

God Is Light

***“God is light, and
in him is no
darkness at all.”
—I John 1:5***

IN OCTOBER 2001 THERE was published a feature article in the *National Geographic Magazine* advertised as “*Light: Dazzling Enigma*” on its front cover. The article actually was entitled, “*The Power of Light*,” and 29 pages were devoted to the

subject. All people should be impressed with the marvelous nature of this amazing phenomenon of energy. A few excerpts from the article appear below. The author began by saying:

“Light is more than a little bit inscrutable. Modern physics has sliced the stuff of nature into ever smaller and more exotic constituents, but light won’t reduce. Light is light—pure, but not simple. No one is exactly sure how to describe it. A wave? A particle? Yes, the scientists say. Both.

“It is a measure of light’s importance in our daily lives that we hardly pay any attention to it. Light is almost like air. It’s a given. A human would no more linger over the concept of light than a fish would ponder the notion of water.

“There are exceptions, certain moments of sudden appreciation when a particular manifestation of light, a transitory glory, appears—a rainbow, a sunset, a pulse of heat lightning in a dark sky, the shimmering surface of the sea at twilight, the dappled light in a forest, the little red dot from a professor’s laser pointer. Stained glass in a church, backlit by a bright sky.

“Usually, though, we don’t see light, we merely see with it. You can’t appreciate the beauty of a rose if you ponder that the color red is just the brain’s interpretation of a specific wavelength of light with crests that are roughly 700 nanometers apart.”

LIGHT’S DIVERSITY

The author then reflected on the worries he had in writing about such a subject both from the technical knowledge he lacked to having it be a

news-breaking story. On the latter concern he expressed how wrong he was, saying:

“Try an Internet search under the keyword ‘photonics.’ A photon is what you call light when it’s behaving like a subatomic particle. Photons, it turns out, are a hot commodity. They are replacing electrons—we know them from grade school as the negatively charged particles that orbit the nuclei of atoms—as the favorite tool of modern industry for transmitting information.

“Light is now used for everything from laser eye surgery to telephone technology. The potential military applications of light are straight out of science fiction, and within a decade light may be the preferred weapon for zapping hostile missiles out of the sky. Light could even become the preeminent power source for long-distance space travel. The spaceship would have an ultrathin sail to catch the ‘wind’ of light beamed from an Earth-based laser. In theory such a craft could accelerate to a sizable fraction of the speed of light—without carrying fuel.

“The more you look at the topic, the more you realize that our lives are built around light, that our daily existence is continuously shaped—and made vivid—by that ambiguous stuff that dates from the beginning of time. From our technology to our spirituality, we are creatures of light.”

SCIENTISTS EXPLORE LIGHT

The article then went on to explain work done by scientists to define light in trying to answer the question “What is light exactly?” No one really knows, but as described by the author, he said:

“Here we come to one facet of the miracle of light. It has no volume. And photons have no charge, so in the process of being concentrated into a very small space, they don’t repulse each other as negatively charged electrons do.”

The author then wrote about our forefathers and how they tried to understand the phenomenon of light. It wasn’t until Sir Isaac Newton made certain proposals that there was any accepted theories. Concerning Newton’s proposals the article said:

“Newton believed that light was particulate—‘multitudes of unimaginable small and swift corpuscles of various sizes, springing from shining bodies at great distances one after another.’ Newton was such a

giant on the scientific landscape that his rivals had little luck pushing the theory that light is a wave. The wave theory did not begin to rebound until the titans of 19th-century science joined the battle to understand light and overwhelmingly came down on the side of waves. It was James Clerk Maxwell, a Scot, who in the 1860's made one of the most essential breakthroughs. He had been studying electricity and magnetism and realized that they propagated through space at—coincidence?—the speed of light. Light, he concluded, is an 'electromagnetic' wave.

“The particle versus wave debate wound up with a kind of truce, governed by quantum mechanics: Light is produced by changes in the energy level of electrons. Light moves through space as a wave, but when it encounters matter it behaves like a particle. It simply doesn't fit into one of our neat little categories. 'Light, indeed, is different from anything else we know,' writes Sidney Perkowitz, a physicist at Emory University and the author of *'Empire of Light.'*”

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

The author then reviewed briefly work done by the great scientists of our time such as Max Planck, Albert Einstein, Albert Michelson, and Edward Morley to help define light. Most of their findings led to “permanent uncertainty” and “head scratching implications” and what light is and does continues to be awesome and mysterious. Albert Michelson and Edward Morley did conduct experiments to establish the speed of light which they found to be an imponderable 186,000 miles per second and constant under all of their test conditions. It was Sir Isaac Newton that found white light to be composed of different colors. Scientists know now that white light is composed of all the different wavelengths of ultra violet rays to infra red rays. Another scientist, Charles Towne, who, together with Arthur Schawlow, developed the technique that led to 'light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation' which we know as the acronym, *laser*. Light normally spreads out rapidly in all directions. A laser coheres the light in a narrow beam. This makes light strong and straight and what it will lead to remains yet to be seen.

LIGHT A SYMBOL OF GOD

From this article, we learn that light still is an unknown. It is a tremendous form of energy. It contains all the spectrum of color. It can

penetrate everywhere and in all directions at tremendous speed. It is a fitting symbol, therefore, of the omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of the great supreme Creator of the universe, the God which we worship and call our Father in heaven.

In the Bible, God, the Father, is associated with light. As the Apostle John has described him in our key text, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5) As remarkable as is the phenomenon of light as we know it, mainly emanating from the sun, so much more remarkable is the light which emanates from the Father. The Apostle Paul aptly described this specific light when he said of God, “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.” (1 Tim. 6:16) It is a light no man can approach unto. It is so dazzling that no man can see it. It was told to Moses that this light no man could see and live.—Exod. 33:20

FATHER OF LIGHTS

None of us can comprehend the vast amount of energy possessed by God, our Father. Truly he is the “Father of lights” as described by the Apostle James who said, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17) When the Apostle James describes God as the ‘Father of lights,’ we are reminded of the creative epochs when God was preparing the earth for man’s habitation and for that of other living creatures. The Bible tells us that as God began this work “the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” (Gen. 1:2) As the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, God said, “Let there be light: and there was light.” (vs. 3) There has been much speculation as to what light appeared. Some think that it was from the sun. Yet, to a person standing on the surface of the earth the sunlight did not penetrate to the surface of the earth until the fourth creative epoch. (vss. 14-19) It has been suggested that the light which appeared in that first creative epoch was the electromagnetic energy released by the materials assembled by God to form the earth’s surface—the release of photons from the electrons of matter. The period started in darkness and ended in light. We note that God “called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.—vss. 4,5

All the successive epochs of Creation followed the same pattern, starting as a night (darkness) and ending as a day (light). Each epoch began in darkness but ended with light. How appropriately James calls Jehovah, the Father of lights. Each epoch ends with a marvelous release of electromagnetic energy that accomplished the Creator's purposes.

THE FIRST CREATION OF GOD

Before God started to prepare the earth for habitation, his first direct creation was that of the *Logos* (God's spokesman). The Apostle John tells us of this relationship in his Gospel when he writes, "In a beginning was the Word [*Logos*], and the Word [*Logos*] was with the God, and a god was the Word [*Logos*]." (John 1:1, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott, Interlinear*). Then, speaking further of the *Logos*, John says, "Through it every thing was done; and without it not even one thing was done, which has been done." (vs. 3, *WED*) John continues and says, "In it was Life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shone in the darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not.—vss. 4,5, *WED*

JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

One would expect that God's first creation would be likened to light, even as God is light. This was so. When the *Logos* worked with the Father in the works of Creation, and in preparing the earth for habitation, the darkness always ended as light in each epoch. A perfect environment was created for man and he was not only given life, but he also was in the light. Man's disobedience changed all of that. The earth became a place of darkness all over again. As described by the prophet Isaiah, "Darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples." (Isa. 60:2, *New International Version*) Hence, when the *Logos* was made flesh (John 1:14) and came to earth as a man, he shone in this darkness as a light. (vs. 5) When Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was moved by God's Holy Spirit to prophesy concerning the work that his son would do, he said, among other things, that John would prepare the way for Jesus as the Messiah "by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death"—Luke 1:78,79 *NIV*

This prophecy was fulfilled. Jesus came as the light of the world. The Bible uses light to not only symbolize God in all his attributes and characteristics, but also to represent the goodness of God and his

righteous commandments. Whereas, darkness is used to represent sin, evil, and all unrighteousness that leads to permanent darkness or death. Jesus testified of himself, “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12) He had come to earth to show them the Father, who is light. Being the express image of the Father he, too, was a great light that had come into the darkness of this world. As Jesus said, “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Furthermore, Jesus had come to provide a ransom for all mankind that they all might be released from the darkness of death.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT

Those that become footstep followers of Jesus become known as the children of the light, as the Apostle Paul said, “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.” (I Thess. 5:5) When Jesus spoke to the people of how the Son of man had to be lifted up (speaking of his forthcoming crucifixion), the people were puzzled and asked “How sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?” (John 12:34) Our Lord’s reply was, “Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.”—vss. 35,36

Jesus further said “He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”—vss. 44-50

WALK IN THE LIGHT

This, then, was the great objective Jesus had in coming to the darkness of this earth. It was to reveal to man the Father of lights. He did so by being the same light as the Father. His character was like that of the

Father. Therefore, he like the Father, was the light of the world. He did so by speaking of God's commandments and explaining them to us. In this manner also he shone as a bright light, even as the Father's commandments are a bright light. He also was sent on a mission to find those who are described by the Apostle James as "a people for his [God's] name" (Acts 15:14), or, the church class. These would be associated with him in God's kingdom as God's special representatives and would live and reign with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4) But first they would need to prove their faithfulness by walking in the light, following Jesus. And finally, Jesus came to earth to become man's Redeemer, and to liberate all mankind from the darkness of death into the light of life.

What a great privilege has been that of the Lord's people to become children of light. By accepting the invitation of Jesus to follow him and thus, walking in the light, they become children of the light. They learn of him and conform their lives to be like him. They are willing to suffer with him and are promised that if they do so faithfully to the end, that they will reign with him. As the Apostle Peter has suggested, let us "Shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I Peter 2:9

Dawn Bible Students Association

The Beginning of the Gospel

***Key Verse: “There came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
—Mark 1:11***

***Selected Scripture:
Mark 1:1-45***

OUR LESSON BEGINS AT the time our Lord turned thirty years of age. Jesus had come to John the Baptist and had been immersed in the Jordan River. The Gospel of Mark begins by saying, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” (Mark 1:1) The word ‘gospel’ means the announcing of good news. This good news was that the Messiah, the Son of God, had come to fulfill his Father’s plans and purposes.

In verses two through eight, we find a reference to Isaiah’s message regarding the sending of John the Baptist to prepare the people for the coming of Christ. The prophecy said, “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”—Isa. 40:3-5

The arrival of Jesus, and his baptism by John at the Jordan River, was the fulfillment of this prophecy. When Jesus came up out of the water the account states, “The heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove” descended upon him. (Mark 1:10) In the words of our Key Verse, “There came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”—vs. 11

What had been prophesied by various prophets was now to have fulfillment. Isaiah prophesied concerning the purpose of Jesus coming (Isa. 61:1-3), and the prophet Malachi called our Lord the “messenger of the covenant.”—Mal. 3:1

John the Baptist pointed out that his baptism was with water, a symbol of the washing away of the sins against the Law, but that Jesus would

baptize with the Holy Spirit, symbol of the begetting to a new life. “A new and living way” was about to open. (Heb. 10:20) Baptism into the death of Christ was indeed a ‘new and living way,’ one which would lead to “glory and honour and immortality.”—Rom. 2:7; II Pet. 1:4

After our Lord’s baptism and his receiving of the Holy Spirit, he went into a mountain to pray, and meditate upon what his Father’s will would be for him and his ministry. Jesus was forty days without food and water, and was tested regarding his fidelity to God by the Devil. He overcame these tests through the aid of the Holy Spirit, quoting from God’s Word.—Matt. 4:1-11

Meanwhile, John had been shut up in prison for his faithfulness to God’s Word and later beheaded by Herod. (Luke 9:9) We read that Jesus then began his ministry by preaching the “gospel of the kingdom of God.” (Mark 1:14) This Gospel was indeed the ‘good news’ of a coming kingdom of peace and righteousness, under the rulership of Jesus and his body members.—Acts 17:31; Rev. 20

Our Lord called the first of his apostles, Peter and Andrew—fishermen. Jesus told them in the call that he would make of them, “fishers of men.” (Mark 1:17) Following this he called James and John. This was truly the beginning of the Gospel, the good news.

Dawn Bible Students Association

|

Jesus Calls Sinners

***Key Verse: “When
Jesus heard it, he
saith unto them, They
that are whole have
no need of the
physician, but they
that are sick: I came
not to call the
righteous, but sinners
to repentance.”
—Mark 2:17***

***Selected Scripture:
Mark 2:1 – 3:6***

TODAY’S LESSON DEALS with a miracle of our Lord, the healing of a palsied man. Jesus had come to Capernaum. Wherever our Lord went great crowds of people followed, hoping that their loved ones, sick with various diseases, might be healed. Earlier our Lord had healed a man stricken with leprosy.—Mark 1:40-42

Our Lord had entered into a house of the city to preach. The crowds of people were so great many were not able to get into the house; they stood outside and in the doorway. The friends of a palsied man brought him to see Jesus. When they could not get to Jesus they climbed to the roof and tearing part of it away they let the bed down on which the man lay. (Mark 2:4) Jesus recognized the faith of those who would go to such lengths to have their loved one healed, and he said, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”—vs. 5

Immediately, hearing Jesus’ words, the scribes indignantly reasoned in their hearts, “Who can forgive sins but God only?” (vs. 7) Jesus knew their thoughts and heart condition and replied, “Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?”—vss. 8,9

Jesus could read the hearts of the scribes and knew that the only way to demonstrate his power and authority would be to heal the man with palsy. He said to him, “Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.” (vs. 11) Immediately he arose and went forth, and all were amazed and glorified God.

In Hebrews 11:1 we find that faith is “The substance [understanding] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” This was the case of the man with palsy. He felt sure that Jesus could heal him, and his friends were also sure. The apostle reminds us that “without faith it is impossible to please him [God], for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”—Heb. 11:6

Later, our Lord sat at dinner with his disciples, and many publicans and sinners. The scribes and Pharisees saw this and again were indignant. Turning to Jesus’ disciples they said, “How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?” (Mark 2:16) How self-righteous these were!

Hearing this, Jesus said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”—Mark 2:17

All are sinners from their birth (Ps. 51:5), all are in need of the only physician that can truly heal the sick and dying race. This physician is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In the Matthew account of the healing of the man with palsy, Jesus added this statement to his words about the physician, “Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”—Matt. 9:13

There is no gift greater than that of mercy. Let us learn well the lessons found in the healing of the man with palsy and of those who ate with sinners.

The Power of Jesus

Key Verse: “They feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”
—Mark 4:41

Selected Scriptures:
Mark 4:36-41; 5:2-13

OUR LESSON FOR TODAY begins with Jesus at the shore of Galilee. The Lord had been giving the multitudes parables teaching various practical lessons. Now our Lord decided to go to the other side of the lake. Other little ships followed his. A storm arose causing those on board to fear for their life. The ship was filling with water and would sink if something was not done.

Jesus had gone into the hold of the ship and was fast asleep. Fearing that all lives would be lost the disciples woke him saying, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” Jesus then got up, “rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” Turning to his disciples Jesus said, “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?”—Mark 4:38-40

In our last lesson we learned how important faith is. The disciples had witnessed the power of Jesus in curing a leper, and a man with palsy but they were still skeptical when it seemed that they would all lose their life in the storm. At one point the apostles asked Jesus, “Lord, Increase our faith.” (Luke 17:5) This is a proper prayer but is one that must be acted upon. We cannot ask the Lord to stop all the storms of life, but to give us the wisdom and grace to accept what God allows. The disciples should have realized that our Lord was in danger too and could have asked him for direction, but instead said, ‘Master, carest thou not that we perish?’

Jesus’ gentle rebuke is a reminder that whatever God allows to come into our life we need to rely on faith and trust in him. The disciples were astonished at the power of our Lord to calm even the wild wind and waves of the sea.

After arriving safely on the other side of the lake, a man with a demon approached our Lord. No one had been able in the past to capture and

hold him. He lived in the mountain caves and was forever crying out and cutting himself with stones.—Mark 5:1-5

This demon-possessed man knew our Lord and his power, and running to him and worshipping him, he said, “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.” (vs. 7) The word ‘torment’ from the Greek text has the thought of going to the bottom, or to put out of existence. This demon knew that Jesus had the power to destroy him. Jesus called for the demon to go out of the man and then asked him what his name was. The reply was “Legion,” meaning that there were many demons. (vs. 9) These demons asked that Jesus allow them to enter into a large herd of swine. When these demons went into the swine, they all ran over a cliff into the sea below and perished. (Mark 5:13) The demons in this account are the angels who sinned and will eventually have their day of judgment.—Jude 6

The power displayed by Jesus in this account should have increased the faith of the disciples and all of God’s people. The disciples were awed at his power to cause the wind to stop blowing, and still the waves. Violent weather causes havoc and misery, and power to control such forces is impossible for man. The power to control spirit beings is more awesome. Such was the power of Jesus.

Dawn Bible Students Association

Mission Accomplished

***Key Verse: “Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”
—Mark 6:4***

***Selected Scripture:
Mark 6:1-13***

AFTER JESUS HAD RETURNED to Capernaum from the other side of the sea, he traveled back to his hometown of Nazareth with his disciples. As was usual, our Lord entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day and began to preach. Those hearing him were astonished at his wisdom. They said from where did this man get this knowledge, and what wisdom is this that has been given him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands.—Mark 6:1-2

Those in the synagogue recognized Jesus as one brought up in the house of a lowly carpenter. They recognized him only as any other human, son of Mary. None knew him as the “Son of God.”—Luke 1:26-35; Matt. 1:18-25

Disbelief and jealousy had taken over those in the synagogue and we read they were “offended at him.” (vs. 3) As often happens even today, unless one goes to a seminary to learn the Bible there is disbelief as to the abilities of any one understanding the Bible. Often in one’s own home there is jealousy of one able to expound the Scriptures. In Jesus’ case the only recognition was that of a lowly carpenter’s son, one unlearned in the religious schools.

Our Lord recognized the situation and simply replied a known fact, “A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.” (vs. 4) We read that Jesus could do no mighty work, except healing a few of the sick. (vs. 5) We might have supposed that the ability to heal the sick would have changed the hearts of those in unbelief but not even this changed the sentiments toward him. It is stated that “he marvelled because of their unbelief.”—vs. 6

What was our Lord's reaction to their unbelief? He moved on to other villages in his area and taught them. We find the lesson the same for all God's people. Matthew 10:11-14 gives specific instructions to any preaching God's Word. Do not force the message of Truth on anyone; go peaceably, but leave if any do not wish to hear your words.

In verses seven through thirteen we have our Lord sending out the apostles, two by two. The instructions given here are worthy of note. They were not to take scrip, (a purse to carry money in) not even any money or food. However they were to wear shoes and only one coat. This commandment meant that they were to be dependent upon the wisdom and guidance of God. They were to leave the place of their abode in God's hands.

Much misunderstanding has been given to this scripture. The proper thought in any case when witnessing to God's Word is not to be concerned with one's own comforts but be zealous in doing God's will.

We are told "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (II Tim. 4:2) This lesson teaches the preaching of the good news at the cost of rejection.

The people of Israel were the first to hear the gospel message. If they responded, they would be considered for a place in the body of Christ. As the Apostle John wrote later, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:12) Most of them did not recognize the great Prophet in their midst.

Dawn Bible Students Association

Impurity Comes from Within

Key Verse: “From within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and they defile a man.”

—Mark 7:21-23, Revised Standard Version

Selected Scripture: Mark 7:1-23

WHEREVER OUR LORD went the scribes and Pharisees followed him, trying to find some fault that they might accuse him. They saw some of the disciples eating with unwashed hands. There was a tradition of the elders always to wash hands before eating. When they went to the market they washed their hands. Also there was the tradition of washing of cups, pots, brazen vessels, and even the tables. However, looking into the Law there was nothing regarding the washing of hands, or of any instrument before eating; these were, as Jesus said, the “commandments of men.”—Mark 7:7

Speaking of those who demanded these ceremonial washings we read, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.” (Prov. 30:12) The Jewish leaders were of this kind, pure in

their own eyes while condemning others. The Apostle Paul wrote, “We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.”—II Cor. 10:12,13, *New International Version*

It is written, “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” (Prov. 23:7) With this we find that the thoughts are the seeds of the deeds. Jesus went on to describe all the evils that come out of the heart of man. These evils would be appalling were it not for the antidote given in the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul said we are to develop the fruits and graces of the Spirit,

which are, “peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”—Gal. 5:22,23

Jesus gathered all the people around him and gave them the lesson. He said, “There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.” (Mark 7:15) The disciples came to Jesus asking him an answer regarding the parable. They should have understood, but did not. Our Lord said, “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.” (vs. 16) Jesus then said, “Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught? ... That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.”—vss. 18-20

The lesson becomes clear—hear the instruction of the Lord and act upon it. Self-righteousness has no place in the life of Christians. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23) Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, by their traditions they make “the word of God of none effect.” (vs. 13) Jesus then went on to describe all the evils that can come out from man, as they are listed in the words of our key verse. These will corrupt him if not seen and corrected. Such evils are from Satan, who is the Father and instigator of the evil thoughts of man.

Dawn Bible Students Association

The High Thoughts of God

***“My thoughts are not
your thoughts,
neither are your ways
my ways, saith the
LORD. For as the
heavens are higher
than the earth, so are
my ways higher than
your ways, and my
thoughts than your
thoughts.”
—Isaiah 55:8,9***

IN OUR TEXT THE LORD tells us that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts higher than our thoughts, and his ways than our ways. In this respect the situation is somewhat similar to that which exists between adults and children, except that the superiority of God’s thoughts over ours is vastly greater than that of grownups over children.

All who are familiar with the art of teaching know that in conveying thoughts to the mind of a child illustrations are very helpful, whether the illustrations be in story or picture form. An infant learns the meaning of the word round much more quickly when illustrated by a ball or a circle. The word orange takes on a definite meaning when the child sees its color, its shape, and enjoys its odor and taste.

These are simple illustrations, but they have to be simple in order that a child may grasp the thoughts which the adult endeavors to convey to its immature mind. We do not think that we would be straining the comparison to say that the most mature minds, and those possessing the greatest intelligence in the world of grownups, are but as infants before God. Surely this must be true if, as our text declares, his thoughts are higher than our thoughts ‘as the heavens are higher than the earth.’

We can readily perceive the problem involved in our being able to understand the high thoughts of God. Indeed, we would not be able to understand them at all except as he has associated them with objects with which we are at least partially acquainted.

All language is largely pictorial. The word city, for example, would convey no meaning to our minds except as we associate it with a

concentration of people living in a relatively small area, and with their homes, office buildings, factories, which help to make up what the word city means to us.

ON THE HUMAN PLANE

God created man in his own image; endowing him with the ability to think, to reason, to know right from wrong. But, with us, these qualities of the Creator are all limited to this earthly realm of existence. Man's ability to reason is confined to what he can see, feel, hear, taste, and smell. He might increase the scope of his vision by a telescope, or enlarge it with a microscope; he might send the sound of his words around the world by the use of electronics, and by these scientific means enlarge the sphere in which he can reason, but still his reasoning is limited to a material cosmos.

This being true, it should at once become apparent that in order that the Creator may convey to us his thoughts relating to his human creation, he must speak to us in language within the limitations of our understanding. This is the reason, then, that the language of the Bible is human which has its roots of understanding relating to material, mundane things and objects with which we humans are acquainted.

Our plainest speech is in reality largely pictorial, for nearly every word uttered conjures up in the mind of the hearer an object which gives meaning to our speech. This is true even with the literal language of the Bible. But besides this literal language, which is itself pictorial, the Lord has purposely used objects and creatures of various sorts, possessing characteristics known to man as symbols, or illustrations, to help us grasp some of his high thoughts relative to his plan for human salvation.

In almost all languages, words which are not directly anchored to some particular object or thing frequently undergo changes in meaning. Thus the word peculiar originally meant something special, or extraordinary, and this still is one of its meanings; but more frequently today this word is used to convey the idea of being odd, or queer. But the material things of Creation, and the phenomena of nature which the Lord uses in his Word to illustrate his high thoughts, never change. From this standpoint, the Bible speaks the same language to the Lord's people today that it did to his ancient people.

In the symbology of the Bible, we find that the Lord has used the sun, moon, stars, clouds, storms, rain, mountains, hills, valleys, rivers, oceans, trees, grass, rocks, wheat, tares, and the earth. In the animal kingdom he has used sheep, goats, lions, leopards, bears, foxes, serpents, dragons. These do not change their characteristics from century to century.

The sun, with its warming, healing rays, and its blistering heat on the desert sands, is exactly as it was when the Lord caused the writers of the Bible to use it for certain illustrative purposes. Sheep have not changed, nor have goats. Their characteristics today are just as they were when Jesus said in a parable that he would divide the people as a “shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” (Matt. 25:31,32) The same is true of all the illustrations employed in the Word of God.

In some instances the Lord has explained the meaning of the illustrations he uses. At other times the intent of the symbol is so obvious that no explanation is needed. Indeed, in many instances an explanation would destroy the beauty and force of the intended lesson. How apparent, for example, is the meaning of the language employed in the twenty-third Psalm, “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.”—vss. 1-3

There are also those beautiful illustrative expressions in the ninety-first Psalm, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.” (vss. 1,2) Again, “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”—vs. 4

All are well-acquainted with the fact that water is used for cleansing purposes, so no explanation of the symbol is needed when the apostle speaks of our being sanctified and cleansed with the “washing of water by the word.” (Eph. 5:26) How clearly the idea is thus conveyed to us that God’s Word of Truth acts as a cleansing power in the lives of those who obediently yield to its sanctifying influence!

On the other hand, water is also necessary to life, so at times it is employed in the Bible to illustrate the life-giving power of the Word. In

this use of the symbol, the Bible speaks of the “river of water of life.”—Rev. 22:1

The known characteristics of fire make it a suitable symbol of destruction. In this association, fire is employed in the Bible to picture the destruction of a social order; the destruction of the willfully wicked; and the destruction of the “wood, hay, [and] stubble” of Christian character. (I Cor. 3:12) But what grossly wrong ideas have been taken from the Bible through a failure to realize that fire is never a preservative in which conscious life is maintained, and the living ones tortured!

Reading the high thoughts of God correctly, as he has portrayed them in his Word by picture language, requires our considering carefully the natural and apparent characteristics of the things used to convey those thoughts. For example, there is Jesus’ parable of the wheat and the tares. (Matt. 13:24-30,36-43) many have supposed that the “wheat” in this parable represents Christians, and that the “tares” are a symbol of sinners.

But this view fails to take into consideration that, in reality, tares bear a very close similarity to wheat, and that the two are used in the parable to represent, on the one hand, the true followers of the Master, and on the other, those who are merely his professed followers—wearing merely a veneer of Christianity. These lose their identity as Christians.

In explaining this parable, Jesus said that the ‘wheat’ were the “children of the kingdom,” and the ‘tares’ the “children of the wicked one,” that is, the Devil. The ‘children of the kingdom’ are such because they are begotten of and enthused by their hope of the kingdom, and their prospect of participating with Jesus in the work of the kingdom. The tares are ‘children of the wicked one,’ not because they are immoral and unregenerate, for they are often quite the opposite, but because they hold to the erroneous teachings of the “prince of this world” (John 12:31), and their lives are governed by these teachings.

HEAVENS AND EARTH

In the natural realm a very close and significant relationship exists between the heavenly bodies which we refer to in a general way as the heavens, and the earth. All life on the earth is subject more or less to the influences of the heavens—our seasons, atmospheric conditions, and tides, being controlled thereby.

Thus the literal heavens and earth are a fitting illustration of the fact that human associations, or civilizations, are influenced by higher, or spiritual, powers. For this reason the Bible describes the social order, or cosmos, which existed before the Flood as consisting of a “heavens” and an “earth.” The Bible also speaks of a ‘heavens’ and ‘earth’ which has existed since the Deluge; and also of the “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (II Pet. 3:6,7,13) This latter will, in reality, be the spiritual and human phases of the kingdom of Christ.

The sun and the moon, in their relationship to each other, are sometimes used in the Bible to illustrate the light of the Gospel, and the reflected light of the Law as given to Israel, together with the types and shadows of their Tabernacle services. Because of its warming and healing powers, the sun is also used in the Bible as a symbol of the healing power of Christ when enthroned in his kingdom for the purpose of restoring the human race to health and life. The Prophet Malachi wrote in this connection that “the Sun of righteousness [shall] arise with healing in his wings.”—Mal. 4:2

Dawn Bible Students Association

The Life and Resurrection of Christ

THE APOSTLE JOHN saw a vision of Jesus after his resurrection, and Jesus said to him, “Do not fear, I am the first and last and living one, I became dead, and lo, living am I unto the Ages of the Ages.”—Rev. 1:17,18, *Rotherham*

In the previous verses John is found describing the one whom he saw in the vision and was overwhelmed with the unexpected appearance of his visitor. It is not surprising that John should have been troubled and fearful at the sight of one whose head and hair were white as snow, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, his countenance as the sun shining in his strength, his feet like hot brass in a fire, and his voice as of many waters. Seeing this, he became completely overpowered.

It is probable that the vision was designed to impress upon the mind of John, and indeed of all the followers of Christ Jesus, a sense of the majesty and glory of such a visitor, and thus to appreciate the authoritative character and the importance of the message John was to receive, which was to be sent to the particular churches mentioned by the voice.

The effect upon John was the same as with Daniel when he saw a heavenly messenger. Daniel said, “I was left alone, ... and there remained no strength in me: ... I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: ... thy words were heard, and I am come ... to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days.”—Dan. 10:8-14

The same effect was produced upon Saul of Tarsus when he beheld a vision of the Divine one (Acts 9:6), and indeed upon many by the visit of powerful spirit beings, such as, Jacob, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others. When we get a true view of him with whom we have to do, the great heart-searcher (Rom. 8:27), we fall before him humbled to the dust, realizing so vividly our imperfection and unworthiness to be apprehended. These

visions of Jesus and mighty spirit beings are according to character, as Jesus so clearly stated—the pure in heart shall see God.—Matt. 5:8

We have not received visions, but have we not in silent and quiet prayer and meditation upon the Word, before the Lord, experienced a very deep sense of his nearness? Have we not at times been overwhelmed, and found ourselves, at first, making endless confessions of our faults and unfaithfulness, perhaps for days impressed with the sacredness of the occasion, always counting it a joy, and sometimes a milestone, in our spiritual progress, inspiring us with greater urge and deeper sincerity to reach out for greater heights and depths of God's love?

Alone with God the burden of our prayer and meditation often is for wisdom, grace, or revealed truth. We return to our daily responsibility of service for the Lord, strengthened in faith with greater confidence and bolder approach to our Heavenly Father. We receive comfort, peace, and rest of faith, being fully assured that we have a High Priest that is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, one who waits to sympathize and mercifully assist us in our need.—Heb. 4:15

Solitude with God, even for a while, is so satisfying, so wonderful. Isaac enjoyed the same privilege and joy. (Gen. 24:63) It is noticeable that this is mentioned as being just a short while before meeting his prospective bride. To us his comforting assurance has come, in the words of our theme text, "Fear not; ... I am he that liveth," the 'ever living' one.

THE MEANS OF INSTRUCTION

We who claim to be pupils in the school of Christ can be wonderfully instructed in two ways. First, by being shown, through the Word, God's greatness, majesty, and perfection. Secondly, we are taught in being shown by the Holy Spirit, through the perfect law of liberty, our own weakness and imperfections.—James 3:2

The longer and more intently we look into the Word, the more can we discern our own blemishes and the less of others, and this will enable us to think less favorably of our achievements. Penetrating is the Word of God: "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12) It is so much so that we might become thoroughly discouraged were it not for the Lord's assurance that while he knows of our imperfections better than

we, yet he is not regarding these, but covering them by allowing the merit of our dear Redeemer, as a robe of righteousness, to make us perfect and acceptable to him.

Romans 8:2 reads, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott* says in II Corinthians 5:21, “For him who knew no sin, he made a sin-offering on our behalf, that we might become God’s righteousness in him.” Therefore, as to John and Daniel in their embarrassment at the presence of the heavenly messenger, the Lord stretches forth his right hand to us and says, Fear not!

This gracious and loving gesture is evidently designed to give assurance and comfort with confidence. It was so with Peter when walking on the sea towards Jesus. When Peter’s faith began to fail, Jesus immediately stretched forth his hand and caught him and said, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matt. 14:31) To John his right hand was held forth to assure him, ‘I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.’

IDENTIFICATION

This language would immediately identify the visitor in John’s sight as the Lord Jesus Christ, for to no other personage could these words apply. John, of course, knew Christ had been crucified and was dead, and he with others of the disciples shared the privilege, sixty years before, of being led out of Bethany after the resurrection, and of seeing Jesus carried up out of their sight into the clouds, and they worshipped him and returned again to Jerusalem.—Luke 24:51

To John, it would be as real as if he had seen the Savior whom he had known in person, whom he had tenderly loved and faithfully served through those long years since he beheld the ascension. It was the one whom he had seen crucified and laid in the tomb, the one he knew to be the world’s Redeemer and Savior. Jesus was made for a time “a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. ... that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” (Heb. 2:9,14) John knew that Jesus had been raised from the dead by the power of the Father. “Death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin [as a sin offering] once: but in

that he liveth, he liveth unto God” (Rom. 6:9,10), and possessing “all power” over death and the grave, he will presently deliver all entombed therein.—Matt. 28:18; John 5:28

JOHN’S TESTIMONY

The testimony of John concerning Jesus as recorded in the Gospel was that Jesus “was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. ... And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”—John 1:14,16

To consider the life of Jesus is always inspiring to one’s faith. His devotion to his Father’s will; his obedience to his Father’s words; his readiness to sacrifice for others; his love for those who sought to know him; his compassion for the poor in spirit; his outstretched hand to the oppressed; his delight in righteousness; his abhorrence of hypocrisy, sin, and self-exaltation were ever manifest in him.

All these qualities and virtues his followers are exhorted to copy and attain. Indeed, these are the important principles every follower of Jesus should seek to possess. Paul said, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies [a heart which is motivated by mercy], kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.”—Col. 3:12

WARNING FOR LAST DAYS

In these last days—the closing days of the Gospel Age, and the time of its harvest—Jesus said the influences abroad would be such that if it were possible they would “deceive the very elect.” (Matt. 24:24) With the increasing voices around us today, we do well to adopt as a first principle in all our reading and meditation the decision of the Apostle Paul in his letter to Corinth, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”—I Cor. 2:2

All other voices today fade into insignificance before the great issue that to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is eternal life. (John 17:3) Let us ever seek to know Jesus as our personal Savior and Redeemer, our Lord and our Master—continuing to have him as our constant companion, friend, adviser—and God himself, our Creator, as our Heavenly Father, with all reverence and confidence.

To be conscious of an inner conviction, an unction or anointing from the Holy One, and to know it, is of tremendous value to one's faith. (I John 2:20) It seals our union, our relationship with Christ Jesus; it gives peace and rest of faith. It does not require a great brain, or intellectual attainment, to enjoy great benefits. It is the Spirit of God within, which he delights to give in response to wholeheartedness for him.—Luke 11:13

There is a way for man to rise
To that sublime abode—
An offering and a sacrifice,
A Holy Spirit's energies,
An Advocate with God!

The Apostle Paul warned the church at Colosse, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (Col. 2:8) Let us also be aware of ensnarements to our faith, and allow nothing to rob us of our warmth in Christ—zeal, fervor, and love for the Lord and his proven Word. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,” said Jesus.—John 10:27

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4) During the life of Jesus on earth as a perfect man, he was ever seeking to impart the light and understanding of God, his Father. His words, his touch, his look, made manifest sin and selfishness, and also gave life and health and peace to the suplicants. It is still true. The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not, or, as some translations suggest, refuse to admit its spiritual illuminations. How aptly this applied to the chief priests and Pharisees in their prejudices of Jesus. They would have stoned and killed him, but his hour had not then come.

To the widow of Nain, Zacheus, Jairus' little girl, Nicodemus, and to the blind and sick—even to those possessed by demons—he gave comfort, encouragement, health, joy, peace, and life, with understanding. This was only a foretaste of what he will yet do for the willing and obedient of humanity in God's due time.

LAZARUS DIES

While Jesus continued his ministry, word was brought that his friend Lazarus was sick. Knowing the hearts of men, Jesus realized this event would mean two things for him. First, greater and more pronounced

acceptance of himself as a prophet in Israel by the people generally; and secondly, increased bitter and cruel hatred from his enemies. Having always the purpose to honor his Father completely and to strengthen the faith of his disciples, Jesus remained two days at Bethabara before starting off to comfort Mary and Martha in their sorrow at Bethany.

They waited hopefully for his return. As soon as Martha heard Jesus was on his way toward Bethany, she went forth to meet him, with the remark, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," and, Martha continued, "I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Jesus replied, "Thy brother shall rise again." (John 11:20-23) Jesus had assured them time and again in his ministry to the people that all who accepted his Word and teaching, he would raise up at the last day.—John 6:39,40,44,54

Can we not discern the inquiry in Martha's mind—but Jesus, had you come sooner, you would have prevented this loss, and now he is gone and buried, our hopes are shattered, our hearts broken! How like ourselves, how ready we are to question when the circumstances and conditions of life do not fit in with our conceptions and desires. It is so easy for us to bend earthward.

The impossible to them was no obstacle to their illustrious friend. Jesus replied, "I am the resurrection, and the life." In other words, wherever I am, there is life, and the power to give life. Without me, life and resurrection cannot be. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ... Believest thou this?"—John 11:25,26

When Mary came from the house to Jesus, he was greatly moved with her distress. He was touched with a feeling of their sorrow, distraction, and bereavement, their torn hearts, their crushed spirits, and seeing Mary weeping, Jesus "groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." The Greek word 'groaned' conveys the thought not only of deep sympathetic emotion, but also of indignation and righteous anger. "Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!" (John 11:33-36) Jesus was so moved with their sorrow, his whole being seemed to be emotionally affected by their anguish of heart.

Perhaps at this moment Jesus realized, as never before, the anguish of soul, the sorrow of heart, the bitterness of death, that had come to the

human family through the great Adversary of God; and, for six thousand years, billions have similarly suffered the horrors of death through sin, for which the great Adversary was largely responsible, but which Jesus had come to cancel and redeem by giving his life as a ransom. (I Tim. 2:4-6) May we not think, on reflection, that this experience helped to seal the great purpose to finish the work his Father gave him to do?

RAISING LAZARUS

As his followers, we also need experiences to cement and seal our vows of faithfulness to receive the glorious privilege of sonship with our Lord.

Perhaps the holy angels, by seeing death, perceive more definitely and clearly the acuteness of human sin and sorrow, and consequently are helped to maintain more zealously their loyalty to their Creator, Jehovah God. The apostle tells us, “We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.” (I Cor. 4:9) View the matter how we will, death is a cruel enemy to the human heart. Salve the sore as best we can, we cannot become accustomed to these breakups of home, home ties and loves, companionships and friendships.

The world is old with centuries,
But not for these she bows her head.
Close to her heart the sorrow lies:
She holds so many dead!

When Jesus requested the stone to be removed Martha exclaimed, “Lord, ... he hath been dead four days,” thinking, no doubt, that decomposition had set in. Jesus replied, “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” Then he prayed, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me”—and called Lazarus from the tomb, and he came forth alive. (John 11:39-44) O, how very reassuring this must have been for Martha and Mary and all who believed that Jesus was the “resurrection, and the life.” (John 11:25) May the Lord increase our faith as we meditate on these inspiring assurances!

PALM SUNDAY

About a week later Jesus was hailed by the people who would have made him king, and strewed their garments and palm branches in his way, shouting, “Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the

name of the Lord,” fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. (Matt. 21:9) The Pharisees meanwhile exclaimed in their council, “Behold, the world is gone after him,” if we let him alone the Romans will take away our place and nation. “Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing?”—John 12:19

Now prejudice, hatred, murder, had decided the fate of their victim. Jesus, knowing his hour had come, was willing to submit to their cruelty for our sakes. The hours of his work were marked out by signs which he alone could read. Every hour had its work and every work its hour. To the people Jesus said, “Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: ... While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.” (John 12:35,36) These were some of the last words to the gathered crowds.

Following this great event of popularity with the people, and while thousands from all parts were making their way to Jerusalem for the Passover feast, some Greek worshippers approaching Philip said, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Again, Jesus knowing of his crucifixion so close upon him, appears not to have received their introduction, but accepted it as a sign that his hour had come; that he, the Son of God, should be glorified, and therefore he said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone [remains what it was, a corn of wheat undeveloped]: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be.”—John 12:21-26

This was evidently the farewell message of Jesus to his many followers and believers—apart from his disciples—his loving benediction for all accepting his final exhortation. “Now,” said Jesus, “is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.” (John 12:27,28) His decision was made. “Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” (John 12:28) Jesus then declared to those around him, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”—John 12:31,32

JESUS' CLOSING WORDS

For the few remaining days left to Jesus, his particular thoughts and attention were sacred to his disciples. His sympathy for them, his counsel and comforting assurances, must have drawn them together in love and understanding. “Having loved his own, ... he loved them unto the end.”—John 13:1

There was the lesson in humility, both for his disciples and for himself. Jesus took a towel, girded himself, and rendered to his disciples the lowest form of service of that time. He was so conscious of greatness and dignity that he dared to be humble. And we, who are privileged to share the honor and dignity of sonship with him, have need to learn well that “before honour is humility.” (Prov. 15:33) We are told, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”—James 4:10

There was also the lesson of the vine and the branches, that vital lesson of dependence upon and unity with Christ, and of love for each other. Think of the comforting, transcending promise which has been an inspiration to sincere disciples of the Master down through the Gospel Age, “I go to prepare a place for you. ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”—John 14:2,3

We hear Jesus’ compassionate prayer for his disciples, for peace, unity, love, and enduring faith for them and for us: I pray for “them also which shall believe on me through their word.”—John 17:20

DEATH ON THE CROSS

Then came the final test, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”—Matt. 26:39

The beautiful act of healing an enemy who had come to share in putting him to death has been an astounding thought for all since who “consider him.” (Heb. 12:3) When we are tempted to be resentful, to spite and to hate, let us recall our covenant annually resealed by partaking of his cup, and share his triumph, the triumph of persisting love that will not allow anything or anyone to turn it aside or quench it.

Hate and prejudice appear to have triumphed, cruelty has prevailed. His good name is taken away. He is considered a malefactor. His disciples have fled. He is left alone, until it seems God has forsaken him, and from his lips comes the cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou

forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46) Forsaken by God and man! When we have these moments of being forsaken, let us think of Jesus.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look straight in his wonderful face.
The things of earth grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.

Then, in quiet confidence he prayed, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46) "It is finished." (John 19:30) He who liveth was dead. The temple curtains were torn in two. The whole course of nature shuddered at the shock.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Jesus, having tasted death for every man, a tomb held him, but not for long, because as prophesied, and spoken by Peter, "It was not possible that he should be holden of it." (Acts 2:24) God hath made him to be a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (II Cor 5:21, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (I Tim. 2:6), and by this great sacrifice will yet release all mankind from sin and from death. The most glorious fact of human history was yet to be known and revealed.

Up from the grave he arose
With a mighty triumph o'er his foes,
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And he lives forever, with his saints to reign.
Hallelujah!—Christ arose!

God by his mighty power raised Jesus from the dead (Eph. 1:19,20), "wherefore" says the apostle, "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—Heb. 7:25

"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (I Cor. 15:20) The past two thousand years have had as their purpose the calling out of a people for his name, resurrecting them from sin to righteousness, holiness, and heavenly citizenship by his Holy Spirit and Divine grace. For this purpose, the Gospel of the kingdom has been preached "in all the world for a witness." (Matt. 24:14) The seed has been sown, the wheat developed, and now the harvest has come. (Rev. 14:15)

The church, the bride of Christ, will soon have made herself ready to reign with Christ. (Rev. 20:4) Then the age-abiding prayer of every Christian, “Thy kingdom come,” will have been answered. “Behold, I am alive for evermore, ... and have the keys of hell and of death,” said Jesus. (Rev. 1:18) Therefore he has the authority to unlock and release the billions of prisoners of hope who are waiting for “the manifestation of the sons of God.”—Rom. 8:19-21

John sees in his vision of the Lamb slain, all the angelic hosts ascribing to him, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” (Rev. 5:12) This glorious time of blessing is approaching, when “the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”—John 5:25

“Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: ... thy children shall come again [from the land of the enemy] to their own border.” (Jer. 31:16,17) “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” (Rev. 21:4) This is because of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus our Redeemer. “He that liveth, and was dead; ... [is] alive for evermore.”—Rev. 1:18

Soon shall all sorrow cease;
For lo! The Prince of Peace
Cometh to reign!
To Him our songs we bring;
Hail Him our gracious King;
We'll through all ages sing,
“Worthy the Lamb!”

Dawn Bible Students Association

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

***“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”
—Ephesians 3:8***

RICHES HAVE BEEN sought after by fallen man in all generations. One reason for this is that every human being will be blessed in this way in God’s kingdom. In Eden, father Adam possessed material riches, mental and moral worth, power and influence in abundant measure; as the psalmist suggests, “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things

under his feet.”—Ps. 8:5,6

Earthly riches were lost through sin and through man’s alienation from his Creator. However, in the poverty of his fallen condition, mankind still has an innate desire to possess and enjoy as many of the good things of earth as he can possibly acquire. Considering this matter, we realize that nearly all human enterprise, whether it be in the realm of commerce, art, the professions, or whatever the calling in life, is with a view to securing material riches; or riches in the sense of social standing, honor, influence, power. At various times—especially during the nineteenth century—the news went abroad that gold had been discovered in certain places, and immediately a mad rush was made, untold hardships being willingly endured, in order that the first in the field might secure a lion’s share of the hidden treasure.

This innate human desire to possess and enjoy earth’s good things has been largely perverted and taken possession of by Satan. Man has been on earth for six thousand years and has been obediently following the Adversary’s law of selfishness. Hence, in his fallen condition, man is “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”—Rom. 8:7

The great plan of salvation arranged by our Heavenly Father includes, through the coming thousand years of Messiah's kingdom, a rescue of mankind out of this hopeless, helpless condition, back again to that which was lost, when the "stony" (selfish) heart of man will be taken away and he will once more be given a heart of "flesh." (Ezek. 11:19) Before this time comes, however, a gracious opportunity has been given to some (the church) to be lifted out of their poverty and to become unspeakably rich. It is stated concerning Christ that "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (II Cor. 8:9) Hence our text speaks of the 'unsearchable riches of Christ.' This has been helpfully described as 'riches beyond the discovery of human enterprise.'

Man will spend long years in hard toil and mental application in order to search out and secure riches. But the riches that the Christian enters into by faith are riches which cannot be searched out by his own efforts, human energy, or hard work, but come as a gift. Through justification, and consecration to God, we have been inducted into the body of Christ, and Paul says that in Christ are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."—Col. 2:3

TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

These 'treasures of wisdom and knowledge' show us that through Christ we may become heirs of a grand and eternal inheritance—"heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. 8:17) Nevertheless, we are also shown that the future riches of heavenly glory depend upon our proving faithful stewards of what the Lord has entrusted to us during the present life. As the Master said, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:11) The 'true riches' now imparted to the faithful include a knowledge of the Truth—the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—or, as Paul elsewhere expresses it, "the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God."—Rom. 11:33

The eternal riches in heaven are also 'unsearchable,' in that they cannot be secured by human enterprise, but by a faithful conformity to the will of God, allowing him to work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. "The gift of God is eternal life." (Rom 6:23) So also the heavenly inheritance—although from one standpoint a reward of

faithfulness—is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. As the poet says, “Thou hast called us to a station we could ne’er by merit win.”

Seeing that the Father and our Redeemer have arranged to bestow upon the called ones of this Gospel Age such boundless riches of his grace, what manner of persons ought we to be, “in all holy conversation and godliness?” (II Pet. 3:11) As Paul exhorted the church, so let us pray for one another, that we may walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called (Eph 4:1); seeking to become “rich in faith” (James 2:5); rich in grace; rich in wisdom and the knowledge of God; and to abound in love through the power of the Holy Spirit; setting our affections on the things which are above, for where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also.—Col. 3:1-3; Matt. 6:21; Rev. 3:18

Dawn Bible Students Association