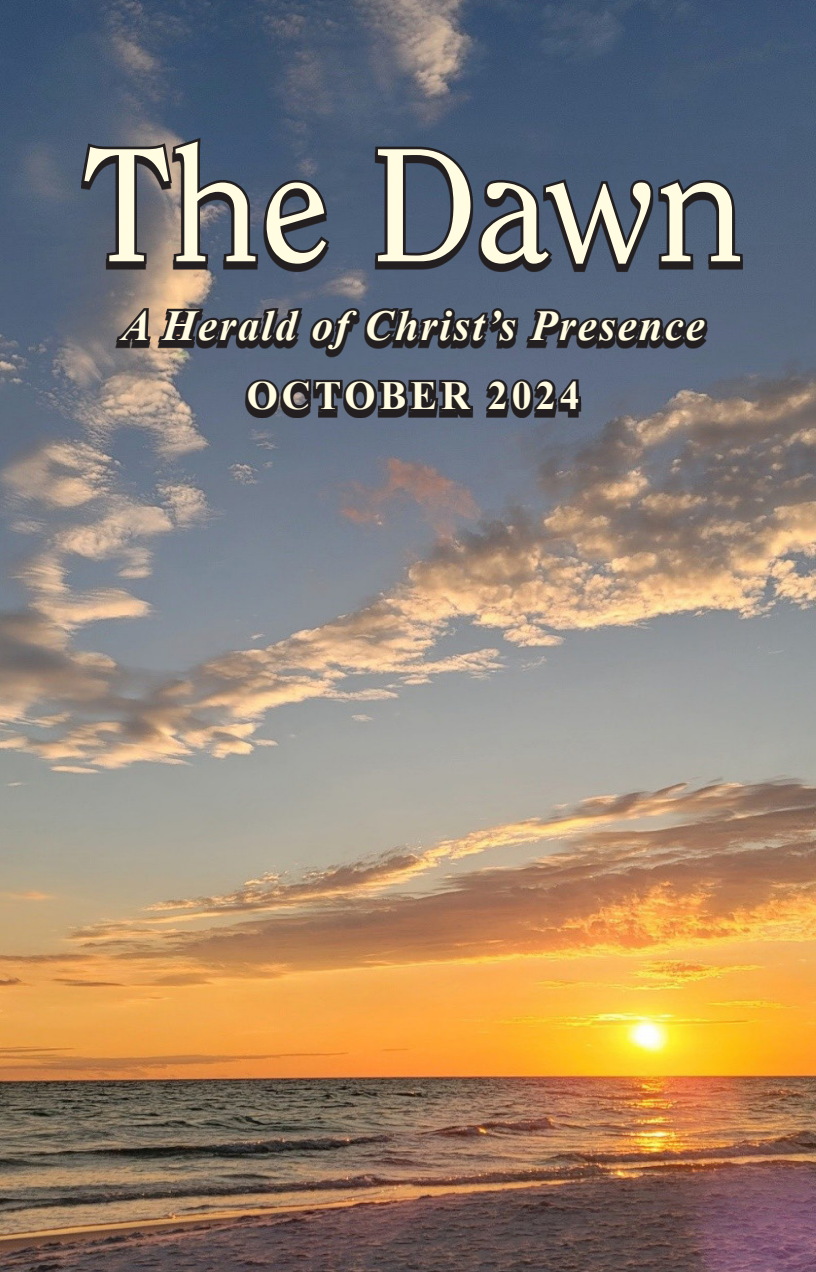


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Rosh Hashanah and the Jewish Holy Days

“The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.”
—Leviticus 23:23-25

AT THIS TIME OF YEAR, during the latter part of September or the early part of October, which varies each year according to the Hebrew lunar calendar, people of Jewish faith begin their preparation for celebrating one of their most important religious holidays, Rosh Hashanah. It is also called the Feast of Trumpets. In Biblical times, the blowing of a ram’s horn, a “shofar,” proclaimed the approaching new moon and Rosh Hashanah. In some Jewish communities, it was blown every morning for the entire previous month.

In more recent times, a variety of horns are used to summon Jews to take part in this religious observance.

Rosh Hashanah, which means “Head of the Year,” is the Jewish civil new year, the first day of the month Ethanim, more commonly known as Tishri, the seventh month of the Jews’ religious year, according to the Hebrew calendar. (I Kings 8:2; see later discussion of the Hebrew calendar) The Jewish highest holy days are observed during a twenty-one day period beginning with Rosh Hashanah. Yom Kippur, which is also known as the Day of Atonement, begins nine days later, on the tenth day of the month. (Lev. 23:27,28) This year’s Rosh Hashanah celebrations will begin after sundown on Wednesday, October 2nd, and end on Friday, October 4th, marking the beginning of the New Year according to Hebrew reckoning. The Feast of Tabernacles is the final celebration during the Jewish high holy days, and is observed for seven days beginning on the fifteenth day of Tishri.—vss. 33,34

JEWISH TRADITIONS

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated as a special time of year that is particularly associated with personal prayer and introspection. Some devout Jews may begin a self-examination and period of repentance during the preceding month Elul, a process that culminates in the ten days beginning with Rosh Hashanah and ending with Yom Kippur.

Typically, this season is also a joyous time of year with the sending of cards, wishing one another well, and happy gatherings among friends and

family. In many Jewish homes, traditional foods may be expected to accompany the occasion. Often, a blessing will be said over two loaves of bread known as “challah.” These loaves are especially prepared into a round shape which symbolizes a crown. The crown, in turn, is said to represent the kingship of God. Challah also suggests the circle of life and the hope that Jewish lives will long endure.

Another tradition may include apples dipped in honey, which symbolizes the hope for the year ahead. Honey may also be spread on the challah. Various other foods with symbolic meaning may be prepared as well, such as tongue, which symbolizes the “head,” or beginning of the civil year. Fruits may also be served, which are a reminder of the ingathering of that portion of the season’s harvest.

This year’s celebrations of Rosh Hashanah will likely be much more subdued than usual, given the fact that Israel has been at war on multiple fronts for the past year. Many Jews will likely pray for an end to the conflict, though they may not be aware of God’s overruling in their national affairs. At this time especially, they, and we, as students of the Bible, should keep before our minds the sentiments of these words of the psalmist David: “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.”—Ps. 122:6-9

VARIATIONS AND RABBINIC THOUGHT

Rosh Hashanah observances may vary from one Jewish community to another. For example, some

Orthodox Jews may celebrate the occasion during the first two days of the month Tishri, whereas Reform Jews may observe it for only the first day. During ancient times, the moon determined the dates for all Jewish festivals. Special watchers were appointed to observe the sky that would indicate the approaching new moon, which signified the beginning of a new month. In the case of Rosh Hashanah, the watchers may not have been able to inform in time some people who were living in distant locations of the exact date, and some would thus miss the festival. Therefore, in some communities, the religious leaders decided that two days should be set aside for the observances so that everyone would have ample time to participate in the event. It is acknowledged, however, that the addition of a second day of observance does not follow the original record of the Hebrew Scriptures.

According to rabbinic tradition, the creation of the world was completed on the first day of Tishri. Therefore, in Jewish thought, Rosh Hashanah is the most important of all judgment days. It is the day on which all mankind must pass before their Creator for judgment. In some Jewish writings it is stated that there are three books of account that are opened on Rosh Hashanah. At that time, the fate of the wicked, the righteous, and those of an intermediate class are recorded. The names of the righteous are immediately inscribed in the book of life and they are thus sealed to live. Those who are in the intermediate class are allowed a respite of ten days to repent and become righteous on Yom Kippur. The wicked are blotted out of the book of

the living. Here again, such details as these are not found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

A HISTORIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

A well-known and respected nineteenth century scholar and writer on Jewish history and culture, as well as a major work on the life of Christ, was Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889). He was born and raised in a Jewish family and later converted to Christianity, becoming a minister in the Presbyterian, and then the Episcopalian, Church. His writings provide an important and historical perspective in the study of Jewish traditions during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry.

In his book, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Christ*, he pointed out, "Scarcely any other festive season could have left so continuous an impress on the religious life of Israel as the New Moons. Recurring at the beginning of every month, and marking it, the solemn proclamation of the day, by 'it is sanctified,' was intended to give a hallowed character to each month, while the blowing of the priests' trumpets and the special sacrifices brought, would summon, as it were, the Lord's host to offer their tribute unto their exalted King, and thus bring themselves into remembrance before Him. ... And so we trace its observance onwards through the history of Israel; marking in Scripture a special psalm for the New Moon Tishri (Ps. 81:3); noting how from month to month the day was kept as an outward ordinance, even in the decay of Israel's religious life. (Amos 8:5) ... And in New Testament times we still find the New Moon kept

as an outward observance by Jews and Judaizing Christians.”

Continuing, Edersheim wrote, “Quite distinct from the other new moons, and more sacred than they, was that of the seventh [religious] month, or Tishri, partly on account of the symbolical meaning of the seventh or sabbatical month, in which the great feasts of the Day of Atonement and of the Tabernacles occurred, and partly, perhaps because it also marked the commencement of the civil year.”

HIS VIEW ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, took place on the 10th day of the month Tishri. (Lev. 16:29; 23:27) Concerning the significance of this feast Edersheim points out: “The Levitical arrangements for the removal of sin bear on their forefront, as it were, this inscription: ‘The Law made nothing perfect’ (Heb. 7:19)—having neither a perfect mediatorship in the priesthood, nor yet a perfect atonement in the sacrifices, nor yet a perfect forgiveness as the result of both. ‘For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.’ (Heb. 10:1) And this appears, first, from the continual recurrence and the multiplicity of these sacrifices, which are intended the one to supplement the other, and yet always leave something to be still supplemented; and, secondly, from the broad fact that, in general, ‘it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.’”

—vs. 4

The author further states that the Day of Atonement symbolically completed the sacred or Sabbath of months, and that it also had a distinct position relative to all other Jewish festivals. We again quote: "The seventh or sabbatical month closed the festive cycle, the Feast of Tabernacles on the 15th of that month being the last in the [religious] year. But, as already stated, before that grand festival of harvesting and thanksgiving Israel must, as a nation, be reconciled unto God, for only a people at peace with God might rejoice before Him in the blessing with which He had crowned the year. The import of the Day of Atonement, as preceding the Feast of Tabernacles, becomes only more striking, when we remember how that feast of harvesting prefigured the final ingathering of all nations."

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

The Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the "Feast of Ingathering" or "Booths," was the third and last of the special seventh-month Jewish festivals. It began on the 15th day of the month Tishri, therefore five days following the Day of Atonement, and lasted for seven days. (Lev. 23:33-43; Exod. 34:22) Edersheim writes: "The most joyous of all festive seasons in Israel was that of the Feast of Tabernacles. It fell on a time of year when the hearts of the people would naturally be full of thankfulness, gladness, and expectancy. All the crops had been long stored; and now all fruits were also gathered, the vintage past, and the land only awaited the softening and refreshment of the later rain, to prepare it for a new crop. ... The

harvest-thanksgiving of the Feast of Tabernacles reminded Israel, on the one hand, of their dwelling in booths in the wilderness, while, on the other hand, it pointed to the final harvest when Israel's mission should be completed, and all nations gathered unto the Lord."—Isa. 25:6-8

From the foregoing quotations, we see that Edersheim's historic perspective emphasizes the solemnity and importance of the various arrangements associated with Israel's high holy days. In addition, these writings from a Jewish-born convert to Christianity provide an interesting insight into the traditions of the Israelite people.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 23

In our opening Scripture, God is giving specific instructions to the Israelites concerning their seventh-month festivals. (Lev. 23:23-25) They were to sound their trumpets on the first day of the seventh month Tishri, a Sabbath Day, which served to announce the two feasts to follow—the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. (vss. 27-44) In Leviticus chapter 23, however, we note that these are merely the last three of seven festivals that are therein recorded.

God's instructions concerning Israel's first four feasts, which were to be observed at the opposite time of year, in the spring, provides a broader overall perspective of the importance and meaning of the festivals. Three of them were to be observed during the Jewish month Abib, later called Nisan, corresponding to our March/April months. (Exod. 23:15; Deut. 16:1) These were: (1) the Lord's Pass-over; (2) the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread,

or Feast of Passover, which began the following day; and (3) the waving of the sheaf of the first-fruits, which took place on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (Lev. 23:5-14) The fourth spring feast was to be celebrated fifty days later during the Jewish month Iyyar, and was called the Feast of Weeks, or Feast of Harvest.—vss. 15-21; Deut. 16:10; Exod. 34:22

THE HEBREW CALENDAR

The Hebrew calendar was based on lunar calculations that divided the months of the year that ran from one new moon to the next new moon. The Prophet Isaiah establishes the fact that the moon is the basis for this division of months. “It shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.”—Isa. 66:23

There are two principal Hebrew words that have been translated “month” or “moon” in our English Bibles. One of these is *chodesh*, which is translated both “month” and “moon” and comes from a root word meaning “new.” The other word is *yareach*, which means “moon,” and is solely translated by that word. In the foregoing Scripture, Isaiah uses *chodesh* to emphasize the beginning of each new month, which is based on lunar calculations.

For comparison, we note the prophet describing the glory of the future kingdom when the symbolic features, the sun and moon, are fulfilled. “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon [*yareach*] give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting

light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon [*yareach*] withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” (Isa. 60:19,20) John the Revelator also uses these same symbols to describe this beautiful scene. Speaking in vision he says, “I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”—Rev. 21:22,23

RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL CALENDAR

Ancient Israel followed two calendars—one civil and one religious. Ethanim [or Tishri] was the first month of the civil year and Abib was the seventh month. The month Abib was the time of year that the Jewish nation was delivered from Egyptian bondage. (Exod. 13:3,4; 23:15; Deut. 16:1) To celebrate this passing over and to emphasize its great importance and significance, God designated Abib as the first month of Israel’s religious year calendar. “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.” (Exod. 12:2) Abib later became known by the name Nisan, and it remains the beginning of Israel’s annual religious celebrations. (Esther 3:7) To include the observance of the Feast of Weeks in the new sacred arrangements, Israel’s month Zif—later called Iyyar, corresponding to late April to early June—became the second month of the Jewish religious calendar.—I Kings 6:1,37

With new and greater emphasis being placed on the institution of Israel’s religious calendar, Nisan,

changed from Abib, became the first, or the beginning, of months. Tishri, changed from Ethanim, though the seventh month of the religious year, retained its place as the first month of the civil year. The month Ethanim is indicated as the time of year when King Solomon gathered the elders and religious leaders of Israel to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the Temple, which was its final resting place. It is recorded, "All the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month."—I Kings 8:2

PICTURE OF A GREATER WORK

God set aside the nation of Israel and their religious life to serve as an illustration, or pattern, of a far grander future work. The observances of their feasts and holy days were divinely instituted and foreshadow the overall plan of God for the eventual reconciliation and recovery of not only Israel, but the entire human family, from sin and death. Trumpets were thus commanded to sound on the first day of Tishri to announce the new civil year and the coming of the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles, or Ingathering. The sins of the people needed to be atoned for every year, and the killing of sacrificial animals was necessary in order to provide them a standing of righteousness before God.

In particular, the Atonement Day celebration was the means by which God brought the Israelite nation back to a standing before him on an annual basis. Under this arrangement, justice was satisfied with the sacrifice of the bullock and the Lord's goat. (Lev. 16:11-15) Two rams were also provided

as a burnt offering to indicate God's acceptance of the sacrifices of the bullock and the goat.—vss. 3-5

Students of the Bible understand that the bullock represents the sacrificial offering of our Lord Jesus, who left his heavenly home, became a perfect man, and gave his life as the ransom for the sins of the whole world. (I Tim. 2:5,6) It is also understood that the goat represents those who, during this present Gospel Age, faithfully present their lives as a "living sacrifice," which is made acceptable by the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus.—Rom.12:1; Eph. 1:5,6

The work of calling out a people who would respond to the invitation to "walk in newness of life" and make an unreserved consecration to do the will of God, has been extended since the Day of Pentecost. (Rom. 6:4) During this long period of time since then, footstep followers of our Lord Jesus who have consecrated their lives have partaken of his "sufferings." (I Pet. 4:13) When this work of the present age is completed, the glory and blessings associated with Christ's kingdom will be ready to be administered on behalf of the whole groaning creation.—Rom. 8:22

In the festival of Israel's Day of Atonement, the sacrificing of the bullock and the goat took place within a twenty-four-hour day, whereas in the greater Atonement Day, completion of the sacrificial work extends over the entire Gospel Age. In the grander scope, the special features of the Atonement Day celebration pointed forward in time to the ultimate reconciliation and recovery of all earth's inhabitants from the penalty of sin, sickness, and death. (Rev. 21:1-4) This time of

reconstruction will take place under the administration of our Lord's kingdom of peace, truth, and righteousness that will be established over all the earth.—Isa. 9:6,7; Dan. 7:13,14,27

THE WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

The last in the series of Israel's seven annual festivals was the Feast of Tabernacles. "Ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days." (Lev. 23:40) The record further states that this practice was to be done in memory of the temporary dwellings, called "booths," which the Jews lived in when they were in the wilderness.—vss. 41-44

The children of Israel were thus reminded of God's providential care over them during the forty-year period of time during which they sojourned in the wilderness and lived in temporary dwelling places. This, in turn, served to strengthen their faith and love for him. Israel's wilderness experience pointed forward to the wilderness conditions during this present Gospel Age, and the experiences that the consecrated children of God undergo as they make their way toward the heavenly Canaan.—Rev. 12:6,14

THE INGATHERING OF ALL PEOPLE

The Feast of Tabernacles was also known as the Feast of Ingathering, and is a fitting illustration of the ingathering of the world's people into Christ's kingdom. It very significantly coincided with that special time of year when the crops were being gathered in from the fields, identified in Scripture

as “the feast of ingathering, which is the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.” (Exod. 23:16) It was a time of special reflection to thank God for the bounties of the recent harvest. In its grander sense, it reflects the ultimate purpose of God on behalf of the whole human family.

As we remember this special time of year for those of the Jewish faith, let us be mindful of the pictures and illustrations which Israel’s high holy days and other religious festivals convey to our minds. In them we see foreshadowed the ransom sacrifice of Jesus, the Messiah; the calling, selection, and development of the church; and finally the grand culmination of God’s plan, in which all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike, will be given the opportunity to return to favor with their Creator and live forever on a restored, perfect Earth. May we continue to sound forth the trumpet of these blessed tidings. “Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow ... the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.”—Ps. 81:1-3 ■

“The poor will eat and be satisfied. All who seek the LORD will praise him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy. The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him.

All the families of the nations will bow down before him. For royal power belongs to the LORD.

He rules all the nations.”

Ps. 22:26-28, New Living Translation

David Confesses and Repents

Key Verse: “*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*”
—*Psalm 51:10*

Selected Scripture:
Psalm 51:1-10

IN THIS PSALM, DAVID makes public confession of his sin and asks for God’s mercy and forgiveness. In our Key Verse the heart is used in a symbolic sense, the physical heart representing the seat of human affections—our desires, motives, and ambitions. As these are also often based in conjunc-

tion with our thoughts, the heart, in a broader sense, may be said to likewise symbolize our thoughts and mental reasoning.

The heart must be guarded and trained in order to operate properly and in harmony with God’s will. Thus our Heavenly Father sets various guards to train and help us keep our hearts pure. We should use these in accordance with his will and boundless wisdom. The guards which God provides are his admonitions, chastening, and the influence of his Holy Spirit. These are given to his children for their correction, training, and protection. The psalmist expresses this thought, saying, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing.”—Ps. 141:3,4

In the first Psalm we are told that the one whose “delight is in the law of the LORD,” and who meditates

in it day and night, “shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” (Ps. 1:2,3) A literal tree planted by “rivers of waters” will not lack the necessary moisture in the heat of the summer in order to develop its fruit in due time. Those who meditate in the Law of God will always be informed of the will of Jehovah. Even under difficulties they will not find it hard to discern what to do, as would be the case if they did not study God’s Word.

The purpose of guarding the heart is to keep it pure, because, according to the declaration of Jesus, the pure in heart “shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8) Today we are living in a world that is at enmity with God. Its works are the works of darkness. Daily we encounter people whose minds, words, and actions have the tendency of influencing us to do, think, and speak as they do—in ways unbecoming of a true Christian. It is necessary, therefore, that we are well established with the mind of Christ that we may do only the will of God.—I Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5

We should allow only those thoughts that are in harmony with the Lord, and with the instructions we have received of him, to occupy our minds and attention. Indeed, we should treasure up in our minds those thoughts that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy, from the standpoint of God. (Phil. 4:8) If we do this, we store up a good spiritual treasure which will manifest itself in our words and actions.

God’s thoughts are pure, his ways righteous, and his works holy. (Ps. 119:140; 145:17) As we observe our Father’s dealings with mankind—his servants, his friends, his enemies, transgressors, and those obedient to him—we learn his character. In this we see him glorious in every respect, and we should endeavor to imitate his ways. Thus we will be “changed into the same image from glory to glory,” by the influence of his Holy Spirit.—II Cor. 3:18 ■

A Prayer for Deliverance

Key Verse: “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*”
—*Psalms 22:1*

Selected Scripture:
Psalms 22:1-19

PSALM TWENTY-TWO contains several prophetic statements concerning Jesus and his crucifixion. Several details were fulfilled exactly, one being the quote of our Key Verse by Jesus as he hung on the cross. (Matt. 27:46) Another is the statement: “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” (Ps. 22:18) John 19:23,24 states: “The soldiers,

when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: ... They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.”

Jesus’ earthly mission was to take Adam’s place in death so that the condemnation of sin and death could be lifted from him and all his progeny. Jesus was a Jew born under the Law Covenant. (Gal. 4:4) God’s promise to the Jews was that if they were obedient to the terms of the Law he would bless them. On the other hand, if they were disobedient God promised to punish them. The Jews were disobedient, and, therefore, if they were

ever to return to harmony with God, it was also necessary that their special punishment be lifted.

This, according to God's arrangement, required that Jesus die in a certain way—that is, by crucifixion. The Apostle Paul explains, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."—Gal. 3:13

In Numbers 21:4-9 is the account of the Israelites in the wilderness when they spoke against God and Moses. This experience of the children of Israel, and what they were instructed to do in order to have God's wrath lifted from them, was a picture of Jesus' purpose in coming to earth. We read: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life."—John 3:14,15

Then follows perhaps the best-known text in the Bible, and one that is part of the foundation of every Christian's hope: "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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."—vss. 16,17

In these texts we are reminded that it was God who designed the arrangement for the lifting of condemnation from the world of mankind, both Jew and Gentile, and that it was at a heavy cost, for Jesus was his only begotten Son. By this we see, at least in part, the measure of God's love for his human creation. The Apostle Paul expresses the matter with these words: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8) With this, let us remember, too, the unselfish, loving sacrifice of Jesus, who was so willing to cooperate with his Father. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—Phil. 2:7,8 ■

Death Swallowed Up in Victory

***Key Verse: “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.”
—Isaiah 25:8***

***Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 25:6-9***

A DEFINITE PROMISE OF blessings to all people through his “seed,” or offspring, was given to the Patriarch Abraham. To him God said, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 22:18) Many centuries later, the Apostle Peter spoke of a future period, under the rulership of Christ, when there would be “times of restitution [restoration] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:21) Peter then adds in verse twenty-five: “Ye are the children of the

prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.” Thus the apostle reveals that the blessing, which God promised would come to all mankind in due time through the seed of Abraham is, in reality, their restoration and deliverance from sin and death in the “times of restitution of all things” during Christ’s kingdom.

The promise that God made to Abraham was reiterated to his son, Isaac, and his grandson, Jacob. (Gen.

26:1-4; 28:10-14) Jacob had twelve sons, and toward the end of his life he gathered them around him and pronounced individual blessings upon them, which took the form of prophecies. To his son Judah, Jacob said, “Thy father’s children shall bow down before thee. ... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”—Gen. 49:8-10

The name Shiloh means tranquil, or peaceful. It is one of the Old Testament titles assigned to the seed of Abraham and suggests that this promised Deliverer, Christ Jesus, would be a peacemaker among the people, as well as a peacemaker between God and men, and would restore the harmony that existed before man transgressed divine law.

In Isaiah 25:6-9, we are presented with another promise descriptive of the blessings that will reach the people in the Messianic kingdom. One of these will be the destruction of death. The Lord will “swallow up death in victory,” the promise reads, and will “wipe away tears from off all faces.” Another blessing to reach the people through the administration of this government is described as the destruction of the “face of the covering cast over all people.” This is a “covering,” or veil, of superstition and misunderstanding pertaining to God and to his loving purpose in the creation of man, and his plan for restoring him to life.

Included in this covering, which at the present time hides divine truth from the people, are all the God-dishonoring theories arising out of Satan’s lies. We can thank God, however, that all the false notions which Satan has weaved into a covering and thrown over the eyes of the people will be removed. Moreover, since in this same kingdom death is to be “swallowed up in victory,” it will become true for the first time since the transgression in Eden that there is “no more death.” (Rev. 21:4) All the dead will be brought forth from the grave and be given the opportunity to live forever upon the earth.—John 5:28,29, *Revised Standard Version* ■

Trust in God Alone

Key Verse: “*My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.*”
—*Psalms 62:5*

Selected Scripture:
Psalms 62:1-12

ONE OF THE IMPORTANT

keys to a victorious Christian life is trust in the Lord. Trust is very much related to faith, and the Apostle John says, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” (I John 5:4) We are dependent upon the Lord for everything, and it is important always to remember this, for it is when we lean on our own understanding or depend upon our own strength that we often fail.

In our lesson we are told, “The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.” (Ps. 62:7,8) Speaking for those who do put their trust fully in the Lord, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song.”—Isa. 12:2

Fear is an enemy to the Christian. It weakens our determination to press on and fight the “good fight of faith.” (I Tim. 6:12) It destroys the joy and peace which should be ours in the Lord. Love “casteth out fear,” the apostle tells us. (I John 4:18) If our love for God and for his plan of salvation is strong, our trust in him will also be strong. Instead of fearing our enemies, we will confront them in the strength of the Lord, and he will become our “strength” and our “song.” The words of God to Joshua should ring true to us also: “Be strong

and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”—Josh. 1:9

The Apostle Peter, in outlining the various elements of a righteous character, begins with the foundation of faith: “Add to your faith.” (II Pet. 1:5) Faith, then, is seen to be one of the basic elements of righteousness required by God. We are to have absolute confidence and trust in him, and rely on the assurance that he is not only able to accomplish all of his good purposes, but also that he is able to care for us. He will not permit any experience to come into our lives that will not be for our highest spiritual welfare—Ps. 62:5-7; Rom. 8:28; I Cor. 10:13

Upon the basis of this trust, having our minds fixed on the Lord, and our hearts determined to know and do only his will, we can have, as Isaiah tells us, “perfect peace.” The prophet reminds us, furthermore, that we can trust in the Lord “for ever,” that in him is “everlasting strength.” (Isa. 26:3,4) This means that we can continue to trust him all the days of our lives here in the flesh, and that beyond the veil we will “dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”—Ps. 23:6

In the world today it might seem that sin is triumphant. The unholy governments of our day reign with a high hand. Even those that attempt to change the course of society for the better are unable to do so due to the selfishness of fallen man. This situation will soon change, however, for the promise from God is that the “lofty city, he layeth it low; ... even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust.”—Isa. 26:5

Thus we can be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”—Eph. 6:10,11,13 ■

David—King, Prophet, Psalmist

“David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. And the time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour.”

*—I Chronicles
29:26-28*

AT THE DIRECTION OF the Lord, David, the shepherd boy and youngest son of Jesse, of Bethlehem, was anointed by Samuel to be king of Israel in place of Saul, the first king over God’s chosen people. (I Sam. 16:1-13) Though Saul’s kingship would continue for a time, God had rejected him because of his disobedience to divine instructions. Thus, David was anointed to replace Saul as king upon his death.

Following the death of Saul, David began to reign as Israel’s king. His kingship was first recognized only by the tribe of Judah, over which the initial part of his reign lasted seven years and six months. During this time he lived at Hebron, and here he was formally anointed by the people of Judah.—II Sam. 2:1-5; 5:4,5

Gradually David's power increased, and finally the united voice of all Israel called him to be king. Then, and for the third time, he was anointed king, and in Hebron there was a festival of three days to celebrate the happy event. (I Chron. 12:38-40) One of David's first acts after becoming king was to secure Jerusalem, which he seized from the Jebusites, and there he established his royal residence. Thenceforth Jerusalem became known as the "city of David."—II Sam. 5:6-9; I Chron. 11:4-7

The establishing of Jerusalem as the capital of the nation introduced a new era in David's life and in the history of the kingdom of Israel. He became a king on the scale of the great sovereigns of Egypt and Persia, with a regular ministration and organization of court and camp. He also founded a dominion which for the first time embraced the entire prophetic bounds of the "seed of Abraham."—Gen. 15:18-21

During the succeeding ten years, the Gentile nations surrounding Israel caused David considerable trouble. For the most part, however, he was victorious in his battles with them and reduced to a state of permanent subjection the Philistines on the west, the Moabites on the east, the Syrians on the northeast as far as the Euphrates River, the Edomites on the southeast, and finally the Ammonites.—II Sam. 8:1-6,14; 10:1-19; 12:26-31

David's reign was marked not only by conflicts with outside nations, but also by rebellion within his own household. The revolt of his beloved son, Absalom, brought on a crisis which sent David forth a wanderer as in the days when he fled from the jealous Saul. The final battle of Absalom's

rebellion was fought in the forest of Ephraim and terminated in the accident which led to the rebellious son's death. After this David reigned for a time in comparative peace.—II Sam. 18:1-17

THE "SURE MERCIES OF DAVID"

God spoke of David as being a man after his own heart. (I Sam. 13:13,14; Acts 13:21,22) This was not because he never yielded to the weaknesses of his flesh, but because at heart he was loyal to God and desired above everything else to please the Lord. Saul's great sin was his flagrant and willful disobedience of God's commands, while David's was simply a failure to control his passions. Therefore, the two men were judged differently by the Lord.

Because of Saul's sin the kingdom was removed from his family, the tribe of Benjamin, and David, a member of the tribe of Judah, was anointed in his stead. Because of David's tender heart condition, God made a covenant with him that under no circumstances would the kingdom be wrested even from his descendants. This covenant is referred to as the "sure mercies of David," because mercy would need to be extended in order to carry it out.—Isa. 55:3

The original statement of this covenant is recorded in II Samuel chapter 7. When finally gaining a measure of peace, David decided that he would like to build a "house" for the Lord. He said to Nathan, a prophet of the Lord, "See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." Nathan said to David, "Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee." (vss. 2,3) Nathan encouraged David in his laudable ambition without seeking divine approval. That

night the Lord spoke to Nathan and instructed him to inform David that he would not have the privilege of building him a house. Doubtless the king was greatly disappointed over this, but the Lord gave him a compensating portion, for it was in this connection that he made a special covenant with him, which we quote below in part.

“When thy days be fulfilled, and thou 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 [Solomon’s] kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men. ... But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”—vss. 12-16

God had not shown mercy to Saul due to willful disobedience, but he had to David. Despite David’s sins due to fleshly weaknesses, God exalted the kingdom of Israel in his hands and made him a great king. Now God covenanted to preserve the kingdom within David’s family forever, even though his descendants, including his son Solomon, who would succeed him on the throne, would transgress his laws. David was greatly impressed by this, and replied to the Lord: “Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come.

And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?"—II Sam. 7:18,19

The full understanding of this covenant with David is possible only through recognition of the fact that David's throne pointed forward to the Messianic kingdom throne, on which Jesus sits with "all power." (Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 3:21) However, God's providences in protecting Israel's throne in the hands of David's natural descendants are remarkable, as is manifested by a study of the experiences of the Davidic kings down to the overthrow of the last one, Zedekiah, when the nation was taken captive to Babylon.

It was then that the Prophet Ezekiel wrote concerning Zedekiah: "Thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him."—Ezek. 21:25-27

ONE "WHOSE RIGHT IT IS"

Here the kingdom of David ceased, but God's promise was not broken. Ezekiel did not say merely that the kingdom should be "no more," for this would have implied a broken promise. Instead he explained that it would be no more "until he come whose right it is." In other words, the active operation of God's promise was merely suspended until the rightful king appeared.

Note the prophecy of the birth of this one "whose right it is" to occupy forever the throne of David:

“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder. ... Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

In the annunciation to Mary, the angel said concerning the child who would be miraculously conceived: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”—Luke 1:32,33

Thus we see that Jesus came as the rightful king to sit on the greater spiritual throne of David. However, Jesus’ enemies put him to death, and the ruling house of David seemed doomed, even as had Israel’s throne on many occasions. Just as in the past, however, God again intervened. He raised his Son—Israel’s rightful king—from the dead. Paul associates the miracle of Jesus’ resurrection with the “sure mercies of David.” In a synagogue in Antioch he said: “We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he hath raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.”—Acts 13:32-34

Thus we see that David was very honorably used by God in being constituted a picture of Jesus, the future King of glory. It will be through this greater house of David that God's promised blessings will flow, not just to Israel, but to "all the families of the earth." (Gen. 22:15-18; Acts 3:25,26; Gal. 3:8,16) Concerning the purpose of Christ's second advent, James, when speaking at the council in Jerusalem, quoted God's words given by the Prophet Amos: "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; ... That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord."—Acts 15:16,17; Amos 9:11,12

David recognized that as king of Israel he was merely a representative of God, who was the real Ruler. He, like all of Israel's kings, sat on the "throne of the LORD," not on his own throne. (I Chron. 29:23) Thus the kingdom of Israel pointed forward to the Messianic government, in which the representative of Jehovah will be his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, and associated with him his footstep followers of the present Gospel Age.—II Tim. 2:1,12; Rev. 20:6

David reigned, in all, forty years—seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. "He died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead." (I Chron. 29:27,28) His life had consisted of some failures, but many victories. To exalt the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel and the world, the Creator of heaven and earth, was his dominating ambition. Whether strumming sweet melodies on his harp, writing psalms of trust in God and praise

to his holy name, or driving back the enemies of his people in battle, the law of the Lord was his principal meditation and his greatest delight.

DAVID THE PROPHET

In addition to being Israel's most outstanding king, David was also greatly used by God as one of his "holy prophets." (Acts 2:29,30) His prophecies are found in the Book of Psalms. They pertain largely to the sufferings and death of Jesus, his resurrection, the future glories of his kingdom, and the blessings which it will shower upon the people of all nations. The church's association with Jesus, in suffering and in glory, is also foretold by David.

Psalms 16 prophesies the death and resurrection of Jesus and the supreme confidence he would have in the promises of his God to deliver and exalt him to his own right hand, where there would be pleasures forevermore.—Ps. 16:5-11; Acts 2:31-36

In Psalm 22 is a prophecy by David foretelling Jesus' experience while hanging on the cross. Jesus is represented as saying, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (vs. 18) Hanging on the cross, and watching the Roman soldiers divide his clothing among themselves and then cast lots for his costly outer garment, Jesus recognized the fulfillment of this entire prophecy, and, mustering what he could of his ebbing strength, he began to quote the psalm, saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—vs. 1; Matt. 27:35,46

The second Psalm prophesies the triumphant victory of Jesus, as King, at his second advent, when he subdues the nations under him and rules

them “with a rod of iron.” (Ps. 2:1-9) In the 96th and 98th Psalms we have additional prophecies concerning the kingdom, showing that it will also be a time of righteous judgment: “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall the trees of the wood rejoice before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.”—Ps. 96:11-13

DAVID THE PSALMIST

As a writer David is referred to more often as a psalmist than a prophet, although he is only once thus described in the Bible. The text is II Samuel 23:1, and here he is referred to as “the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel.” It is in his psalms that the true and sterling character of David is revealed, and in reading them we understand better why the Lord referred to him as a man after his own heart.

Many of David’s psalms abound with praise to God. “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.” “O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. Be thou

exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth.”—Ps. 34:1-3; 108:1-5

David’s psalms also reflect the stormy periods of his reign as king and his struggles to hold his enemies at bay. The 9th Psalm reads: “I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.”—vss. 1-5

When victory over his enemies was delayed, David’s faith was tested. These heart-searching experiences he also reveals by psalm: “How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?”—Ps. 13:1,2

David’s earlier experiences in life as a tender of his father’s sheep also lend richness and depth to his writings. How wonderfully his shepherd psalm has contributed to the comfort of God’s people through the centuries: “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

Because David’s heart was right in the Lord’s sight, goodness and mercy did “follow” him all the days of his life. His writings, expressive of his own deep meditations, and beautifully poetic, are also inspired by the Lord. As we have noted, many of them are prophetic. His shepherd psalm has a grand fulfillment in the lives of the spiritual David class throughout the present Gospel Age. These, even more than David, can say, “I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

Who but a godly king whose desire was to rule righteously that his subjects might be blessed, could have foretold so eloquently the rulership of the Messiah of Israel, as did David, when he wrote: “He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. ... He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy. ... In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.”—Ps. 72:2,4,7,8

The description of Messiah’s kingdom and its blessings, which the Holy Spirit inspired David to describe in this psalm, made him feel, seemingly, that there could be nothing more he needed to ask of God. Thus he wrote: “Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.”—vss. 18-20 ■

Understanding God's Covenants

***“All the paths of
the LORD are
mercy and truth
unto such as keep
his covenant and
his testimonies.”
—Psalm 25:10***

THE SCRIPTURAL USE OF
the term covenant, as
descriptive of the relation-
ship between God and his
human creation, conveys the
idea of being in harmony
with him. Thus, when one

enters into covenant relationship with God it means that he agrees to do God's will, and God has agreed to accept him and bless him because of this mutual understanding. The Scriptures also use the term covenant with reference to God's solemn promise to do certain things for his creatures.

To a large extent the term covenant, as used by God, is pictorial in that it conveys to our minds a state of harmony with the Creator, in contrast to a condition of alienation from him. It does not mean that an individual, in entering into covenant relationship with God, signs a literal document or agreement, but rather that in his heart he gives assent to the divine will and determines faithfully to obey that will.

FIVE COVENANTS

There are five special covenants referred to in the Bible related to God's plan. The first of these describes the relationship which existed between Adam and the Creator. The prophet speaks of this, saying, "But they [the Israelites] like Adam have transgressed the covenant." (Hos. 6:7, *Revised Version*) Adam's relationship with God was established by a covenant of obedience from the time of his creation. God's law was given to him, and he was given the ability to keep that law because he was created perfect. Adam's part in this covenant was to obey his Creator. This was the least he could do to show his appreciation for his existence and for the manifold blessings of life bestowed upon him. Adam would continue to live as long as he obeyed God's law.

Adam, however, broke that original covenant and by his disobedience brought upon himself, and all of his progeny, the penalty of death. God was not bound to continue Adam's life after he had violated the covenant to which he was a party. Under this covenant it was necessary for Adam to pay for his wrongdoing, and the only means of paying was by the surrender of his life. Thus, by his breaking of the covenant, Adam lost his special relationship with the Creator, and also lost life.—Gen. 2:15-17; 3:17-19; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12

The second covenant mentioned in the Scriptures is that recorded in Genesis 9:8-17. It is the covenant which God established with Noah, assuring him that never again would all flesh be destroyed by a flood of waters. God sealed this covenant with the outward sign of the rainbow. It was a one-sided

covenant in the sense that it represented only that which God promised to do. The promise was made to Noah without asking him to obligate himself in any way in connection therewith.

The third covenant is the great oath-bound covenant made with Abraham and his offspring, or “seed,” by which God promised to bless all mankind. The apostle, speaking of this, says that because God “could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,” thus sealing this covenant by his oath. (Heb. 6:13; Gen. 22:16) This divine promise to Abraham was two-fold: (1) Abraham’s seed was to inherit the land of promise; and (2) “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 13:14-17; 17:8; 22:18) In Genesis 15:18, this oath-bound promise to Abraham is specifically called a covenant, and in Galatians 3:17 (*New American Standard Bible*), the Apostle Paul also calls it a covenant.

Later, another covenant is brought to our attention in the Scriptures. This is the Law Covenant, entered into between God and the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. (Exod. 24:3,7,8) This covenant promised life to Israel in return for obedience to its terms. (Deut. 30:19) However, as noted earlier from Hosea 6:7, the Israelites, like Adam, broke God’s covenant. Because the Israelites did not faithfully keep their part of the covenant they failed to receive the blessing of life which God promised as his part of the agreement. While they failed to obtain life under this covenant, nevertheless they were furnished many valuable lessons. The apostle told the early Jewish Christians that the Law was to be a “schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”—Gal. 3:19,24

While not many Israelites learned the real lesson of the Law—that is, their need of Christ as a Redeemer—yet God is not finished dealing with them. When the proper time comes for their eyes to be opened, the lessons of the Law will be of inestimable value to them. Meanwhile we, who can look back upon Israel's failure, are able to appreciate the lesson that only through the Redeemer, Christ Jesus, is it possible for any member of the fallen race to come back into harmony with the Creator and live.—Acts 4:10-12

The final great covenant mentioned in the Scriptures is described in Jeremiah 31:31-34 as a New Covenant. The prophet explains the reason for its name, saying that it is a New Covenant because it takes the place of the original Law Covenant. This covenant, the Scriptures show, is to be made with those who previously had participated in the covenant inaugurated at Mount Sinai. The principal facts concerning the New Covenant are that it is made with the "house of Israel and with the house of Judah," and that the law of that covenant is to be written in the inward parts and in the hearts of the people.

The prophet also shows that when this covenant is instituted its effects will be so universal that all, Jew and Gentile alike, shall come to know the Lord "from the least ... unto the greatest." Hence it will mean the re-establishment of that original covenant relationship which existed between God and father Adam. It will include Adam and the entire race that lost life because of his disobedience, for Jesus died "the just for the unjust [Adam and his posterity]."—I Pet. 3:18

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Examining more carefully God's covenant with Abraham, we notice that it contains not only the promise of blessing, but also provides for the development of the "seed" through which the blessings are to be dispensed. The Apostle Paul furnishes us with considerable information concerning the larger meaning of this covenant. In Galatians 3:16, he identifies Jesus as the seed of promise, and in verses 27 and 29 of this same chapter he explains that the followers of Jesus who become members of his body, or church, by being baptized into death with him, are also to be considered as a part of the promised seed.

In the 4th chapter of Galatians, the apostle discusses the experiences of Abraham in connection with the birth of his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, referring to these as an allegory. The Israelites, Paul reminds us, were the natural descendants of Abraham, and as such were pictured by Ishmael, the son of Abraham's bondmaid, Hagar. This finds its comparison in the Law Covenant, which brought bondage to Israel, the natural descendants of Abraham. —vss. 22-25

The apostle further explains that in this allegory, Sarah, Abraham's lawful wife who gave birth to Isaac, represents the covenant arrangements by which the true seed of promise is brought forth. This we often refer to as the "Sarah feature" of the Abrahamic Covenant. Then the apostle adds, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." (vss. 22,23,26-28) It is significant also that Isaac, the natural seed of promise, was offered in sacrifice. While God did not permit the patriarch

actually to slay his son, nevertheless the sacrifice was made in sufficient fullness to warrant our looking upon it as prefiguring the sacrifice of Jesus. —Gen. 22:1-12; Heb. 11:17-19

God's covenant in which he promised to bless all the families of the earth also calls for the offering of sacrifice. No blessing should be considered sufficiently far-reaching to fulfill this wondrous promise to Abraham except the blessing of everlasting life, yet those whom he promised to bless were under condemnation to Adamic death. This clearly implies that through the seed of promise, by which the blessings were to reach mankind, there would of necessity be a provision for the cancellation of the death penalty, which prevents mankind from enjoying everlasting life.

In father Abraham's offering of his son Isaac as a sacrifice, we have a beautiful illustration of the fact that in order for the Heavenly Father to fulfill his promise to bless mankind he would offer up his own Son in sacrifice. (John 3:16,17) Isaac's willing acquiescence in his father's obedience to God exemplifies the fact that Jesus would, himself, gladly cooperate with his Father by voluntarily laying down his life, that those whom he came into the world to bless might live.

As already noted, the Apostle Paul includes the church as a part of the greater Isaac, or seed of promise, saying, "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." (Gal. 4:28) The offering up of Isaac as a sacrifice, therefore, not only foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, the Head of the church, but also prefigured the sacrifice of his consecrated footstep followers. In this picture,

only the sacrifice of Jesus has redemptive value, or merit, to cancel sins. However, the church is also invited to sacrifice in order to prepare them to share in the work of the Messianic kingdom of blessing to all the world.

Therefore, we see that the offering of sacrifice is one of the necessary qualifications to become a part of the spiritual seed of Abraham. In Psalm 50:5, the Lord says, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." To this Paul adds, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." (Rom. 12:1) Thus it is evident that true Christians enter into the covenant under which the seed of promise is developed by virtue of joining in sacrifice necessary for the entire seed class to be prepared for the eventual blessing of all mankind.

"RECEIVING A KINGDOM"

We have another example in the Scriptures of the church being associated with a phase of God's plan, namely, with the kingdom of God. Hebrews 12:28 reads: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Those who have misunderstood God's plan to the point of believing that God's kingdom, through Christ, was established at Pentecost naturally would use this text to prove such a viewpoint. However, we know that the actual establishment of the kingdom for the blessing of the people is still future. Yet the apostle says that we have been given

a kingdom. This means simply that we have been given the opportunity of becoming kings in that kingdom, and that in accepting the invitation to sacrifice with Christ we are being prepared for the work of that kingdom when it is established.

One of the obvious proofs that the kingdom of Christ was not established at Pentecost is the fact that the many promises of kingdom blessings have not been realized by the people. The same is true concerning the New Covenant. It is to be established with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, with its blessings extending to all nations. It calls for the reconciliation of all the willing of mankind to God, so complete and universal that, according to the prophet, no one will need to say to his neighbor, "Know the LORD," for all shall know him "from the least ... unto the greatest." (Jer. 31:34) Surely now, nearly two thousand years since Pentecost, the nations and people in general are as far away as they have ever been from "knowing the Lord."

The Scriptures show that the relationship of Christians to the kingdom of Christ is to be that of joint-heirs with him as kings and priests. (Rev. 20:6; I Pet. 2:9) Similarly, our relationship to the New Covenant is to be as ministers of reconciliation, sharing with Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, in the work of bringing mankind back to human perfection. (II Cor. 5:18; Heb. 12:24) The church, then, as the seed of Abraham, is not brought forth under the terms of the New Covenant, but is a spiritual class developed upon the basis of sacrifice, to be ministers or servants of that covenant. From this standpoint, perfect harmony is found in

all the prophetic teachings relative to the New Covenant.

MINISTERS OF THE NEW COVENANT

Hebrews 8:6 is another enlightening statement: “But now hath he [Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” Notice that Jesus’ ministry of the “better” New Covenant is that of Mediator. Couple with this the statement of II Corinthians 3:6 (*RV*) where the same apostle tells us that we also are made “sufficient as ministers of a new covenant,” and we have the proper setting of the church in the entire picture; namely, that the church, with Jesus as its Head, are the executors, the ministers, or servants of the New Covenant, established for the express purpose of blessing the people who will come under that covenant arrangement.

The preparatory work for establishing the New Covenant began with the sacrificial ministry of Jesus. As students of the Bible we need always to guard against the human tendency of circumscribing God’s works by attempting to bring them within the scope of our own limited viewpoint. The establishment of the old Law Covenant at Sinai required, in all, but a few days, but the making of the New Covenant which takes its place has required, first, nearly two thousand years during which the preparatory sacrificial arrangements of the covenant are being carried out. Then will come the thousand years of Christ’s reign during which the terms of the covenant will be made known to the house of Israel and all nations, and upon the basis of that

knowledge the peoples of earth will be brought back into harmony with their Creator.

The apostle's lesson in II Corinthians 3, where he tells us that we are being made ministers of the New Covenant, indicates a two-fold ministry. First, there is the sacrificial phase of that ministry. As ministers of reconciliation with Jesus, we share in the sacrificial work of this preparatory age. Then there is the "glory" phase of the ministry, which Paul indicates was prefigured by the glory of Moses' countenance when he came down from Sinai bearing the tables of the Law. This glory, Paul shows, is as yet something for which the church merely hopes. (vss. 7-12) It is not now a reality. The work of the ministry while the church is still in the flesh is one of sacrifice and suffering. The ministry of the New Covenant in glory will follow the completion of the church when glorified together with Christ.

Paul's lesson of the typical and antitypical covenants as set forth in II Corinthians 3:3-12 refers to the tables of stone upon which the law of the old covenant was written. He explains that the church's ministry of the New Covenant is similar to the service rendered by those tables of stone. In verse 3 he compares those tables with the fleshly "tables of the heart" on which the law of the New Covenant—the law of love—is written. (vs. 3) A moment's reflection on the fact that the law of the old covenant was written on tables of stone before the covenant itself was established with the people should be sufficient to convince us that the New Covenant cannot be inaugurated until the Christians' "tables of the heart" are prepared and the church appears with Christ in glory—as was foreshadowed by Moses

coming down from the mount bearing the literal tables of stone.

Thus we see that the present work since Pentecost has been the writing of God's law in the hearts of those who, when in glory with Jesus, are to serve as able ministers of the New Covenant. This does not mean that the church is developed under that covenant, but rather, is now being prepared to administer its laws to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah, and through them to the whole world. An attorney who aids in making a contract or covenant between two or more parties must first acquaint himself thoroughly with the terms of the contract to be executed. Thus the church must do likewise in order to be properly qualified for her future work of reconciliation.

This preparatory work is beautifully foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Moses took the two tables of stone up into the mount, and we read, "The LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."—Exod. 34:5-7

This proclamation of God's glory has reflected in it all the elements of God's character as they are revealed to the church through God's plan of salvation for mankind. As this proclamation was made

to Moses, the law of God was written on, and testified by, the literal tables of stone. How clearly this foreshadows the work and purpose of God during this present age. Since Pentecost the Truth of God's plan has been proclaimed. Those who have heard it and responded in full consecration, yielding themselves to its hallowed influence, are having the righteousness of God, his law, written in their hearts. Thus they are being prepared to share with Christ in the work of enlightening and blessing the world under the New Covenant, even as the tables of stone in the hands of Moses bore the message of the Law to Israel under their covenant arrangement.

The great economy of God is seen in the fact that the proclaiming of the Truth, the Gospel message, is done by the church. Faithfulness in this calls for the laying down of life itself in sacrifice and service to the Lord. Thus it is that the sacrificial phase of the church's ministry of the New Covenant is utilized in preparation for the blessings of that covenant to be shed abroad to all mankind in the kingdom. Hence, the shed blood of Christ's sacrifice is said to be the blood of the New Covenant, which makes acceptable the sacrifice of those who will share with Christ in the administration of that covenant. (Luke 22:20, *RV*) Later, Jesus' blood will wipe away the sins of those who receive restitution to life under the terms of the New Covenant.—I John 2:2; John 1:29

FOR THIS CAUSE

A further corroborating explanation of the two-fold manner in which Christ's blood is the blood of the New Covenant is set forth in Hebrews 9:13-15.

The 13th and 14th verses show that the blood of Christ is for the purifying of our flesh in order that our service to God—which is a service preparatory to the New Covenant—might be acceptable. In verse 15 he adds: “And for this cause,” that is, purification from sin, “he is the mediator of the new testament [Greek: covenant], that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first [covenant], they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

The lesson here is plain. Not only does the blood of Christ purify the church, but for this cause, namely the purging of sins, Jesus will mediate the New Covenant in order that those who transgressed the law of the old covenant may also be purged of their sins. In this way the Jewish nation, whose people were “called” under the Law Covenant, will receive the fulfillment of the promise of eternal inheritance.

That this 15th verse is not describing the development of the true church under the New Covenant is obvious for the reason that the followers of the Master are not those who transgressed under the old Law Covenant, “the first testament [covenant].” Therefore, the expression, “those which are called,” is a reference to the Jewish nation. These were a called people, called to receive an eternal inheritance. In Romans 11:26-29, Paul discusses this same subject showing not only that the call of natural Israel is to be made good, but that this will be accomplished through the New Covenant, under which, as God promised, the sins of Israel will be taken away.

The purification of the church by the blood of the New Covenant has to do with preparing its servants. It does not mean that Christians are under that covenant. In Hebrews 9:9, referring to the high priest entering into the Most Holy once every year, the apostle says, "Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect." Indeed, that was one of the great weaknesses of the Law Covenant; the sacrifices then offered could not make its servants perfect. Having imperfect servants, the covenant could not produce the desired results on behalf of those who were served by it.

How different it will be with the New Covenant! Its servants are all to be perfect. Jesus, the great High Priest and Mediator, was already perfect; and through the merit of his perfect sacrifice, the church, his "brethren," are made "completely" one with him. (John 17:21-23, *International Standard Version*; Eph. 4:11-13) This is the preparatory work to the establishment of the New Covenant, which work has been in progress since the beginning of the Christian age at Pentecost—namely, the preparation and development of the New Covenant's future servants and ministers, those who will be given the "ministry of reconciliation."—II Cor. 5:18

The administration of the New Covenant will be in the hands of Jesus and his church, the spiritual phase of the kingdom in glory (Rev. 21:1,2) The final and complete establishment of that covenant with the people will mean that all mankind has been restored to perfect harmony and oneness with the Creator. The terms of the covenant will be inscribed,

as it were, in the very hearts of the people. They will be restored in mental, moral, and physical perfection to the image of God, in which Adam was originally created.—Gen. 1:26,27

At the end of the Messianic Age, the human race will be in a position of covenant relationship with God similar to that enjoyed by father Adam before he sinned. God's plan to bring about this work of restoration will have been completed. The blessings promised under the New Covenant will have been dispensed by Jesus and his church, who will have been brought forth under the Sarah feature of the Abrahamic covenant upon the basis of becoming part of the promised "seed" which will bless all mankind.

What a glorious prospect is thus held out to the followers of Jesus now! We still have the opportunity of proving our worthiness of being a part of the Isaac, or promised seed, class. Let us remember that we prove our worthiness of this exalted position in the divine program of reconciling a lost and sin-sick world upon the basis of our willingness to lay down our lives in sacrifice. May we be faithful to this great privilege, "even unto death."—Rev. 2:10 ■

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 Judith Csutor, New Haven, CT—September 10.
Age, 81

Paying Tithes to the Lord

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, ... and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”
—**Malachi 3:10**

THE WORD “TITHE” IS A translation of a Hebrew word used in the Old Testament meaning a “tenth.” The first time it appears in the Bible is in the narrative which tells of Abraham paying tithes to Melchisedec. (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:1-6) The next instance is where we are told that Jacob, after his vision at Luz, promises to give a tenth of his property to God in the event he should

reach his homeland in safety. (Gen. 28:22) There is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that either of these patriarchs had received specific instructions from the Lord concerning the proportion of their substance they should give. The Scriptures record no tithing law prior to that particular time; therefore, such giving was voluntary, not mandatory.

The next scriptural reference to tithing is when the law concerning it was enacted. A record of this

is found in Leviticus 27:30-33 and Numbers 18:26-28. In this law, the tenth of all increase was directed to be given to the Levites, who in turn were to give a tenth of what they received for the support of the high priest. This does not imply that the Levites were a specially favored clergy class, who lived without working. It should be remembered that the tribe of Levi was given no inheritance in the land when Canaan was divided by Joshua among the other tribes of Israel. (Num. 18:20-23) They were chosen to be the servants of the other tribes in things pertaining to God, and this was his way of making provision for them in order that they might be free to devote themselves fully to the Lord's work.

In God's law given to Israel no penalty was provided for those who failed properly to observe these tithing instructions. Apparently to a large extent it was made a voluntary matter. Nevertheless, as our opening text suggests, it seems likely that the Lord withheld blessings from the Israelites in proportion to their failure to live up to this law, even as he withheld his blessings on account of their unfaithfulness along other lines. This was based on the principle that if they drew nigh to him in faithfulness to their covenant, he in turn drew nigh to them by pouring out rich blessings for their peace and joy.—Deut. 28:1-47

NOT BINDING UPON CHRISTIANS

Tithing is not mentioned in the New Testament as a Christian obligation. It was still being practiced by Israel at the time of our Lord's first advent, for he refers to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who were so outwardly meticulous in their tithing and

yet their hearts were far from the Lord. (Luke 11:42; Matt. 23:23) In Hebrews 7:1-6, the apostle speaks of Abraham's paying tithes to Melchisedec, but otherwise the subject is not even mentioned in the New Testament. It is strange, therefore, that some Christian denominations impose tithing as mandatory upon their members.

For a religious organization to impose an arrangement of this kind upon believers with the claim that those who do not live up to it are disobeying God, is taking unfair advantage of the heart devotion of those who unsuspectingly are led to believe that tithing is a sacred obligation upon all Christians. All one needs to do, however, is to consult an exhaustive concordance of the Scriptures to learn that neither Jesus nor any of the apostles said a word about a requirement that Christians pay tithes for the support of the ministry.

AS GOD HAS PROSPERED

The Apostle Paul collected voluntary donations from the churches of Galatia for the benefit of poor brethren in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Writing to Corinth about this, Paul said, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (I Cor. 16:1,2) There is nothing here to indicate what proportion they were to lay aside, nor was the money to be used for the support of ministers in the church.

Earlier in this same epistle, I Corinthians 9:7-13, Paul writes that it was quite proper for those who served the brethren in spiritual things to have their physical needs provided by those whom they

served, yet he was not requiring the brethren to do this. Evidently Paul sensed a danger in accepting remuneration for preaching the Gospel, a danger that one might be tempted to preach in a manner to please those who paid for the service. (Acts 20:33-35) We believe that Paul's choice was a wise one. What should be especially noted, however, is that the discussion of this subject was a most logical occasion for reminding the brethren of their tithing obligations; yet he did not mention the subject.

We are not suggesting that regularity in giving to the service of the Lord is wrong. The effect of the tithing system upon Israel, had it been carried out faithfully by them, would have been to teach the people the spirit of generosity. It would have inculcated in them a realization of their obligations to God, and that all the blessings they enjoyed were manifestations of his loving-kindness toward them.

Regularity in giving by Christians should help to develop the same wholesome viewpoint toward the service of God and those who stand in need of that service. Systematic giving is a helpful discipline to any who thus contribute, increasing their interest in the cause they serve, and tending to decrease their selfishness and worldliness. What we are stressing is not that it is wrong to give, either a tenth, or a greater or lesser amount, but the fact that no divine law has been laid down for Christians to indicate how much they must give, and that if they do not give this amount they cannot be in good standing in the church of Christ.

Those who truly appreciate God's grace will seek to grow in love—giving being one of its many manifestations. The Christian whose heart is filled with

love will reason that if it was proper for Israelites according to the flesh to give a tenth of their incomes for the service of God and his people, it is much more proper for us who are the spiritual seed of Abraham, and who have been blessed so much more richly spiritually, than the natural seed, also to render an appropriate thank offering unto the Lord.

The attitude of the Christian in this matter was well expressed by David when he wrote, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?" (Ps. 116:12) As Christians, the more we consider this matter, the more we might properly be perplexed to know where our giving should end. The more our hearts learn to appreciate the blessings of divine favor which have been showered upon us, the more do we feel not only that a tenth would be too little to give, but a half would come far short of expressing the love that fills our hearts. Even our all would be wholly inadequate as an offering which could be used, as Peter states, to "shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I Pet. 2:9

GIVING OURSELVES

The Apostle Paul explains the sentiments of every true Christian when he writes: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (II Cor. 5:14,15) How powerful indeed is the influence of divine love in our hearts, transforming our viewpoint from that of wondering how little we can give,

to that of asking how much we have the privilege of giving! We are delighted when we find the answer in the Word of God that not only may we give all we have, but we are invited to give ourselves also, that our very lives may be presented to the Lord in sacrifice as an expression of our appreciation for all he has done for us.

Paul assures us that God will be pleased to accept such an offering. He writes: "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 [Greek: logical] service." (Rom. 12:1) Indeed, to devote all we have, and all we are, in sacrifice is the only reasonable and logical thing we can do in view of God's great mercy to us.

It was this wholehearted giving of everything that Jesus explained to the rich young ruler. "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast," Jesus said—not a tenth, not a half, but all—"and give to the poor." In addition, Jesus invited this young man to give himself: "Take up the cross, and follow me." (Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23) Nothing short of just such a full devotion of everything to the Lord is acceptable to him on the part of those who have given themselves to God in full consecration.

NO EARTHLY INHERITANCE

The Christian's full devotion of his all to the service of God is in keeping with the lessons foreshadowed by God's arrangements for the nation of Israel. After they left Egypt the whole tribe of Levi was selected to take the place of the firstborn class. (Num. 3:11-13) Paul, alluding to this, speaks of the "church of the firstborn, which are written in

heaven.” (Heb. 12:23) Inasmuch as the Levites were substituted for the firstborn, they in turn would also prefigure the “church of the firstborn.”

As previously noted, when the Israelites entered into the land of promise, and that land was divided among the tribes, the Levitical tribe received no inheritance—no portion of the land was given to them. Thus they foreshadowed those in this Gospel Age who give up their earthly inheritance, that their names may be “written [Greek: enrolled] in heaven,” which Paul says is true of the “church of the firstborn.” The apostle also wrote: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”—Col. 3:1-3

The whole tribe of Levi was set apart to serve the nation of Israel in things pertaining to God, and from that tribe the priesthood was selected—the high priest and the under priests. (Exod. 28:1; Num. 17:2,3; 18:1-7) Concerning the lesson thus brought to us, Peter writes, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer ... sacrifices acceptable to God.” “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood.”—I Pet. 2:5,9

In the Old Testament, Israel’s priests offered animals in sacrifice, but the priesthood of this age, of which Jesus is the Head, offer themselves: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, ... present your bodies a living sacrifice.” (Rom. 12:1) Peter declares that we can offer sacrifices “acceptable to God,” and Paul agrees that if we offer our bodies in sacrifice, they will be “holy, acceptable unto God.”

THE SACRIFICE OF ALL NOT MERELY A TENTH

Thus we can see why Christians do not need to decide what proportion of their means is to be given to the Lord. As pointed out in God's arrangements with Israel, and explained so clearly in the New Testament, it is not a matter of proportions, but of all. If we are aspiring to be a part of God's "peculiar people" [Greek: a people for God's possession], living stones who, if found faithful, will be part of his spiritual temple, and a part of his "royal priesthood," we will not put ourselves under the tithing law. Rather, we will be on the alert for ways and means of devoting as much as possible of our time, talents, resources, and strength to sacrifice in the divine cause in order that we may show our appreciation for his marvelous grace toward us.

It was this viewpoint of full devotion to the service of God of one's whole life and possessions that was instilled by the teachings and example of Jesus and the apostles. When the Master called his disciples to be "fishers of men," they knew the call meant the giving up of their regular fishing business. (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17) When Saul of Tarsus was converted on the road to Damascus and his commission was later outlined to him, he saw in it the privilege of devoting his entire life to the Gospel. (Phil. 3:7-11) To all of these early disciples, coming to a knowledge of God meant much more than merely the acceptance of a better religion.

WE ARE MADE STEWARDS

One very important consideration in this matter is that while we have the privilege of sacrificing ourselves in the service of God, we do not have the

privilege of sacrificing others. God accepts our sacrifice as though it could all be used directly in his service and makes us “stewards” of that which we have given to him. “It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful,” Paul writes. (I Cor. 4:2) The faithful discharge of our stewardship requires strict obedience to the regulations laid down in the Word of God as they relate to our earthly obligations. We are to provide for those dependent upon us, our families. (I Tim. 5:8) We are to love and cherish them. We are to provide for our own temporal necessities that we may not be a burden upon others. (II Thess. 3:8-10) These are legitimate, scriptural obligations which the Lord wants us, as stewards of what belongs to him, to meet before anything is used more directly in his service.

When we realize how the Lord wants us to use that which we have given to him, we might at first be discouraged by the thought that there is so little left to be used directly in his service. Whether time, talent, or resources, so much is often needed to meet our own obligations that we might reasonably wonder why the Lord is interested in that little which can be given wholly to him. However, the Bible again furnishes the solution by explaining that everything we do should be done as unto God. (I Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17,23) Thus we can say that the Lord accepts our earthly obligations as though they were for him directly, and he expects us, as his stewards, to meet these obligations—not for ourselves, but for him.

What a wonderful arrangement this is! It means that all our time and strength and means can be used in the divine service. The Lord wants us to be faithful in the discharge of all the obligations which he now counts as his, having accepted them as

mortgages on what we gave to him. To discharge these obligations wisely, and to use the remainder of our time, strength, and resources, be they little or much, directly in God's service and to his glory, is the true test of faithful stewardship.

LOVE AND LIBERTY

As stewards of what belongs to God, we are at liberty to use these things according to the dictates of our own conscience. However, if love fills our hearts we will seek "that God in all things may be glorified." (I Pet. 4:11) If we truly meant it when we gave all to the Lord, we will not now, as stewards of that which no longer belongs to us, use more of it than necessary, nor use it foolishly, in meeting obligations not directly associated with the service of the Lord. Instead, we will be impelled to use as much as we can of time, strength, and resources, directly for God, realizing all the while that there is often so little left for him.

There was no penalty attached to any failure of the Israelites to pay their tithes, yet in the Lord's providence, unfaithfulness on their part along any line resulted in material blessings being withheld from them. Whenever they lacked the good things which the Lord promised to them it was usually because they had failed to live up to their part of the covenant they had made with him. It is this that is referred to in our opening text. At the time of Malachi's prophecy the Israelites were not being blessed by God as they would like to have been, and the prophet is pointing out to them that they were to blame for this experience of leanness.

Through the prophet the Lord asked the Israelites to put him to the test, to prove him, and thus

find out for themselves that if they lived up to their obligations he would live up to his. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, ... and prove me now ... if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

The same principle operates in the case of the royal priesthood of this age. We have entered into a covenant with God which calls for the sacrifice of everything we have in his service, even our lives; but he does not compel us to fulfill that covenant. We are the ones who decide how that covenant should affect the use of that which we have given to him. No sudden penalty will fall upon our heads if we fail to do this or that. We are at liberty to demonstrate by our own course in life the degree of sincerity and devotion which fills our hearts.

While God does not attempt to enforce covenant obligations of full consecration, he does take note of our daily walk, which indicates to him the measure of our love and appreciation of his mercies and blessings. Most assuredly, as God watched over Israel to give earthly blessings in proportion to their faithfulness, so he is watching over us to bestow spiritual blessings as we demonstrate our worthiness of them by paying our "vows" unto him.—Ps. 116:14

Are we rich in the Spirit of the Lord? Are our souls fat with his loving-kindness? Are we growing in grace and love as well as in knowledge? Can we see the smile of God's countenance beaming his love upon us, and is that smile so bright that it cheers us even when we are passing through fiery trials? If we are rejoicing in these blessings which can be ours only through the grace of God, it is because

we are carrying out our part of the covenant of sacrifice into which we have entered with him.

We are to realize also that it is not for us to decide who among us are living up to their vow to the Lord in these matters. Our examination should only be of self. We can rest in the assurance that the “Lord knoweth them that are his.” (II Tim. 2:19) We can be assured also that if we are faithful to our covenant, no good spiritual blessing will be withheld from us; that we will not be permitted to stumble and fall; and that no matter how great our trials may be, we will be given grace sufficient for every time of need.—Ps. 84:11; Heb. 4:14-16

If we are not being blessed by this rich portion of divine grace, then it is well that we examine ourselves and rededicate our life to God and to his service. Those who thus renew their consecration will no longer find themselves more interested in worldly riches than in the spiritual blessings which flow into the hearts and lives of God’s faithful stewards. They will find that the life of sacrifice and the “light affliction, which is but for a moment,” resulting from true faithfulness to the Lord, are of little consequence compared with the spiritual joys of the present consecrated life, and fade completely into insignificance when compared with the “eternal weight of glory” to follow. (II Cor. 4:17) Even as God promised to natural Israel, we too will find that if we are faithful to the terms of our consecration, the windows of heaven will indeed be opened for us, and the spiritual blessings of peace and joy will be so rich and so abundant that they will not only fill our own hearts, but overflow to the joy of others. ■

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, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752. A visit will be arranged whenever possible.

T. Krupa		Florence, Italy	10-12
Turin, Italy	October 4-6	Trento, Italy	19,20
Milan, Italy	9	Chereng, France	30,31

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

G. Balko		T. Malinowski	
Orlando, FL	October 26,27	Agawam, MA	October 13
M. Kerry		D. Rice	
South Africa	October 12	South Africa	October 12
T. Krupa		J. Trzeciak	
Agawam, MA	October 13	Orlando, FL	October 26,27

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

OCTOBER 3—"Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them."—Psalm 119:165 (Z. '04-24 Hymn 233)

OCTOBER 10—"Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."—Colossians 3:9,10 (Z. '04-25 Hymn 42)

OCTOBER 17—"He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust."—Psalm 91:4 (Z. '04-75 Hymn 361)

OCTOBER 24—"And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, ... and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus."—Luke 23:26 (Z. '04-155 Hymn 359)

OCTOBER 31—"Because thy lovingkindness [favor] is better than life, my lips shall praise thee."—Psalm 63:3 (Z. '01-246 Hymn 324)

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, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

SOUTH AFRICA CONVENTION, October 12—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact A. M. Forjindam. Email: foalex@gmail.com

AGAWAM CONVENTION, October 13—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001. For hotel accommodations, contact M. Wardak. Phone: (413) 789-6198 or Email: mtwardak@verizon.net. For all other information, contact F. Sansom. Phone: (860) 861-6881 or Email: elshaddai144k@sbcglobal.net

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 26,27—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—South Seminole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli. Phone: (321) 442-1862 or Email: jkuenzli@cfl.rr.com

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, November 2,3—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Farchione. Phone: (414) 324-9667 or Email: debfarchione@aol.com

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 10—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—NEW LOCATION—Elks Lodge, 175 School Street, Hamden, CT 06518. Contact M. Lacombe. Phone: (203) 910-3091 or Email: merrilylacombe@hotmail.com

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 23,24—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Brand. Email: blatbrand@aol.com

IBADAN THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, December 7,8—IN PERSON ONLY—Ibadan Place of Fellowship, Coca Cola Mokola, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: +2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

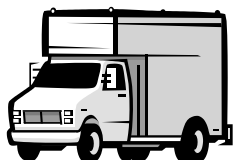
CHICAGO CONVENTION, December 28,29—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Doubletree by Hilton, 3003 Corporate West Drive, Lisle, IL 60532. Contact T. Blackwell. Email: secretary@chicagobible.org, or contact M. Neiman. Phone: (630) 740-0900

PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 18,19—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Fountain Hills Community Center, 13001 N. La Montana Drive, Fountain Hills, AZ 85268. Contact A. Mengos. Phone: (480) 390-3767 or Email: samengos@yahoo.com

AUSTRALIAN GENERAL CONVENTION, January 24-26—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Charlton. Phone: WhatsApp +61429172606 or Email: randscharlton@bigpond.com

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 14-16—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Phone: (916)923-1100. Contact K. Freer. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 1-3—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Winter Park Masonic Lodge, 1495 Grand Road, Winter Park, FL 32792. Contact J. Benson. Phone: (860) 884-8168 or Email: jonathanandjewel@gmail.com



MOVING?

If you are moving, please let us know six weeks before you move so that we can change the address on your Dawn subscription.