:27 (Z. '03-425 Hymn 200)

God Commissions Joshua

Key Verse: “*Moses
My servant is dead.*

*Now therefore,
arise, go over this
Jordan, you and
all this people, to
the land which I
am giving to
them—the children
of Israel.”*

*—Joshua 1:2, New
King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Joshua 1:1-11

The mantle passes. Moses,

the greatest leader from among their kindred that Israel had ever known, was dead. With his passing an enormous power vacuum could have occurred among the people of Israel. Fully aware of his impending death, Moses proactively laid his hands on Joshua, making him Israel's leader. (Deut. 34:9) It may be that Joshua felt overwhelmed in assuming his new role. How could he ever be the leader that Moses was? The

Lord's initial counsel to him seems to recognize Joshua's apprehension.

Three times in the Lord's inaugural message to Joshua the theme is emphatically repeated, “Be strong and courageous.” We read, “Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; ... Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid,

nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”—Josh. 1:6-9, *NKJV*

In retrospect, we recall that Moses himself demurred from the role of leader: “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?” (Exod. 3:11) Again, we read: “Then Moses said to the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue,” to which the Lord replied, “Go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.” Moses still resisted, saying, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. ... Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.”—Exod. 4:10-16, *NKJV*

The Lord supplied Moses with all he needed to fulfill his role. The Lord would be with Joshua to supply all his needs. As Christians, we have come to believe that “God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19, *NKJV*) Do we feel inadequate to properly serve the Lord and his cause? Does the weakness of our broken flesh hinder us from doing his will? We recall God’s assurance to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”—II Cor. 12:9, *NKJV*

Let us, when called upon by the Lord our God to a service in his cause, not cower or faint. Let us remember the words of the Lord to Joshua, “Be strong and of good courage; ... for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” ■

Twelve Stones from the Jordan

Key Verses: *“Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, and command them, saying, Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests’ feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.”*
—**Joshua 4:2,3**, *New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Joshua 4:1-24

At long last Israel was about to enter into the Land of Promise. Having endured forty years of divinely imposed wandering in the wilderness, the people could see the legendary land of hopes and dreams just beyond the Jordan River. How could they cross the river? No bridge existed. There was no ferry to transport them, but there was a means of crossing the river—supplied by the miraculous working of God!

Joshua was instructed that the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders must lead the people across the Jordan. The priests would precede the populace by 2,000 cubits. “And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the

Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters

coming down from above shall stand in one heap. So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water, ... the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.”—Josh. 3:13-17, *English Standard Version*

To mark this great event twelve men, one representative from each tribe, would take from the riverbed twelve stones for a memorial. The stones were laid down at the place of Israel’s first encampment. Joshua personally took the stones and built the memorial to commemorate this occasion. It was a lasting, and important reminder of God’s power exercised on behalf of His people. (Josh. 4:4-9) Centuries later, another man of God also set up a stone memorial. “Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, Thus far the LORD has helped us.” (I Sam. 7:12, *NKJV*) We also are given to memorializing those notable events in which God provided and helped us in our lives as “Ebenezers.”

Symbolically speaking, as Christians we may do as Israel had done. In times of personal turbulence or moments when we may feel overwhelmed by waves of trouble, the Lord’s help is there for us. The solid promises of God sustain us. Let us set up our personal memorial stones or “Ebenezers” to remind ourselves of his faithfulness. ■

The Sun Stands Still

Key Verse: *“There has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the LORD heeded the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.”*

—*Joshua 10:14,*
New King James
Version

Selected Scripture:
Joshua 10:1-15

The remarkable day set forth in our lesson has been a subject of much wonder and debate. Joshua and the army of Israel came to defend their new ally, the Gibeonites. The aggressor consisted of the five kings of the Amorites. These had joined in common cause to destroy Gibeon. They apparently reasoned, “What if Gibeon joins with the might of Israel to defeat us?” Their miscalculation devolved into folly and defeat.

“The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, saying, Do not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites ... have gathered together against us. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor.” (Josh. 10:6,7, *NKJV*) Although the forces rallied by Joshua were formidable, it was the Lord’s actions against the Amorites that won the battle.

“And the LORD said to Joshua, Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you. Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal. So the LORD routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon ... And it happened, as they

fled before Israel, ... that the LORD cast down large hailstones from heaven on them, ... and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.”—vss. 8-11, *NKJV*

From the preceding we glean the following important facts: the Lord had arranged that not a man of the Amorites could stand before Joshua. Victory was previously assured. It was the Lord that routed the Amorite army. Lastly, the Lord cast down large hailstones upon the Amorites, slaying more of them than Israel had slain with the sword.

Visualize the battle conditions. It was not fought in broad daylight. Rather, the sun and rising moon were obscured by the dark storm clouds which covered the area, being the source of the hailstones. We read, “Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: Sun, stand still over Gibeon; And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon. So the sun stood still, And the moon stopped, Till the people had revenge upon their enemies.” (vss. 12,13, *NKJV*) We doubt that Joshua was calling for the sun to literally stand still in the sky, for the sun could not be seen. How then may we explain these verses?

The definition of the word “still” hints at our answer. *Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary* defines the word translated “still” as meaning: “to be dumb; ... to stop; also to perish.” Joshua did not want the sun to stand still but wanted it to keep silent or cease. That is, he wanted the storm of heavenly hail to continue obscuring the sun until the Amorite enemy was thoroughly defeated.

That day was not remarkable for the duration of sunlight, but for the very reason declared in our Key Verse. It was remarkable in that the Lord heeded the voice of a man, and gave Israel the victory! ■

Rahab Hides the Spies

Key Verse: “As soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.”
—***Joshua 2:11, New King James Version***

Selected Scriptures:
Joshua 2:1-24; 6:17

In Rahab we find an intriguing and conflicting array of character traits. Identified in scripture as a harlot, Rahab also demonstrated great personal integrity. She was both a woman of her word, and yet was one of the most adept liars in recorded history. She was a Gentile, an outsider to the covenants and promises given to Israel, who yet revered their God—Jehovah. She had heard of the Lord through various reports of his divine favor to the people of Israel. The parting of the Red Sea forty years prior to this time was evi-

dently still being spoken of by the people of the land.

Rahab provided some very useful intelligence to the spies who were sent to evaluate conditions in Jericho. She said to the men: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are faint-hearted because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.”—Josh. 2:9,10, NKJV

Rahab's statements confirm the Word of the Lord to Moses: "This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you." (Deut. 2:25, *NKJV*) The nations, including Jericho, feared and were in dread of Israel. Rather than embracing fear, Rahab embraced the might and majesty of the one true God! This was an act of faith on her part. Some believe in God and tremble while others believe in him and rejoice. (James 2:19) Rahab rejoiced in her faith. New Testament scriptures commemorate this. "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace." (Heb. 11:31, *NKJV*) Her faith led to works on behalf of God's people. "Was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?"—James 2:25, *NKJV*

Rahab's works proved the depth of her faith, which motivated actions. It was not a passing fascination with legends or current gossip, but was real. Her faith was so real, in fact, that Rahab was honored with an amazing role in God's plan. "And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." (Josh. 6:25, *NKJV*) However, there is much more. The Bible record is that "Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king."—Matt. 1:5,6, *NKJV*

David, the king of Israel, was ancestor to our Lord Jesus Christ. The lesson is—simple acts of faith may achieve abundant and mighty results! James reminds us: "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."—James 2:17,18, *NKJV* ■

“So Shall My Word Be”

*“As the rain
cometh down, and
the snow from
heaven, and
returneth not
thither, but
watereth the earth,
and maketh it
bring forth and
bud, that it may
give seed to the
sower, and bread to
the eater: So shall
my word be that
goeth forth out of
my mouth: it shall
not return unto me
void, but it shall
accomplish that
which I please, and
it shall prosper in
the thing whereto
I sent it.”
—Isaiah 55:10,11*

The Word of God reveals the divine plan for the reconciliation of the sin-cursed and dying race. In our text we are given the blessed assurance that God's purpose will not fail, that he will cause the things spoken by his Word to be accomplished. This is one of the important lessons we learn when we first become acquainted with God's glorious plan. How blessed it is to be thus assured! It gives us a firm foundation for faith and enables us to rejoice in the hope set before us in the Gospel.

Not only does our text comfort us with the assurance that God is graciously willing and abundantly able to accomplish his loving purpose that

he has revealed through his Word, but also that his Word itself has a function to perform. This also will be effectively accomplished in keeping with the divine purpose. The Apostle Paul assures us that the Word of God is “quick,” or living, and “powerful,” sharper than a “twoedged sword.” (Heb. 4:12) God’s Word reveals his plan. It is also used by him to accomplish much of it. This is especially true with respect to the outworking of his will in the hearts and lives of his consecrated people. In this connection, how blessed it is to realize that if we yield ourselves unreservedly to the influence of the divine Word we will be sanctified by it and made “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”—Col. 1:12

A Lamp to Our Feet

The psalmist wrote that God’s Word was a lamp to his feet, and a light unto his path. (Ps. 119:105) Again, he wrote, “The entrance of thy words giveth light.” (vs. 130) How much we also need this enlightenment! The people of the world are engulfed in darkness, but by his Word God gives us light: “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.” (II Cor. 4:6) Paul says this light has “shined in our hearts” by the Gospel, and while we are still in a darkened world, we can now see our way.

Light is a symbol of knowledge, of understanding, and how wonderful is the understanding the Lord has given us through his Word. We have been blessed with a knowledge of God’s plan, both for ourselves and for the world. In our day by day walk in the narrow way our steps are guided by the Word. We can depend upon its directives to guide us aright—that

is, if we are sincere and humble in their application. James wrote, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." (James. 1:5) It is through his Word that God answers our prayers for wisdom. If we search diligently for this wisdom, our pathway will become "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Prov. 4:18

We Feed upon the Word

God's Word is also likened to food. This is because it nourishes each of us as a "new creature" in Christ Jesus. (II Cor. 5:17) As we feed upon it, we become "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." (Eph. 6:10) Through this spiritual nourishment we grow up to the stature of spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus. Quoting from Moses, Jesus said to the Adversary, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3

Jesus referred to the Word of God as food in one of his promises to those who faithfully watch for his coming. He said: "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37) How rich has been the feast of Truth we have enjoyed through the fulfillment of this promise. It is all the Word of God—that which has gone forth from his mouth through his son, Jesus Christ.

Waters of Refreshing

The Word of God is also likened to water. It is refreshing, invigorating, and life-giving. How dry

and desert-like our lives would be without the refreshing waters of the Truth. We rejoice in the assurance given by the Master that spiritual food and drink will be abundantly provided for those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” (Matt. 5:6) Jesus promised that such would be “filled.” This has proven to be true. How refreshing and filling has been the Word of Truth.

Additionally, the Word of God is pictured by water because of its cleansing effect in our lives. Paul wrote concerning our being cleansed “with the washing of water by the word.” (Eph. 5:26) This function of God’s Word was foreshadowed by the water in the laver that was located in the court surrounding Israel’s Tabernacle. Here the priests washed, and to us, the prospective “royal priesthood,” the Word is a place for cleansing from the faults and stains of our fallen flesh.—I Pet. 2:9

An Armor of Protection

“His truth shall be thy shield and buckler,” the psalmist wrote. (Ps. 91:4) As Christians, we are each a “soldier of Jesus Christ.” (II Tim. 2:3) We are fighting a “good fight of faith.” (I Tim. 6:12) Soldiers have enemies who fight against them, and our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil. Against these enemies the Word of God is as an impregnable armor of protection. Satan, and the unseen powers allied with him, are especially powerful, and Paul tells us that to “stand” against these we will need to “put on the whole armour of God.”—Eph. 6:11

Paul identifies each part of this armor and suggests the manner in which it serves to safeguard us

against all “the fiery darts of the wicked.” (Eph. 6:16) There is the “helmet of salvation.” (vs. 17) This well represents our knowledge of the Truth. It is essential that we know the Word of God in order to give battle to the Adversary. When Satan attacked Jesus as he was leaving the wilderness, his knowledge of God’s Word was his protection. Against every fiery dart of temptation the Master’s defense was, “It is written.” (Matt. 4:4,7,10) So it will need to be with us if we are to be successful soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Another part of the Christian’s armor is the “breastplate of righteousness.” (Eph. 6:14) The breastplate of an ancient armor was designed to protect the heart and other vital organs. The Word says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23) We know that the Lord is not judging us according to the unwilling imperfections of our fallen flesh, but the Adversary endeavors to discourage us along this line. He would have us believe that there is little use in our trying to please the Lord, because we will always come far short of the divine standard of righteousness. However, in this also the Word affords protection, for it assures us of our Heavenly Father’s loving provision through Christ, that our standing of righteousness, or justification, is in him and not in ourselves.—Rom. 5:1

As a result, when the Adversary hurls his fiery darts of discouragement, they fail to injure us, for we remember the protective assurance of the Word that declares, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is

risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”—Rom. 8:33,34

Paul mentions the “shield of faith” as that part of the Christian armor designed to quench all the fiery darts of Satan. (Eph. 6:16) It is the “faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3) However, merely to have a knowledge of this faith is not sufficient. We must also have full confidence and trust in it. Thus, the symbolism of the “shield of faith” also includes our belief in the “precious promises” of God. (II Pet. 1:4) Full confidence in the divine plan and purpose, including the manner in which God’s providences are operating in our lives, furnishes a bulwark of strength against any and all efforts Satan may make to destroy us as New Creatures.

There is also “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Eph. 6:17) This is the offensive part of our armor. With it we give battle to our enemies, but it is not a carnal sword. None of the weapons of our warfare, Paul says, are carnal, but “mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; ... and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.”—II Cor. 10:4,5

Satan’s fiery darts are suggestions that are contrary to the will of God for the body members of Christ. These may often seem very plausible, and they are always more pleasing to the flesh than is the expressed will of God. If we accept these and are governed by them, they result in serious injury to us as New Creatures. However, if we wield the “sword of the Spirit” to repel and destroy those suggestions, we will come victoriously through each skirmish with the Adversary.

Our walk in the narrow way is also protected by the Word. Paul says that our feet are “shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” (Eph. 6:15) The way of the Christian is often rough and difficult. The Adversary places stumbling stones over which we may fall. The Word also speaks of the “snare of the fowler.” (Ps. 91:3) The protection of our feet is referred to as the “gospel of peace.” This indicates that one of Satan’s methods of attack is to lure us into carnal strife and controversy with those who may oppose us. Such a course may be appealing to the flesh, but is a snare and a stumbling stone to the New Creature. “Blessed are the peacemakers,” says the Word, “for they shall be called the children of God.”—Matt. 5:9

We are to have our “loins girt about with truth,” Paul says. (Eph. 6:14) The function of a girdle in ancient times can be likened to a belt. This suggests it as an apt symbol of service. The protective qualities of the Word of Truth depend upon our holding it unselfishly—in love. In other words, we must be faithful servants of the Truth with which we have been blessed. We cannot enjoy its benefits just for ourselves, but are to use them faithfully for the blessing of others. Otherwise, the “whole armor of God” will not remain properly bound to us, and sooner or later we will fall before our enemies.

Servants of God’s Word

The Lord assures us in our opening text that the Word which goes forth from his mouth will not return to him void. It is important to remember that he uses his people as servants of his Truth. God does not shout his Word from his throne in

heaven, but conveys it to the hearts and minds of his people through human instruments. He inspired the ancient prophets to record his plan in the Old Testament. He guided Jesus in his teachings. His Holy Spirit miraculously enlightened the minds of the apostles so that their sermons and writings serve to elaborate further the Word that goes forth from God's mouth.

Paul explains that in addition to the miraculously inspired servants of the Word, the Lord has also provided pastors, teachers, and evangelists. (Eph. 4:11, *Weymouth New Testament*) In a still broader sense, every consecrated child of God is a servant of his Truth, for "the Spirit of the Lord GOD" is upon them all, anointing them to this service. (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; I John 2:27) The great plan of salvation that is outlined by his Word is the reconciliation with God of the sin-cursed and dying race. The plan is centered in Christ Jesus, the Redeemer and Savior. Paul wrote that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," and then adds that in this great project we are "ambassadors for Christ." In order to serve as Christ's ambassadors, the Lord has given unto us "the word of reconciliation."—II Cor. 5:19,20

The Parable of the Sower

It is almost beyond comprehension that God should use such frail and imperfect servants as instruments for dispensing his Word. It is wonderfully reassuring to be told by him that his Word will not return unto him void, but that it will accomplish that which he pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto he sends it. We rejoice in this,

but when, by his authority we proclaim his Word, the results may appear meager. Frequently, indeed, there may seem to be no results at all. However, his Word explains this also for our encouragement, showing that while to our finite minds our efforts may be useless, his Word does accomplish his good purposes.

This explanation is found in Jesus' parable of the sower. (Matt. 13:3-8,18-23) The seed in this parable is the "word of the kingdom," or the Word of God. It is the great plan of God for the reconciliation of the human race to himself. It is the plan that will reach its glorious consummation when his kingdom comes, and his will is done in earth even as it is in heaven. The sower of this seed represents all the Lord's consecrated and Spirit-begotten people. To these God speaks, saying, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."—Eccles. 11:6

In the parable, some of the seed sown falls by the wayside, and the birds carry it away; some falls on stony ground, where the earth is shallow; some falls among thorns; and some falls on good ground. Only that which falls on the good ground brings forth "fruit" to maturity. When we proclaim the Truth and there are apparently no results, if we remember this parable we would not be discouraged. It shows that Jesus knew in advance that much of the efforts of his people would seemingly be in vain.

In reality, however, it is true that even though our efforts frequently seem to be wasted, God's Word does not return to him void. He does not need our

help to disseminate his Word. He has given us this privilege in order that by its faithful use we ourselves may be enriched and strengthened spiritually. The prophet wrote, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." (Prov. 11:24) God wants us to scatter the seeds of Truth in order that its life-giving powers may increase in our own lives, regardless of how it may be received by others. This is God's way of making the Word of Truth the greatest blessing to us.

If we are obedient to his ways, we can be sure that his Word, when we proclaim it to others, will not return unto him void. As noted in the parable, a great deal of the seed we sow falls by the wayside; that is, the people do not understand what we tell them. Even so, however, we receive a blessing. By telling the Truth to others it becomes more powerful in our own lives. It is through obedience to the Word, including the Lord's instructions to proclaim the Gospel "for the witness of Jesus," that we are made ready to live and reign with Christ. —Rev. 20:4

When we sow the seed of Truth, some falls on stony ground. The parable indicates that this represents those who hear the Word with joy, but are not able to endure the ill will and persecution that result from espousing it. They do receive joy from the Truth, even if only temporarily, and this is a blessing to them. While they are not prepared to fully give their hearts to the Lord during the present time, they remember it with joy, and in the next age will be ready to enter the "way of holiness."—Isa. 35:8 *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) There are also those who hear the Word of Truth, rejoice in it, make progress for a while, but permit the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches to choke out their spiritual lives. The Word was very effective in their hearts until they permitted the circumstances of life to take the place of its hallowed influence. God's Word is indeed powerful, but he does not use it to coerce the minds of his people. Through the exercise of the free will of those who accept his Word, the Lord tests their fidelity to him and to his laws of righteousness.

Finally, there are the hearers of the Word in which the Truth falls on "good ground." These not only respond to the message but continue to progress in spiritual growth, bringing forth fruit "with perseverance." (Luke 8:15, *New American Standard Bible*) The growth and fruit-bearing of these depend upon their daily application of the Word of God. This daily work of fruit-bearing in the hearts, minds, words, and actions of the consecrated is therefore also accomplished by the Word that goes forth from the mouth of God.

We cannot keep the Truth to ourselves and expect to receive all the rich benefits it contains for us. We feed upon the Word as we share it with others. We are refreshed by it as we seek to "water" others. The cleansing power of the Truth in our own lives is the more effective as we exhort one another "unto love and to good works." (Heb. 10:24) The defense of the Truth against the attacks of the various enemies of the New Creature is greatly strengthened as together we "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 1:3

The “Foolishness of Preaching”

Paul speaks of the work of God that is accomplished by the “foolishness of preaching.” (I Cor. 1:21) This preaching is not limited to lecturing from a podium. All the faithful consecrated children of God participate in it to the extent that they permit the Word to radiate from their lips and their life. From the human standpoint it might well seem foolish that such a mighty work could be accomplished in seemingly so ineffective a manner. The reason it can be done is because God gives “the increase.”—I Cor. 3:6

The work of God in preparing for the kingdom is symbolically described in Isaiah 51:16—“that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth.” The “foundations of the earth” referred to here is the earthly phase of the kingdom of Christ, under the direction of the resurrected Ancient Worthies of old. They were prepared for this honored position through their obedience to the Word of God as it was made known to them in past ages. The “heavens” are symbolic of the spiritual phase of the kingdom, made up of Jesus and his church. Since Pentecost, these also have been prepared for their positions of glory by obedience to the will of God as expressed through his Word.

Jesus said in consecration to his Father, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” (Heb. 10:7; Ps. 40:7) It was his faithfulness to this covenant that qualified him to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. Thus, it was the Word of God recorded by the prophets that prepared and sanctified the Master, setting him apart for the holy and honored position he occupies at the “right hand of

God.” (Col. 3:1; Heb. 12:2) On behalf of his followers Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth,” and then he added, “thy word is truth.”—John 17:17

In order for the Word of Truth to accomplish this divine purpose in planting the new heavens, it must be communicated from one to another of his dedicated people. God does not emblazon it upon the skies where all can read it. He gave it to the prophets, to Jesus, and to the apostles, by the power of his Spirit, and we receive it from them and continue to communicate it one to another. This being the Lord’s arrangement, we get the full force of God’s statement, when through the prophet he said, “I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”—Isa. 51:16

We must also have the Word in our hearts, but it should not be hidden there. If it is to be truly effective in our lives it must also be upon our lips. It was so with Jesus, who is represented prophetically as saying, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.”—Ps. 40:9,10

It is a humbling thought to realize that the Word of God, which he declares shall not return unto him void, can be communicated through us, and will be if we are faithful to the commission that has been given to us by the anointing of the Spirit.

How reassuring it is to know that even though our efforts are feeble, and we speak with stammering tongues, the Word will accomplish the good pleasure of the Lord.—Isa. 28:11

Very soon the work of the present age will be successfully completed. We may not be able to see now just what our part in this labor of love has accomplished, but beyond the veil we will discover that the Word of God as uttered by our imperfect lips contributed something to the total effort, that the words we spoke to glorify our God were blessed by him to the strengthening of others in the narrow way, and to the enrichment of their spiritual lives.

That same Word, while being communicated for the gathering and building up of the church, has served as a witness to the world. (Matt. 24:14) In this way also it accomplishes the will of God. We may at times think that our efforts are in vain, but that is only because we do not always realize that the Lord's ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts higher than our thoughts. (Isa. 55:8,9) God's Word, as proclaimed by us and by his authority, may not accomplish what we would like to see, but we may be sure that it will accomplish what he pleases. In this we can rejoice. Upon the basis of this assurance, let us endeavor to be more and more emptied of self, and filled with his Word. Let it so fill us that it will overflow from our hearts and lips for the blessing of others and to the glory of God.■

“There is no better exercise for strengthening the heart than reaching down to lift others up.”

—Selected

The Elements of Justification

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.”
—**Romans 8:33**

Justification is one of the most important teachings in the Bible. It helps us to understand the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ and how our relationship with God is estab-

lished. Our loving Heavenly Father desires to have some of Adam’s progeny share in blessing “all the families of the earth” under the administration of Christ’s kingdom. In that regard, he has provided the means necessary to justify those whom he has called from the world during this present Gospel Age.

Defining Justification

In the *King James Version* of the New Testament, the words “justification” and “righteousness” both come from the same Greek root that denotes being made “right, innocent, or holy.” (Rom. 5:16-19; 6:18) The Bible further states that it is God who justifies, as noted in our opening verse. Therefore, the thought behind the word justification is to be made right with our Heavenly Father. Justification, as it

pertains to the called in Christ Jesus during this present time, is the arrangement by which God recognizes believers as being made right even though they are not actually righteous. Thus, having been made acceptable, God begets these to a spiritual life that permits them to have fellowship and communion with him.—I Cor. 6:11; I John 1:3,7

One of the features of justification is the removal of any estrangement and discord that may exist between God and the one justified. Someone may ask how this is possible since we were all born sinners, and how can righteousness be conferred upon anyone born imperfect? (Ps. 51:5; Isa. 64:6) How does the Bible answer this question?

A Fundamental Doctrine

Each of the following scriptures presents an element, or aspect, of the Christian's justification. These are taken from the Apostle Paul's letter to the brethren at Rome, and all apply to the justification of the church class during this present age since Pentecost. As we review these, we must keep in mind the statement of our theme text: "It is God that justifieth."—Rom. 8:33

We are justified by God's grace.—Rom. 3:24

We are justified by the blood of Christ.—Rom. 5:9

Christ was raised again for our justification.—Rom. 4:25

We are justified by faith.—Rom. 5:1

By God's Grace

With the foregoing brief introduction we will consider some of the aspects of the Christian's justification. In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul explained, "But now the righteousness of God

has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”—Rom. 3:21-24, *English Standard Version*

The last phrase is especially important: “justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” This introduces to us a righteousness, or justification, that is set apart from the Law of Moses, or any other written law, and is not dependent upon deeds and works. The Jewish people tried to attain righteousness through keeping the Mosaic Law, but they failed. This scripture points us to a righteousness, or justification, that is obtained by faith in Jesus Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles need to be made right with God, as Paul proclaimed, “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (vs. 20) Thus, justification is made manifest: “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.” God accepts us only because we have faith in Christ Jesus.

We need this wonderful grace because, as Paul states, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Adam in his perfection was crowned with glory and honor, but none of his children have enjoyed the glory of human perfection. All have sinned and all are imperfect. Paul points out that we are “justified by his grace as a gift.” God’s grace is his unmerited favor resulting from his love and lovingkindness. It is because of his great love for us

that he arranged for our justification. Therefore, the first feature of our standing before God in righteousness is our Heavenly Father's love for us.

Had it not been for his loving grace and his great goodness and kindness, there would be no opportunity for us to be anything other than sinners in the sight of God, with none excepted. This realization brings to our minds the words of a familiar scripture: "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) He gave, and we are justified freely by his grace. The gift of his Son was not without cost to God. It cost him much in that it required the death of his beloved Son. It was also not without cost to our Lord Jesus. It cost him crucifixion and death, condemned unjustly as a blasphemer of God. (I Pet. 2:21-24; 3:18; John 10:33) This great love was freely given and without cost to us, and it opened up a new and living way for us to come back into fellowship and communion with God.—Heb. 10:19,20

Let us pause and think for a moment of God's love for us. The Heavenly Father was the one who was sinned against. It was his instructions that were dishonored in the Garden of Eden. (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 5:12) It was Adam and Eve, who owed so much to him and that sinned against him. Yet, it was our loving Father in heaven who made the first overture toward reconciliation, and at great cost. He arranged the first step so that those under condemnation could be brought back into fellowship with him. (I John 4:9,10) This was a wonderful expression of his grace and lovingkindness. It was the first requirement in providing the

way for our justification. Through God's great love he provided the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus."
—Rom. 3:24

By Christ's Blood

Paul speaks of another requirement to our being justified. We read, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Rom. 5:9) We are justified by the blood of Christ, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [or atonement] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."—Rom. 3:25

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote, "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Eph. 2:13) These scriptures explain that the blood of Christ is a fundamental requirement to our standing of justification before God. The "sins that are past" refer to Adamic sins. The "wrath" of God speaks of the condemnation of Adam under which all mankind is born.—Rom. 1:18

The "blood of Christ" has primary reference to his death. The "life of the flesh is in the blood." (Lev. 17:11) Shed blood results in the death of the life that existed in the body. Thus, we understand the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This principle is, "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (I Cor. 15:21,22) That is, because of the shed blood of Jesus, and the fact that as a perfect man he was a ransom, an exact corresponding price for perfect

Adam before he sinned, all will be given the opportunity to gain life that was lost due to Adamic sin.

It is written, "Take heed therefore ... to feed the church of God, which he [Jesus] hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28) When we are purchased with Jesus' precious blood, then our relationship with God is dependent upon that purchase price. We cannot separate Christ's sacrifice from salvation. Our salvation depends upon it. The Apostle Peter wrote, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."—I Pet. 1:18,19

In the Old Testament, the Israelites' sacrifice of the Passover lamb illustrated this point. The lamb "without blemish" was sacrificed, its shed blood was applied according to God's instructions, and the firstborn received life as a result. (Exod. 12:3-14) The offering of a life to God is the essential matter in sacrifice, and therefore, blood becomes a symbol of sacrificial death. The blood of Christ is a gift to us because he sacrificed his life for us.—I Cor. 5:7; Eph. 5:2

The expression "being justified by Jesus' blood" emphasizes the fact that the ransom, which signifies "the price of redemption" (*Thayer's Greek Definitions*), is a prerequisite of our justification. The philosophy of the ransom, and the part it plays in our deliverance from God's condemnation of our race to death because of sin, is an important and fundamental truth. It clearly teaches that our redemption, which is from God, is made possible through Christ Jesus and his shed blood.—Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; I Tim. 2:5,6

By Jesus' Resurrection

Another aspect of justification is found in Paul's letter to the brethren at Rome. When speaking of the righteousness imputed, or reckoned, to Abraham because of his faith, the apostle said, "For our sake also, unto whom it [righteousness] shall be reckoned, who believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification."—Rom. 4:24,25,

Revised Version

Christ was "delivered" up in death for our trespasses. Had he remained dead, however, none of the human race could ever be accounted righteous in the sight of God. Therefore, he was raised from death that we might be justified. Justification depends upon a change from our being at enmity with God to being reconciled to him, and from being under condemnation to being freed from that condemnation of death because of sin. Only by Jesus' resurrection could this be fully accomplished.

Paul referred to Israel's Tabernacle sacrifices and the future offering of "better sacrifices." "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." Then he 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. 9:23,24) When Christ entered into the presence of God for us, he did not take the blood of a bull or the blood of a goat as was done in Israel's Tabernacle arrangement. Rather, he presented the merit, or value, of his own sacrificed life "for us"

and, subsequently, for all mankind, to be manifest under the provisions of his future kingdom over the earth.—Matt. 6:10

If Jesus had not been resurrected and had not appeared in God's presence for us, we would not be justified. John recorded Jesus' words, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."—John 10:17,18

It was indispensable that Jesus take up that life again in order to accomplish the full purpose of his death. He said, "No man taketh it from me." This was not true of Adam, whose life had been taken from him because of his disobedience to God's law. Jesus was always obedient to his Father's will and voluntarily laid down his life in sacrifice. Because he was perfect, his life was his own to either keep or to give. He chose to give it, but also proclaimed, "I have power to take it again."

This is not to suggest that Jesus raised himself from death. He was raised from the dead by the mighty power of his Heavenly Father, as clearly taught in the Scriptures. "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." (Acts 2:24) Jesus was raised from the grave to the highest of all spirit planes. He appeared in the presence of God on behalf of his faithful consecrated followers who are being called "in Christ Jesus" during this present Gospel Age. (Phil. 3:14) This was a necessary step before anyone could be released from Adamic

condemnation and be justified through the “redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

By Faith

The next element of the Christian’s justification is also found in Paul’s letter to the Romans, where he said, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1,2) God’s love and grace in providing a way through the gift of his Son was the first step toward our justification. Christ’s faithfulness even unto death, his resurrection, and his appearing in the presence of God for us were further steps towards our justification.

We recognize the importance of God’s part as well as the importance of our Lord Jesus’ part in this providential arrangement of grace on our behalf. We have a part also. Our part and privilege is the full exercise of our faith, which is to be an active principle in the life of every child of God. Our faith must result in action. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”—James 2:17

At the beginning of our walk with God, we were moved to act upon our faith by offering ourselves to him in full consecration, or dedication, to do his will. This was a most important step. During this present age, the merit of Christ’s blood is imputed only to those who have truly consecrated themselves to God. If we have made a full and acceptable consecration to God, through the imputation of Christ’s merit, we are covered with the robe of his righteousness. (Isa. 61:10) Thus we are made acceptable to

God as a “living sacrifice.” “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”—Rom. 12:1

The statement previously quoted, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” does not refer to the peace of a tranquil life, but rather that we have peace with God in the sense of no longer being at enmity and in opposition to him. This peace of reconciliation is possible only because we have had imputed to us the merit of Christ’s blood. The Heavenly Father sees us as being righteous and clean before him only because we are covered with the righteousness of Christ. Thus, we are justified in God’s sight. At this present time, only those consecrated to God may receive this redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Of them, Paul said, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”—Rom. 8:1

One of the connotations of the word “peace” is reconciliation. It is the same word used by Luke when he recorded the words of the angelic host: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:14) It brings us joy in the realization that the time is coming when there will be reconciliation and peace between God and all mankind. Thus will be fulfilled the words, “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.”—vss. 10,11

One of the most beautiful texts that the Apostle Paul has written in explanation of justification is found in his letter to the church at Rome. “To

declare, I say, at this time his [God's] righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3:26) Our Heavenly Father was just in sentencing man to death. However, if the sentence was just, how could he remove that sentence and still be just? He can do so only because of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who died "the just for the unjust."—I Pet. 3:18

The foregoing scriptures emphasize God's justice, even as his grace emphasizes his great love. These also affirm his eternal consistency. He provides the way whereby we may come to him and be justified, the way that enables him to be just and yet the justifier. God provides his Son that he can be just and yet be the justifier of the ones made acceptable through faith in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

God Is for Us

When emphasizing God's special care over his people whom he justifies during this present time, the inspired Apostle Paul wrote, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."—Rom. 8:31-34

The subject of justification is a wonderful teaching as it is presented to us in the Word of God. We rejoice in the knowledge that faithful Christians, by virtue of the merit of Christ's precious blood

being imputed to them, are made righteous and acceptable to our loving Heavenly Father. Justification is not the process of being made right, but the imputed righteous condition that is attained by the fully consecrated child of God.

The question may be asked whether God deals with anyone before they are consecrated. There is no doubt that he does. The Scriptures are clear on this point, and the experiences of every child of God confirm that he does indeed deal with those who are drawn to the way of righteousness. Jesus exclaimed, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44) The thought of the drawing power of God most beautifully expresses the experience of our own lives prior to consecration. Our providences and our experiences, as we sought after the Lord, made us realize that the drawings of God through the power of his Holy Spirit were directing us into the way of truth and righteousness. They were leading us, through his providences, toward the act of consecration and to our justification.

When writing to the Colossian brethren, Paul made the following statement that harmonizes these thoughts. He said, "Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight."—Col. 1:20-22

This is a wonderful scripture with which to summarize this study. Justification is only the beginning

of our heavenly calling in Christ Jesus. It then leads us on to the subject and work of sanctification. Even as justification changes our status before God at the beginning of our walk in newness of life, sanctification changes us daily as we grow in grace and in knowledge.—I Cor. 1:30; I Thess. 5:23; II Pet. 3:18

Thus we develop as Christians and continue towards the completion of the good work that has begun in us. (Phil. 1:6) Let us consider the great privilege that we enjoy of being justified in God's sight and appreciate the privilege of daily sanctification through the power of the Truth. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17) If faithful unto death, our Christian walk will be finished and we will hear those longed-for words, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—Matt. 25:23

Finally, let us also rejoice in the knowledge that the blood of the cross has a further dimension for the whole sin-sick world of mankind. The Scriptures testify that it will extend the redemption blessings to all people under the administration of Christ's kingdom of life and peace. (Rev. 5:9-13; 20:4,6; 21:2-5) At the close of the thousand-year reign of our Lord and the faithful members of the church class, all the obedient of the human family will have been reconciled to our loving Heavenly Father, and their enmity will be removed. Truly we can say with the Apostle Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"—Rom. 11:33 ■

Residing in the House of the Lord

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”
—*Psalm 23:6*

The twenty-third psalm illustrates our Heavenly Father’s loving care for his faithful people throughout the ages. In particular, however, the words of this psalm provide comfort and encouragement to those who have responded

to the heavenly calling since the Day of Pentecost. To faithful Christians there is the privilege of daily dwelling in the house of the Lord. These also have the glorious hope and prospect of being in the Father’s heavenly house that Jesus went away to prepare.

Places of Residence

Near the close of Jesus’ earthly ministry, he explained to his disciples, “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 14:2-4

The word “mansions” in this scripture is a translation of a Greek word that means residence. It is used only twice in the New Testament, and both times by Jesus. The second usage reads, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”—vs. 23

Here the same Greek word has been rendered “abode.” Jesus is emphasizing that both he and his Father will make a place of residence in the hearts of those who love him and are obedient to his words of Truth. Both the Father and the Son dwell together with those who love them. Their dwelling place becomes ours, and where we live in our innermost hearts and minds they will also live.

High Exaltation

The “Father’s house” may be understood to mean the entire vast universe that he has created, and in this house are many places of residence, or abodes. As members of the human family, the only one of these abodes that is suitable for us to live in is the earthly home. However, God did not confine himself to the creation of human beings and to provide a home for them. The Scriptures indicate that there are other orders of beings, and that these are adapted to live under circumstances that are very different from those existing on the earth.

In this connection, the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus and explained to them the blessed hope of their calling in Christ Jesus. “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that

ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.”—Eph. 1:18,19

The apostle desired that the followers of Christ would have the ability to see and appreciate their heavenly calling with the eye of faith and understand spiritual things that are not visible to the human eye. (Rom. 1:17; II Cor. 4:18; 5:7) Their eyes were to be opened to receive the wonderful promises of God’s Word and the beauties of his glorious character. They were told about the very high place Jesus had received because of his obedience and faithfulness to the divine will. Paul described this as when God raised Jesus from the dead, “and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his 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. 1:20-23

Paul also brought this wonderful truth to the attention of the Colossian brethren in his letter to them. Concerning the preeminence of Christ, the apostle wrote: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all

things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” (Col. 1:15-19) The Heavenly Father had exalted our Lord Jesus to the very highest throne in the universe and had given him the highest form of life—the divine nature and immortality.

Preparing a Place for Jesus’ Followers

While there are many planes of life in the Heavenly Father’s house, as enumerated by the Apostle Paul in the foregoing verses, there were none that had yet been made suitable for the faithful followers of Christ—his bride. Jesus therefore said to his disciples, “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.” (John 14:2,3) This indicates that the future dwelling place, or residence, for the Lord’s bride did not exist prior to Jesus’ First Advent.

Jesus and his heavenly bride, otherwise known as “The Christ,” were to be a new and heavenly “creation.” (II Cor. 5:16,17, *English Standard Version*) There is a special appeal in Jesus’ wonderful words of promise to those who have been called during this present Gospel Age. Although there were already many places of residence in God’s vast mansions of the universe, none of them had been made ready for Jesus’ bride. It is not possible for us to grasp with any degree of certainty the various dimensions of spiritual life in Paul’s reference to principalities, powers, might, dominion, and

every name that is named. Neither do we know the special conditions that will identify the unique place that Jesus has gone to prepare for us. Whatever sets it apart from all other realms of existence, we long to be with our blessed Lord Jesus, to dwell where he dwells and to share his heavenly home.

To Be Like Him

Considering the great height of glory to which the faithful members of the Christ class will attain, the Apostle John wrote, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."—I John 3:1-3

As a disciple of Jesus who walked with him while he was in the flesh, John was quick to grasp the implications of what Jesus said on these particular matters. He had recorded Jesus' wonderful promise to prepare a special home where his faithful followers would dwell together in glory.

John also recorded the Master's prayer on behalf of his disciples, in which he said to his Heavenly Father: "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. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may

be made perfect [Greek: brought to full development] in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”—John 17:21-24

There was no doubt in John’s mind that this prayer would be answered in God’s due time and manner. Jesus had asked that the Heavenly Father bestow the same love upon his followers that he had displayed toward him, and John realized what great love this truly was. These blessed followers of our Lord were to be made like him and dwell together with him in heavenly glory.

Light and Salvation

The psalmist spoke of the power of faith. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.”—Ps. 27:1-4

David declared that he would “dwell in the house of the Lord” all the days of his life. This suggests that his determination to do so would have much

to do with his attaining this desired position in the divine arrangements. This mark of character has also been true of the Lord's people during this present age. Their desire to be in harmony with God and to be a part of his household has identified their degree of faith. It is a necessary prerequisite to their attaining such a high position of favor. Indeed, the wonderful promises spoken by the psalmist were pointing to our present association with the Lord through his Word and the prospect of our living with him in his future glorious kingdom.

A New Creation

All of God's creation who willingly remain obedient to him are said to be dwelling in the "house of the Lord." Under the administration of Christ's coming kingdom all of the restored human family living on earth will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Their mansion will be a perfected earthly paradise.—Matt. 6:10; Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14; Rev. 21:3-5

However, the new heavenly dwelling place that is prepared for the New Creation will be different from any of the other mansions that already exist. As Christians, we put our consecrated lives in God's hands that we may be faithful to our calling. We are thus comforted by the psalmist's familiar words: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”—Ps. 23:1-6

Resting in Faith

During this present time the Lord’s people enjoy a rest of faith in the development of the Christ. This rest brings a peace of heart and mind that transcends all our trials and difficulties, and it is based upon our assurance of the Heavenly Father’s love and guidance. (Phil. 4:7) We may have confidence in him. “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever.”—vss. 19,20

The bride of Christ dwelling with her Lord will occupy the grandest of all the mansions in the universe. The apostle explains that even now those who believe do enter into rest. He encourages, “Let us therefore fear [reverentially obey, *Thayer’s Greek Definitions*], lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” (Heb. 4:1) In addition to our present rest of faith, we have the grand assurance of an abiding place that Jesus promised to prepare for his bride. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.”—vss. 9-11 ■

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

Changing Lives in Africa

Dear Dawn: Thank you for being a great blessing via Radio Africa network. My life has totally changed with your powerful program which is a spiritual sword touching and changing lives in Africa. Thanks again—Kenya

Inspired by Hope

Dear Dawn: We are thankful for each one of you!

“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” I Thess. 1:3. With love—WI

Learning the Love of Jesus

Dear Dawn: I heard your program on Radio East Africa. I was very blessed by the beautiful Word you preached.

We got very encouraged and look forward to hearing

more from you. Your message also gives hope to those who thought they had no reason to live.

Recently, after listening, many youths had a lot of questions, particularly the question of how can Jesus love them because they had many sins.

This shows the power of God reaching out to the lost, and calls for more of your preaching.

Thank you and God bless.—Zambia

Satisfies My Longings

Dear Dawn: I am writing to request some booklets and a copy of *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. I gave mine away.

I have now been a devoted reader of your literature since 1967.

For all these years I have never wavered from the Truth because it satisfies my longings as nothing else can do. Sincerely—PA

—*Blessed are your eyes, because they see;
and your ears, because they hear.*—
—Matthew 13:16

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 Monika Kos, Kozy Dolne, Poland—June 29.
Age, 91

Sister Janina Magiera, Chrzanów, Poland—July 1.
Age, 88

Brother Iosif Dejan, Baia Mare, Romania/Vancouver,
BC, Canada—July 15. Age, 72

Brother Józef Golan, Lublin, Poland—July 19. Age, 93

Brother Klaus Heinrich, Ludwigshafen, Germany—
July 23. Age, 91

Brother Harry Nugent, Orlando, FL—August 20.
Age, 97