

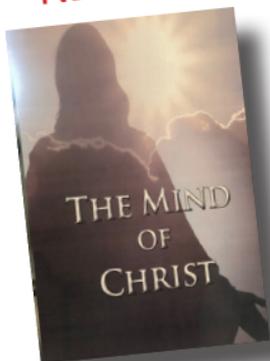
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The Christian's Commission in 2022

“Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”
—Galatians 6:9,10

WHEN THE RESURRECTED

Jesus appeared to his disciples the last time before his ascension, he outlined for them what their work as his disciples was to be. He said, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of

the earth.” (Acts 1:8) Years later, when the Apostle John received that marvelous vision of the future, he saw those who had been fully dedicated to “the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:4

The commission given by Jesus to his disciples nearly two-thousand years ago, and which John saw in vision as having been followed by all those who would ultimately reign with Christ in his kingdom, is still in operation today. As we enter the year 2022, there are many activities, causes, and potential distractions which might draw us as Christians toward other fields of endeavor. However, our commission has not changed from that which our Lord gave his disciples, for indeed, we are also his disciples, and are to be followers of his example in thought, word and action.

The work of bearing witness to the Truth of God's Word is done under the power and through the authority of the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself received this power and authority at the time of his baptism when the Holy Spirit came upon him. Later, in a synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61:1-3 to show that his authority and work had been known and foretold by his Heavenly Father. (Luke 4:16-21) Verse 1 of Isaiah's prophecy reads: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Throughout the three and one-half years of his ministry Jesus was faithful in carrying out this commission of the Holy Spirit. Luke 8:1 states concerning Jesus that "he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him." Jesus not only preached the gospel by word of mouth, but also illustrated the blessings which

would reach the people through the agencies of his kingdom by the many miracles he performed.

Jesus sent his apostles out to do a work similar to his own. After that he sent out seventy others. These all, under the leadership of Jesus, and following his example, went from place to place throughout the land of Israel to bear witness to the “gospel of the kingdom.” (Matt. 10:5-8; 24:14; Luke 10:1-9) The apostles and the other seventy were empowered to perform miracles in order to substantiate the message they proclaimed.

NOT A SOCIAL GOSPEL

While in the course of their ministry these first witnesses bestowed many temporal blessings of healing upon those to whom they proclaimed the kingdom gospel, this was merely a by-product of their campaign. The miracles were designed simply to make more effective their witness to the fact that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. It is important to keep this in mind, for today throughout the professed Christian world the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom has almost ceased, and a social gospel is proclaimed instead, which seeks to rid mankind from various social evils solely by human effort, coupled with good works on behalf of the poor and needy.

We should appreciate and commend those who seek to do good to their fellow men along material lines. Probably at no time has there been greater need for assistance throughout the world. However, as followers of the Master our obligations as Christians are set forth in his commands, and in his example. Those who are acquainted with God’s

plan for man's salvation have the advantage of knowing that in due time abundant provisions will be made for all the poor and needy of the world, as well as for the sick and dying about which we could do very little now in any case.

Jesus said to those he called from their fishing business, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt. 4:19) He did not say to them that in following him their primary work would be to feed and clothe the needy. When he sent them out into the ministry, he said, "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat."—Matt. 10:7-10

From these detailed instructions it is clear that the apostles were sent out to preach, and in conjunction with their preaching, to heal the sick and perform other miracles. They were not provided with means to assist the poor. Indeed, they often had to depend upon the generosity of those whom they served for their own material needs. Later, when opposition toward Jesus and his coworkers had grown to the point that the religious rulers were ready to crucify him, he instructed his apostles that they should now take whatever material means they had with them, because perhaps from then on they could not expect much help from their fellow Israelites.—Matt. 10:21-36

Jesus conducted his ministry along lines similar to the manner he outlined for his representatives.

His miracles were more outstanding, for on several occasions he awakened the dead from the sleep of death. After Pentecost Peter also did this. (Acts 9:36-42) Another of Jesus' outstanding miracles was the feeding of the multitude. (Mark 6:34-44) There is no evidence to show that these five thousand people were particularly poor. It was simply that they had been listening to Jesus' preaching in a "desert place," far removed from their homes, that he considered it an act of courtesy and hospitality to provide something for them to eat. His disciples advised that they be sent into the villages to buy their own food, indicating that they had the necessary funds to do this had Jesus permitted it.

This miracle, even as all the others performed by Jesus and his chosen representatives, was designed to impress the message of the kingdom they were preaching. Later, Jesus admonished his hearers, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." (John 6:27) When the people asked Jesus for a sign he referred them to the manna which God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness, and reminded them that all those Israelites died. Then he explained that he was the "true bread" which, when accepted through faith, would give everlasting life.—vss. 30-35,47-51

TO FEED THE POOR

On one occasion a young man came to Jesus and asked him what he could do to acquire eternal life. He was a Jew, and Jesus reminded him of the Law, which promised life to anyone who could and would

keep it. When the man told him that he had kept the commandments, Jesus said to him that he should sell all that he had and give the proceeds to the poor, then take up his cross and follow him. (Matt. 19:16-21; Mark 10:17-21) Jesus did not ask this young man to give his wealth to him so that he might feed the poor. What he did ask was that the man divest himself of his riches, dispensing them to the poor, and then become his follower. The simple act of giving his wealth to feed the poor would not have been following Christ, but a necessary step in becoming a follower. The point is that the purpose of Jesus' ministry was not one of feeding the poor with material food.

By no means do we condemn the professed Christian world for devoting much effort towards social and uplift work among the poor and needy. We are merely emphasizing that this was not the focus of the work Jesus conducted, nor are his followers commissioned to concentrate their efforts along such lines. Jesus was commissioned by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the glad tidings; and, as his followers, our great commission also is to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

AFTER PENTECOST

After Pentecost, by the authority of Jesus, and through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, the apostles and other disciples continued the ministry of the Truth, the glorious gospel of the kingdom. The apostles were able to perform miracles, as Jesus did, although this aspect of their ministry does not seem to be as prominent as it was in the case of Jesus. When the apostles died, miracles ceased altogether.

The simple proclamation of the gospel message was then depended upon to give the witness.

In the beginning, this effort was limited almost entirely to what could be accomplished by individual oral presentations of the message to varying sizes of audiences. Copies of the Scriptures themselves were very scarce and costly. During the Dark Ages, possession of the Holy Scriptures was prohibited by the church-state system in power at that time, and translation of the Bible into a commonly used language was a crime punishable by death. Finally, following the advent of the printing press in the 15th century, the Lord's witnesses had this additional means of dispensing the message. Coming down to our day, we rejoice in the availability of radio, television, the Internet, and many other forms of electronic media as further means of transmitting the gospel. At no time, though, has there been any change in the commission.

From time to time there have been some of the Lord's people who reached the conclusion that all the efforts to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom are wasted because, they reason, there are such meager results. Nowhere in the Bible, however, are we instructed to give up proclaiming the gospel on the grounds that there are little to no results. God's will in this matter is not determined by the results of our efforts. Quite to the contrary, we are instructed to continue laying down our lives in this service whether the people to whom we witness hear, or whether they forbear to hear.

Solomon wrote: "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of

the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”—Eccles. 11:4-6

SEED SOWING

In Jesus’ parable of the sower he taught us what to expect from our efforts to proclaim the Word of God to the people. (Matt. 13:18-23) According to the parable, as the seeds of Truth are sown, some fall upon what is illustrated by the “way side,” some fall on “stony places,” and still other grains of wheat fall among “thorns.” Only a small portion, it seems, falls upon the “good ground” of sincere and honest hearts. It is this class, we believe, that eventually prove worthy of joint-heirship with Jesus in his kingdom.

Jesus said, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32) It is indeed only a little flock who, during the present age, fully and completely respond to the message of the gospel. It must have seemed many times to the Lord’s people that they were obtaining very small results from their self-sacrificing efforts.

However, the results are not our responsibility. We are to plant the seeds of Truth and water them, but it is the Lord who causes it to grow. (I Cor. 3:6,7, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) Many times newly interested ones are reached by the message. Only one here and one there may fully make it their

own at the present time. For the vast majority, the germination of the “seed” of Truth which has been planted by our efforts will take place in the glorious Messianic kingdom. Indeed, it is for this future time that Jesus’ taught his disciples to pray.—Matt. 6:10

SERVING THE BROTHERHOOD

Bearing witness to the Truth does not end with a public proclamation of the message, important though this is as the bulwark of the Christian’s commission along this line. Our love for the Lord should reach out especially to our brethren in Christ. Jesus commanded us that we should love one another as he loved us. (John 13:34) The Apostle John wrote that we should lay down our lives for the brethren. (I John 3:16) The great need of all our brethren is spiritual help and encouragement, and we should be on the alert at all times to render this needed assistance.

We cannot turn our backs upon the needs of our brethren in Christ, including those of a temporal nature. When there was a famine in the Jerusalem area, and the brethren there were in desperate need, Paul raised funds from among the brethren of many ecclesias to help supply their needs. We believe that the Lord’s people in every part of the age have similarly been awake to their privileges along this line. What a joy it is to render what assistance we can to all such! It is one of the Lord’s ways of giving us an opportunity of demonstrating our love for him.

In this connection we think of the opportunities which presented themselves some seventy-five years ago at the close of World War II. Many of our

brethren in Christ in European countries were in dire need of food and clothing, and it was surely a heart-cheering experience to observe the extent to which brethren in many parts of the world came to their assistance. This is the privilege which, as the Lord's consecrated people, we all have of helping to take care of our own. If our love does not include this type of service for our brethren, it is of a shallow nature indeed.

UNSELFISHNESS

The motive in all that Christians do as followers of the Master should be love. There should be no desire to please self, nor to be honored of men in any work or service rendered. The course of selfishness is described by the Apostle Paul as sowing to the flesh, and the course of selfless love as sowing to the Spirit.

Our opening text is the climax to Paul's lesson on these points. We quote: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."—Gal. 6:7-10

God is preparing true Christians to be instruments of blessing to all the families of the Earth. He wants the footstep followers of Christ to keep their hearts sympathetic toward all mankind, and to rejoice in the prospect of soon having the privilege

of assisting in their blessing. Indeed, how great are the needs of the poor groaning creation! They are sick, and dying. They are filled with fear and perplexity. They are without direction from their leaders and statesmen, and they wonder how much longer such conditions can continue without catastrophic consequences.

God knows all about these conditions and could remedy them very quickly if it were his will to do so. However, he has a due time in his plan for this work. He is now preparing a special called-out class for this great project. The Heavenly Father wants those who hope to be a part of that group in the heavenly phase of his coming kingdom to develop love, sympathy and understanding toward the masses of mankind, even as he loved the whole world in giving his Son to be their Redeemer and Savior.—
John 3:16,17

One of the greatest blights upon the suffering world is a lack of understanding of the true and loving God. For the most part the people are without true faith in God, and therefore struggle mightily to have any real hope for the future. Fully consecrated Christians, through the enlightening influence of God's Holy Spirit, know his divine arrangements for man's ultimate blessing, and are in a position to speak a word of comfort to those who are in need. Thus in a small way we can bind up the brokenhearted with the good tidings of the kingdom. How better could we "do good unto all men," than to share with them the glorious "gospel of the kingdom?"

As Paul declares, in our work of sowing to the Spirit, we are to do good "especially unto them who

are of the household of faith.” These, our brethren in Christ, are to be our special care, both along spiritual as well as material lines, when needed. The apostle says further that we should not be “weary in well doing.” There would not be much danger of becoming weary if we could see outstanding results from our efforts. It is because we frequently do not see tangible results that we might become weary. When this happens, we may even question whether or not we are doing the proper thing.

Paul reminds us that we shall “reap, if we faint not.” Here he is not speaking primarily of present visible results from our efforts, but rather to “reap life everlasting” in the kingdom. (Gal. 6:8) The Lord does not want us to depend upon present results for courage and strength to continue in the narrow way of sacrifice and service, although we are all greatly encouraged when he permits us to see some small results from our labors. He wants us to “walk by faith,” and to rejoice in the hope set before us of reaping “glory and honour and immortality” beyond the veil, and of sharing with Jesus in causing the knowledge of the Lord to fill the earth “as the waters cover the sea.”—II Cor. 5:7; Rom. 2:7; Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14

What a glorious prospect is set before us! May it give us strength as we enter the year 2022 to continue faithful to our commission to bear the glad tidings to all as we have and can make opportunities. Let us ever keep before our minds that those who will live and reign with Christ are those whose lives are fully dedicated to “the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.”—Rev. 20:4 ■

Cain and Abel

Key Verse: “*And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*”
—Genesis 4:8

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 4:1-15

shall rule over thee.” The sorrow related to bringing forth children has, in particular, extended throughout all generations to mothers’ pains and anxieties concerning their offspring.

In her perfection, Eve surely looked forward to the time when she would see in her own children a manifestation of love toward God like she had experienced in her own heart. Yet before her first child was born, she was cut off from her Creator’s favor and the life-sustaining fruits of Eden. She, along with Adam, began to toil with sweat of face battling the thorns and thistles of the earth. Her pregnancy with Cain was likely one of great mental distress, as she recalled her Eden home and perhaps coveted it. Doubtless this could have marked her yet unborn child with tendencies toward discontent and selfishness.

THE FIRST TRAGEDY UPON the earth was the result of disobedience to Jehovah through the eating of the forbidden fruit by our first parents. (Gen. 2:16,17; 3:6) Details of Eve’s punishment for her part in the disobedience to God’s command is described in Genesis 3:16. He said to her, “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he

The second tragedy of earth is found in the incident described in today's Key Verse. Our lesson tells us that "Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." (Gen. 4:2) In time both brought offerings from their bounty as a sacrifice to God. Verses 4 and 5 say, "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." The Apostle Paul says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." (Heb. 11:4) This suggests Abel first sought the mind of the Lord regarding what and how to offer a sacrifice. Here is a lesson for those who would be followers of Christ. Jesus taught this same principle when he said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."—Matt. 6:33

Cain should have rejoiced with Abel and brought a similar offering which would have gained divine acceptance. Had he sought to know why only Abel's offering was acceptable, he might have learned that the death of an animal had great symbolic significance in God's arrangements and plans. Rejecting this course of action led to a spirit of selfishness, jealousy and anger in Cain. God immediately warned him of this. "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."—Gen. 4:6,7, *New American Standard Bible*

How much we all need to learn this lesson! Through the fall we all have baser sentiments which war against the nobler ones. As a lion in search of prey, they would seek to devour us. (I Pet. 5:8) Divine aid is needed in order to overcome these fallen propensities. Cain had direct access to such help but chose to ignore it. The Apostle John teaches us, saying, "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."—I John 2:1,2, *NASB* ■

Hagar and Ishmael

Key Verses: “*God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.*”
—*Genesis 21:12,13*

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 21:8-20

For years Ishmael was looked upon as the heir of Abraham, even after the birth of Isaac, the long-promised son of Abraham and Sarah. When Abraham held a great feast to celebrate Isaac’s being weaned, Ishmael mocked his half-brother. (Gen. 21:8-10) Angered, Sarah told Abraham to banish Ishmael and his mother from their presence. Abraham was

TODAY’S LESSON CONCERNS a hopeful mother, a first-born son, and a rejection of that son’s favored position by Jehovah. This narrative transpired in the lives of Abraham and his wife Sarah—at first called Abram and Sarai. Hoping to fulfill God’s promise that Abraham would bear a son, and knowing she was barren, Sarah urged him to take her Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, and bare children through her. (Gen. 15:4; 16:1,2) Abraham agreed, but when Hagar conceived and despised her mistress, Sarah demanded the servant be turned over to her care. This resulted in Sarah’s mistreatment of Hagar. In due course, Hagar gave birth to her son by Abraham, who was named Ishmael.
—vss. 5-16

saddened at the prospect of having his first son sent away. To comfort him, God spoke the words of today's Key Verses, which state that Isaac was the seed of promise, but another nation would come from Ishmael. Hagar had previously been told that Ishmael would have descendants "too numerous to count," but also that "he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."—Gen. 16:10-12, *New International Version*

The Apostle Paul points out to us that these circumstances contained pictures of future events. He identifies Hagar and Ishmael saying, "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar."—Gal. 4:22-24, *NIV*

It was not apparent at the time why Sarah was right to have Hagar and Ishmael sent into a foreign land. The Apostle Paul makes it clear these things were done to identify the true seed of promise—Christ and the church. "Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does Scripture say? Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman."—vss. 28-31, *NIV*

Though not known at the time, Paul makes it clear that Ishmael represented fleshly Israel. Many of the shadows and pictures of the Old Testament are clarified in the New Testament. The apostle shows these things were hidden until the promised seed could be called through faith in Jesus Christ.—Gal. 3:15-29 ■

A Burial Place for Sarah

Key Verses: *“And [Abraham] communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you.”*
—Genesis 23:8,9

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 23:1-20

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

is a central theme in the plan of God. Throughout his life and his many demonstrations of faith, Sarah was by Abraham’s side. Therefore, Jehovah changed their original names, Abram and Sarai, to new ones befitting their faithfulness. “Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. ... And God said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.”—Gen. 17:5,6,15,16

Such testimony from the Almighty speaks volumes

concerning the character of these two foundations of a great nation. “Listen to me, all who hope for deliverance—all who seek the LORD! Consider the rock from which you were cut, the quarry from which you were mined. Yes, think about Abraham, your ancestor, and Sarah, who gave birth to your nation. Abraham was only one man when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation.”—Isa. 51:1,2, *New Living Translation*

The Apostle Paul declares that we are the spiritual children of Abraham if we have strong faith such as his: “Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—just as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness? Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.”—Gal. 3:5-7, *English Standard Version*

One of Abraham’s final acts of faith is shown in today’s lesson in the acquisition of a burial place for Sarah. We read of his respectful negotiation with the Hittites: “I am a foreigner and stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead. The Hittites replied to Abraham, Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead.”—Gen. 23:4-6, *New International Version*

Here were two tests of Abraham’s faith—an appeal to pride as a mighty prince, and an offer of the choicest of the tombs of the Hittites for no charge. Even though God said that all the land would be given to him and his descendants, he did not take it by force. Honorably, Abraham purchased, at full price, the cave of Machpelah, which would be the burial place for Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah. (Gen. 49:29-32) Thus, in one cave lies the forerunners of the “seed” which will bless all mankind in the Messianic kingdom.—Gal. 3:16,26-29 ■

Justice and Judges Established

Key Verse: *“That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”*
—Deuteronomy
16:20

Selected Scriptures:
Deuteronomy
16:18-20; 17:8-13

SYSTEMS ESTABLISHED IN Israel for justice and judgment were intended to guide the people in their proper worship of Jehovah. Shortly after their exodus from Egypt, Moses alone judged between the disputes of the people. (Exod. 18:13-16) However, this arrangement soon began to overwhelm Moses. At the suggestion of his father-in-law Jethro, Moses appointed able leaders to judge the people alongside him.—vss. 17-26

Another element of Israel’s judicial arrangements was the appointment of judges and officials from all the tribes to execute righteous judgment, thus providing a judiciary throughout the population. (Deut. 16:18-20) Moses further instructed that the Levitical priests were to collaborate with the judges in more difficult cases to aid them in judgment. These matters were to be heard and decided at “that place which the LORD shall choose.” This arrangement continued the practice of having smaller cases decided at a local level and the harder matters settled by a higher, centralized authority.—Deut. 17:8-13

The Selected Scriptures of our lesson do not give the

specific qualifications of the judges and officials to be selected, the method of their appointment, or the details of their job description. They do, however, give attention to the principles they were to embody. First, the appointment of judges and officials was the task of the whole community. They were to choose men who possessed righteous characters as would be approved by God. This principle stresses the community's responsibility to be actively involved in the maintenance and pursuit of righteous judgment.

Judges and officials were also to judge fairly. They were prohibited from distorting justice, showing partiality, and accepting bribes. (Deut. 16:18,19) These practices were clearly condemned by Jehovah. The community was to appoint those who were wise, as noted in God's instructions to Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 1:13-15. The work of these judges and officials was to be for the benefit of the whole community. Their appointment was not to be a matter of status or power, but for the specific task of judging people fairly, in order that righteous decisions would prevail among the entire nation.

Today's Key Verse reflects the blessed result of following righteous judgment and rejecting unrighteous practices. All would be benefitted—the judges and officials, the people in general, and the entire nation—if God's instructions would be followed. We see a general principle in this lesson, that the blessing of the Lord ensues where righteousness prevails. The paraphrased *Living Bible* captures the essence of our Key Verse: "Justice must prevail. That is the only way you will be successful in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

Learning the meaning of justice, and practicing it in our lives, should be one of the prime objectives of our walk in the Christian way. Making these things part of our character will help prepare us for our future kingdom work: "Don't you know that Christians will one day judge the world?"—I Cor. 6:2, *J. B. Phillips New Testament* ■

Judgment—Not Oppression

Key Verse: “*Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.*”
—Deuteronomy
24:18

Selected Scripture:
Deuteronomy
24:10-22

IN OUR PREVIOUS LESSON

we considered the judicial system to be established for Israel when they would enter the land of promise. We noted that while there were no specific qualifications for those selected as judges, they were to follow righteous principles given by Jehovah, which were made known and agreed to by the people. Today’s Selected Scripture passage gives a few examples of cases in which these principles were to be applied.

The first example relates to taking collateral for a loan. The people of Israel had little in the way of individual property. Therefore, if a person could only pledge a cloak for a loan the creditor was to return it before nightfall. “Return the cloak to its owner by sunset so he can stay warm through the night and bless you, and the Lord your God will count you as righteous.” (Deut. 24:10-13, *New Living Translation*) Another part of this requirement stated that, when making the loan, the creditor was to remain outside while the borrower retrieved his pledge. This was beneficial to both parties as it prevented the borrower’s reproach and the creditor’s potential greediness if he were to see something better

than what had been agreed to as the pledge.

Another law mentioned in our lesson commanded that hired laborers should be paid their wages at the end of day, as was customary at that time. (Deut. 24:14,15) Leviticus 19:13 indicates that withholding pay, even if only overnight, was the equivalent of robbery. The Apostle James says of those who oppress the poor through this practice: “The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.”—James 5:4, *New International Version*

Deuteronomy 24:16 says, “Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.” (NIV) This law was to be enforced among all Israelites, establishing the equitable principle that none should be responsible for the crimes of others. The Prophet Ezekiel adds that every parent and every child belongs to Jehovah, and “the one who sins is the one who will die.”—Ezek. 18:4, *NIV*

Another law set forth in our lesson is with respect to landowners showing generosity to the poor and landless. Once a harvest had been completed the landowner was to leave any overlooked sheaves of grain where they lie. Likewise, once olives and grapes were harvested the owner should not go back and gather any missed fruit. Anything remaining was to be left for the “foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.” These requirements were to remind the people that Jehovah gave to them liberally when they were in need. “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.”—Deut. 24:19-22, *NIV*

Similarly, we are also reminded of our bondage in sin. “The proof of God’s amazing love is this: that it was while we were sinners that Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8, *J. B. Phillips New Testament*) Therefore, let us heed the counsel of Paul: “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:2 ■

The Better Things of Our Heavenly Calling

*“Ye are come ... to
Jesus the mediator of
the new covenant, and
to the blood of
sprinkling, that
speaketh better things
than that of Abel.”
—Hebrews 12:22,24*

AS WE STUDY THE Bible and make an effort to apply the things that it teaches, we are exhorted to be “rightly dividing the word of truth.” (II Tim. 2:15) We are also thankful daily for the assurance

found in Jesus’ statement, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” (Matt. 13:16) Having our minds enlightened by the Holy Spirit, we have been enabled to comprehend that God’s plan provides, first, a heavenly salvation for a “little flock” who faithfully follow in the footsteps of Jesus, those who have responded to the call, “My son, give me thine heart.”—Luke 12:32; Prov. 23:26

We have come to appreciate that God’s plan also provides for the salvation of mankind in general,

and the hope of living in righteousness upon the earth forever. The promises contained in the Bible point out to us that the redeemed shall, in due time, “sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree,” and will “long enjoy the work of their hands.” (Mic. 4:4; Isa. 65:22) This is God’s provision for mankind when they will be restored to divine favor, when all the families of the earth shall be blessed.—Gen. 12:3; 22:18

Of the true church, the bride of Christ, it is declared that the members of this “little flock” shall, in the “first resurrection,” be raised heavenly or spirit beings, having attained to “glory and honour and immortality,” and become “partakers of the divine nature.” (Rev. 20:6; Rom. 2:7; II Pet. 1:4) The Apostle Paul says concerning the heavenly hope of the church: “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”—I Cor. 15:50

Jesus promised his faithful disciples the night before his death, “I go to prepare a place for you” in “my Father’s house,” that is, in the courts of the heavenly realm. (John 14:2,3) The eternal home for the remainder of mankind, however, is the earth, having already been provided “from the foundation of the world,” and which “abideth for ever” as man’s dwelling place. (Matt. 25:34; Eccles. 1:4) Thus, we can appreciate that both aspects of salvation, whether the heavenly or earthly hope, are the result of the loving and gracious provision of the Heavenly Father. As the Scriptures point out: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”—I Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:4

BETTER THAN ABEL

The basis for both the heavenly and earthly hope set forth in the Scriptures is the willing sacrifice of Jesus as the “lamb of God,” a “ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (John 1:29; I Tim. 2:5,6) His willing sacrifice on Calvary’s cross assured the human race of forgiveness for Adamic sin, and their subsequent release from the bondage to sin’s penalty, death. (Rom. 5:12,18,19) Our opening text refers to Abel, who offered an acceptable sacrifice to God, and who was slain as a result by his brother Cain. Abel’s blood, the Scriptures state, called for vengeance upon Cain. (Gen. 4:4-15) Jesus’ blood, however, speaks of “better things”—mercy, forgiveness, redemption, and a full opportunity for reconciliation to God.

In Hebrews 12:25, the verse following our opening text, we read, “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.” These words are addressed to those striving to be of the church, the “body of Christ.” (I Cor. 12:12-14,27) They are a sobering reminder to us that the hearing and understanding of the word of the Lord brings with it much responsibility. “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required,” Jesus said.—Luke 12:48

Our opening Scripture also reminds us of the establishment of the promised New Covenant through Christ Jesus, the great teacher and Mediator of that covenant. It awaits inauguration until the end of this present Gospel Age and the completion of the church class. These will share with Christ in

the mediatorial work associated with the New Covenant on behalf of the remainder of mankind. The “blood of sprinkling” cleanses the members of the body of Christ at the present time, and in due time will also cleanse all mankind from the condemnation resulting from Adamic sin. Paul discusses the privileges and responsibilities associated with the blood of Jesus which the church class enjoys now, in advance of the world of mankind, in Hebrews 10:19-23. His words conclude with the exhortation, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).”

HEAVENLY VERSUS EARTHLY HOPES

In the Old Testament, there is no suggestion of a heavenly or spiritual hope for any of mankind except as given in highly veiled, prophetic language. The promises given to the faithful ones of old were all of an earthly nature. In Abraham’s case, for instance, we read, “The LORD said unto Abram, ... Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.”—Gen. 13:14-16

The Apostle Paul distinguishes between the hope of the spirit-begotten church, founded at Pentecost, and those of all others. After listing many of the heroes of faith of past ages, he declares that although they had God’s testimony as to their faithfulness, “none of them received all that God had promised.

For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.” —Heb. 11:39,40, *New Living Translation*

The “better” reward which God has in mind for his faithful people of the present Gospel Age is beautifully given in these words of the Apostle John: “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he [the glorified Jesus] shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (I John 3:2) It is far beyond anything that we can ask or think to be “like him” whom God hath highly exalted, “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.” (Eph. 1:21) We stand amazed at such grace! Moreover, we can realize that he who called us to become joint heirs with our Redeemer in his mediatorial kingdom has provided for blessings and joys untold in that heavenly state.

Following the reward of these faithful ones to the divine, spirit nature, and its associated glory, the worthy ones of ancient times will receive their reward of resurrection to human perfection. Under Messiah’s kingdom, those Ancient Worthies will be made “princes in all the earth.” (Ps. 45:16) Finally, we are assured that all those who sleep in the grave, the entire world of mankind, will be raised from the death condition. “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth.” (John 5:28,29) Blessings and instructions will then descend to the world of mankind, who for so long have been mired in the grip of sin. God’s perfect law of love will be rewritten in the hearts and in the character of all the willing and obedient.—Isa. 35:1-10; Jer. 31:31-34

THE FIRSTBORNS PASSED OVER

When the due time came in which God purposed to deliver his people out of Egyptian bondage, the firstborn of the Israelites received a peculiar “salvation,” or preservation. The night before Israel’s deliverance, all of the firstborns were in danger of death and were saved only by residing in their homes, protected by the sprinkled blood of the slain Passover lamb on the upper lintel and side doorposts of their houses. (Exod. 12:1-30) By examining the New Testament, we see the significance of this beautiful picture. Paul tells us that Christ is “our Passover Lamb,” sacrificed for us. (I Cor. 5:7, *English Standard Version*) We each have had appropriated to us, by the mercy and love of God, the redemptive merit, or value, represented in the shed blood of Jesus. Further, we are to abide continually under that arrangement until the end of our earthly walk.

Just as the firstborn of Israel were to reside “under the blood” during the entire Passover night, we who aspire to the heavenly calling must remain under the covering merit of Jesus’ sacrifice during this present nighttime of sin, suffering and death in the world around us. Being thus faithful, we will be “passed over” and protected, as were the firstborn of Israel, and on account of the blood be accounted worthy to be members of the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.”—Heb. 12:23

LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES

Our Heavenly Father has given many wonderful promises to those who truly love him and his dear Son, Christ Jesus. In II Corinthians 7:1 we are admonished that having “these promises,” we

should “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear [reverence] of God.” This is a similar thought to that expressed by the Apostle John when he wrote that those who have this heavenly hope, based on the promises of God, are to purify themselves. (I John 3:3) The possession of the promises to the extent of our readiness to inherit them fully, can be most notably found in that which we think upon. Paul counseled us along this line, saying concerning those things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praiseworthy —“think on these things.”—Phil. 4:8

We have also been given these helpful words by the Apostle Peter: “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness.” (I Pet. 3:13-15) Let us lay claim to these promises, but also realize the responsibility, and at times the suffering, that comes with them.

It seems apparent that giving a “reason of the hope” that is in us is to be demonstrated not only by our words, but also by our meditations and daily conduct. The Scriptures speak along all three of these lines. The psalmist writes: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.” (Ps. 19:14) The importance of Christlike conduct is brought to our attention by Paul, when speaking of his own daily walk, he

states: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”—Gal. 2:20

In another place, Paul speaks of those “who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Heb. 6:12) In order to claim the promises for our very own we must demonstrate an abiding faith in them, and also patiently endure whatever trials the Lord may see that we need in order that our worthiness of the promises might be manifested. The fulfillment of many of God’s promises belong to our present life, while others apply to our future inheritance beyond the veil. Thus, when the apostle speaks of inheriting the promises, he apparently had in mind both our present blessings as well as our future heavenly inheritance. What a magnificent prospect is assured for us by our Heavenly Father’s wonderful promises! Truly he has given us “good doctrine,” so that we forsake not his law.—Prov. 4:2

LOVE FOR OUR BRETHREN

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John wrote, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” (I John 3:14) These words should encourage each of us to search our heart’s intentions and motivations as we ponder these soul-searching questions. Is the witness of God’s Holy Spirit evident in our life? Do we love the brethren—all of them—or merely our favorites or those with whom we most agree on various details of the Scriptures? Do we truly love those whose imperfections may be a trial *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) to us? That is, do we love them sufficiently not to speak evil about them, or to make them the subjects of gossip when fellowshiping with those whose personalities are more congenial to us?

Do we love those of our brethren who are going through severe trials and need our help and encouragement, and do we show it by our actions? Do we love those who may be tossed about by various winds of doctrine, and seek, in humility, to assist them to have their feet set upon the sure foundation of Truth? Do we love those who may not yet have learned much in the way of Truth, but have expressed interest in understanding more? Do we love them so ardently that we are willing to lay down our lives bearing witness to the Truth in order that they may hear and be blessed by it?

John continues his thoughts concerning love with these words, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (I John 3:18) If, upon examining ourselves, we find that we have a pervasive, all-encompassing love for all of our brethren—a love that will cause us to lay down our lives for them if called upon to do so—then we have this further assurance of divine favor, and the encouraging testimony that as sons of God we have "passed from death unto life." Indeed, one of the final and most searching tests, and one that we must not fail, is that of developing selfless and sacrificial love for our brethren. Let us endeavor to qualify under its conditions. It is a witness that human philosophy cannot overthrow, nor that Satan's lies can destroy.

BURNING AND SHINING LIGHTS

Jesus spoke of John the Baptist, his forerunner, as “a burning and shining light.” (John 5:35) We may be sure that Jesus also befits this forceful description. Some lights may appear to be cold, harsh, or unsympathetic, but the kind of light which is approved of God is that which is beautifully described in these words of the Master, and which he exemplified continually. His was a “burning” light—warm, glowing, sympathetic, helpful, intensive and all illuminating. He was the Light which came down from heaven—undimmed, lovely, shining forth to the fullest the light of divine truth. The Apostle John wrote concerning Jesus that he was the “true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. ... In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”—John 1:9,4

One of the charges brought against Jesus by the Pharisees and scribes was, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” (Luke 15:2) As the Jewish religious leaders heard of these things, they began to realize that Jesus’ conduct of life was of a different sort than theirs, and as darkness hates the light, they hated him. (John 3:19,20) The common people, though, heard him gladly. (Mark 12:37) Recognizing that he was different from the others, they were drawn to Jesus because he was a “burning and shining light,” and they marveled at the “gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.”—Luke 4:22

Those in this present Gospel Age who have made a consecration of their lives to God and are anxious to know the divine will that they may conform their lives to it, have entered into the school of Christ. They desire to be taught of him, and then

to apply the things learned to faithfully walk in his footsteps. (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23) As sincere students of the Bible, they seek to know the secrets of the Lord and understand them more fully, because they love him supremely, and appreciate his glorious plans and purposes.—Matt. 11:25; I Cor. 2:10-12

Concerning our privileges of also being light-bearers, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16) As the Bible is the “lamp” provided by God to all those who walk in his Son’s footsteps, so each of us in turn is a lamp which should shine forth to others, fueled by the symbolic anointing oil of the Holy Spirit. (Ps. 119:105; Phil. 2:15) As sympathetic and helpful lights in the midst of a dark world, we have this admonition from the Apostle Peter, “That ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”—I Pet. 2:9

“THE LIGHT SHINETH IN DARKNESS”

While keeping our lamps properly trimmed and burning, and while seeking to glorify God as burning and shining lights in the world, we have the assurance that we will not be successful at this present time in converting the world. Concerning Jesus, John said, “The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”—John 1:5

The Master’s words concerning his followers continues to be true even as we near the end of this present age. “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.” “Ye know that it hated me before it hated you.” (I John 3:13, John 15:18) The reason

for this is that it is only the church, not the world in general, which is being tested and tried at this time. The world of mankind will have the opportunity in the coming Messianic kingdom to be taught of God and to learn of his ways. For the Christian now, however, the opposition and darkness of the world serves to test our loyalty to God and to the Truth revealed in his Word, by which we are also to be sanctified.—John 17:17

Whoever receives, understands, and appreciates the light of truth must rejoice in it, and let it shine forth to others. “Put on therefore, as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, ... and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.” (Col. 3:12-14, *Revised Version*) The Lord is seeking these qualities among those whom he has invited to be sharers in the glories of the kingdom for which we have so long prayed.—Matt. 6:10

In God’s kingdom, soon to be established, Christ and his bride, the church, will constitute the great “Sun of righteousness,” which will “arise with healing in his wings.” (Mal. 4:2) Mankind themselves will have the privilege of being lights one to another, as each one learns, and puts into practice, the righteous precepts and principles of God’s law of love. Let us, therefore, be obedient and strive daily to make our “calling and election sure.” (II Pet. 1:10) If faithful, the “better things” related to our calling will result in the realization of our hope of “glory and honour and immortality, eternal life,” as “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”—Rom. 2:7; 8:17 ■

The New Testament Corroborates the Old

“No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”
—II Peter 1:20,21

THERE ARE MANY WHO, while expressing themselves as having considerable confidence in the narratives of the New Testament, feel that the historical records of the Old Testament are largely fictional stories or myths. Those who share this viewpoint may readily think of Jesus as having spoken the truth on the various subjects which he discussed. We are glad of this, for we believe we can present evidence that Jesus and the apostles of the New Testament themselves had faith in, and confirmed, the many disputed records of the Old Testament.

In Luke 3:23-38 the genealogy of Jesus is traced through a long line of ancients, including a number of the well-known personalities of the Old Testament, along with Seth, who was “the son of Adam, which was the son of God.” Thus Luke clearly confirms the Old Testament record that Adam not only was the first man, but that he was the direct creation of God, an earthly “son of God.”

In Romans 5:14 the Apostle Paul writes, “Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.” Here Paul assures us of his belief in Adam and of the manner in which death came into the world through his disobedience. Adam willfully sinned against the divine law and was condemned. This condemnation, and death itself, were inherited by his progeny even though they may not have sinned with the same degree of willfulness as did Adam. They were born in a dying condition.—Ps. 51:5

This continued unabated until Moses, at which time God gave the one small nation of Israel an opportunity to gain life through obedience to his law. Referring to the Law given to Israel, the Scriptures state that “the man which doeth those things shall live by them.” (Rom. 10:5; Lev. 18:5) Paul explained that while the Law was designed to give life, it failed to do so because of the imperfection of the people.—Rom. 7:10

The Apostle Paul again refers to Adam in I Corinthians 15:22, which reads, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” This also confirms the Genesis record that death came into

the world through the transgression of Adam. Here the additional thought is given that the opportunity to enjoy everlasting life “in Christ” by obedience to divine law will, in God’s coming kingdom of righteousness, be just as far reaching as has been the penalty of death which was imposed as a result of Adam’s sin.

We quote further from Paul: “The first man Adam was made a living soul.” (I Cor. 15:45) These words are taken directly from Genesis 2:7, where we are told that God formed man of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and “man became a living soul.” Then Paul speaks of the “last Adam,” who he says, “became a life-giving spirit.” (*Revised Standard Version*) In these few words, we have set forth the basis for God’s great plan of the redemption and restoration of mankind through Christ.

“Adam was first formed, then Eve.” (I Tim. 2:13; Gen. 1:27; 2:21-23) Here again we note the full confidence Paul had in the details of the Genesis account of creation. He also informs us that “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” (I Tim. 2:14) The great deception which the Adversary perpetrated upon mother Eve was that she would not die if she partook of the forbidden fruit. (Gen. 3:1-4) Satan’s lie that death would not result from disobeying God’s law has deceived essentially the whole world ever since it was first told to Eve. It is the basis of all the “no-death” theories that have existed throughout the ages down to our very day.

In Jude, verse 14, we are informed that Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam. Surely

Jude had confidence in the genealogical record of Genesis. Thus, we find that Adam's name appears in seven different places in the New Testament. These references confirm the fact that he was the first man; that he came under sentence of death because he transgressed God's law; and that all his progeny share in this condemnation.

Jesus also confirms the Genesis record of creation, but without mentioning Adam by name. In Matthew 19:4,5, *Revised Version*, Jesus refers to the creation of man, saying, "Have ye not read, that he which made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh?"—Gen. 2:24

In another reference to the Book of Genesis, Jesus mentions Abel, one of the sons of Adam. In a reminder of the trouble which would come upon the Israelites of his generation, Jesus said, "That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation."—Luke 11:50,51

Abel and the sacrifice which he offered to God are mentioned in Hebrews 11:4, which reads, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Is the story of Cain and Abel a myth? Jesus and the writer of the Book of Hebrews did not believe so!

THE FLOOD ACCOUNT CONFIRMED

Jesus believed in the Genesis account of the Flood. When describing conditions in the earth at the time of his return and second presence, he said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:26,27) If Jesus was mistaken concerning the Flood, then we could have little or no confidence in any of his teachings. However, Jesus was not mistaken, as archeologists have since confirmed through evidence found of a catastrophic flood thousands of years ago.

The Genesis record of Abraham, and the promises God made to him, are likewise discounted by many modern schools of thought. Here again, Jesus believed in Abraham, and referred to him several times. On one occasion he observed, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." (John 8:56) Abraham's vision of Christ's day was the result of the promise God made to him, that through his "seed" all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) Evidently Abraham understood that this seed of promise would be someone who would rescue the race from sin and death and bring blessings to all the people. This, which Abraham saw by the eye of faith, we now know has been the very mission of the great Messiah, Christ Jesus, who died and rose again as man's Redeemer.

Paul confirms this viewpoint, also mentioning Abraham. He says, "Now to Abraham and his seed

were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” (Gal. 3:16) Then, in Hebrews 11:8-10, we read, “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Paul wrote that God preached beforehand the gospel unto Abraham—the good news being contained in the promise that through the Messiah all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gal. 3:8) This same gospel, or “good tidings,” was proclaimed by the angel who announced the birth of Jesus: “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”—Luke 2:10

If Abraham was merely a legendary character, then no promises were ever made to him. This would mean that the first promise of the gospel is a fraud. In that case Jesus was deceived if he supposed that Abraham actually did exist and looked forward to the coming of a “seed” which would bless all mankind. In such a case, we would have no foundation at all in the Bible for “the gospel of Christ, ... the power of God unto salvation.”—Rom. 1:16

Jesus and the apostles corroborate the existence of Abraham by their many references to this “Friend of God,” who is the father of the faithful.

(James 2:23; Rom. 4:11,12,16) Abraham's name appears in the New Testament more than seventy times. One of the very important references is in Hebrews 2:16, where we are informed that Jesus "took on," or "came to help" Abraham's seed. (*International Standard Version*) This he did by becoming that seed, through which all the families of the earth will, in due time, be blessed.—Gal. 3:16; Acts 3:25,26

Another incident recorded in Genesis with which Abraham was associated was the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Apostle Peter refers to this. He said that God, "turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."—II Pet. 2:6

Genesis records the experience of Abraham offering his son Isaac in sacrifice. Hebrews 11:17-19 refers to this. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

In the Book of Acts we find Stephen, the first Christian martyr, confirming the story of Joseph and the jealousy of his brethren which caused them to sell him into slavery. God was with Joseph, Stephen said, and "delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt." (Acts 7:9,10) We can say that nearly every prominent person and incident in Genesis is confirmed in the New Testament.

JONAH

One of the Old Testament accounts which has been classified by the critics as a fantasy of the first order is the one pertaining to Jonah and the account which states that he was swallowed by a “great fish.” (Jonah 1:17) Jesus, however, believed this report to be true, and he spoke about it, as we find in this passage: “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”—Matt. 12:38-40

Jesus then added, “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here.” (vs. 41) From this it is evident that Jesus had the complete story of Jonah in mind, and believed it. The “sign” of Jonah is the fact that as Jonah was saved from the belly of the great fish, so Jesus would be raised from the dead. Few of the Israelites of Jesus’ day believed this sign. They denied that Jesus had been raised from the dead, even as the critics now deny that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, and that after his deliverance he preached to the Ninevites and led them to repentance.

THE MANNA

Jesus, in confirming the fact that he would give his life that the dying race might be restored to life,

referred to his flesh, his humanity, as “bread which cometh down from heaven,” and used the manna which fell in the wilderness to sustain the Israelites as an illustration. (Exod. 16:12-35) We quote Jesus’ words: “I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:47-51) Thus does the Master confirm another of the great miracles recorded in the Old Testament.

MOSES

Moses, like Abraham, is one of the outstanding personalities of the Old Testament, and over and over again Jesus either quotes from him or refers to him. Moses, in fact, is referred to eighty times in the New Testament, more than any other Old Testament figure. He was the great lawgiver of Israel, having written what the Bible refers to as “the book of the law.” (Gal. 3:10) In the past, critics have claimed that the art of writing was not known in Moses’ day. Now, however, it is realized that writing was known and practiced long before the days of Moses. Jesus knew this and adds his testimony to the authenticity of Moses’ writings.

Speaking to two of his disciples after his resurrection, comforting them with the fact that his death had been foretold, and therefore was not a miscarriage of the divine plan, Jesus quoted from the prophecies. He said to them, “O fools, and slow

of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”—Luke 24:25-27

After Jesus left the two disciples, and they realized that it had been the resurrected Jesus who had been speaking to them, they said to each other, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (vs. 32) We can well imagine the feelings of these two disciples when they became convinced of Jesus’ resurrection, and that his suffering and death were parts of God’s plan which had been foretold by the prophets. May our hearts likewise burn within us more and more as the evidence abounds that the entire Word of God is truly a firm foundation for our faith.

DANIEL

One of the favorite prophets for attack by the critics is Daniel. Here again Jesus disagrees. He said, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place.” (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 12:11) Here we have Jesus not only referring to Daniel, but also quoting from his prophetic record.

Daniel 12:1 speaks of a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” Although he does not mention Daniel by name, Jesus refers to this prophecy, speaking of “the time of trouble” as “great tribulation.” He says, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of

the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."—Matt. 24:21,22

The Book of Hebrews also confirms incidents recorded in the Book of Daniel. The account of the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace is well known to Bible readers, as is also the experience of Daniel in the lions' den. Critics would like us to believe that these are merely fanciful stories with no foundation in fact. However, the writer of Hebrews knew that they were real. In this book the apostle presents a number of the experiences of the faithful ones of old, referring to them as those, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire." It was Daniel who "stopped the mouths of lions," and the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace who "quenched the violence of fire," all "through faith" in the miracle-working power of God.—Heb. 11:33,34

Throughout this same chapter of Hebrews, we find confirmation of many other incidents recorded in the Old Testament. Given in brief statements, it shows how these ancient heroes demonstrated their faith in God and in his ability to care for them. Paul mentions Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Joseph and Moses. Of Moses the apostle says that he forsook Egypt, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."—vss. 25-27

By faith, we are told, the Israelites "passed through the Red sea as by dry land," and that "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed

about seven days.” Then Paul speaks of Gideon, who defeated the hordes of the Midianites; and of Rahab, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel and the prophets.—vss. 29-32

In the Old Testament we have the records of two mothers whose children were awakened from the sleep of death. One was the son of a widow, and the other was a Shunamite woman’s son. One miracle was performed by Elijah, and the other by Elisha. (I Kings 17:19-23; II Kings 4:32-36) Paul refers to these two miracles with the simple statement, “Women received their dead raised to life again.”—Heb. 11:35

Paul knew that these miracles of the Old Testament would be followed during the Messianic kingdom by much greater miracles—even the resurrection of all the dead. Speaking of the faithfulness of the Ancient Worthies, he indicates that their inspiration to faithfulness was their hope of “a better resurrection.” In Acts 24:15 Paul speaks of this better resurrection as the resurrection of the “just,” and asserts that the faithful of the past who had hope toward God, believed that there would be a resurrection, “both of the just and the unjust.”

What a great miracle that will be—the resurrection of all mankind! This will not be accomplished in a day but will be the work of the entire thousand-year kingdom of the Messiah. (Rev. 20:6) The “just,” the faithful ones of Old Testament times, will be the first to be restored to life, as “princes in all the earth.” (Ps. 45:16) These will then cooperate in the glorious work of that kingdom, assisting in the recovery and restoration of the “unjust” of mankind back to righteousness and favor with God, through

the holy influences and conditions of the kingdom then in effect under the rulership of Christ.

There are many other quotations and references in the New Testament to the people and events of the Old Testament. However, we believe we have referred to a sufficient number of these to establish the fact that Jesus and the apostles of the New Testament indeed believed that the Old Testament was the inspired Word of God. In this day of increasing chaos and distress in the world around us, it is especially comforting to realize that the testimony of the entire Scriptures is harmoniously built on the message of the gospel of Christ, which holds out such a glorious hope for all mankind. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JANUARY 6—“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”—Psalm 90:12 (Z. '01-333 Hymn 74)

JANUARY 13—“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”—I John 2:1 (Z. '01-233 Hymn 213)

JANUARY 20—“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”—Hebrews 12:7 (Z. '95-107 Hymn 335)

JANUARY 27—“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”—Proverbs 4:23 (Z. '99-140 Hymn 198)

Activity and Statistical Report

For the year ended September 30, 2021

THE DAWN continues to engage in the blessed work of spreading the glorious Gospel of the kingdom by means of both the printed page and the many forms of electronic media available today. With God's providence evident throughout the year just ended, and by his marvelous grace, we are pleased to present this report to our readers.

During 2021 the Dawn was able to increase its printing and witnessing activities in several areas compared to the previous year. In particular, expenditures related to overseas printing and witness work as well as internet advertising grew substantially during the year, increasing nearly 16%.

In total, the Dawn's operating expenses in 2021 were 3.6% below the previous year. We had a net operating deficit, excluding bequests and investment income, of (\$411,306), compared to a 2020 deficit of (\$424,178). The table on the following page provides details of operating revenue and expenses for the 2021 fiscal year:

Income	Receipts	Expenditures
Revenue (excluding bequests and investment income)	<u>\$68,924</u>	
Expenses		
Radio and TV (domestic)		\$ 66,507
Radio and TV (foreign)		27,884
Internet and Other Media		107,654
Other Foreign Support		13,348
Shipping/Mailing (domestic and foreign)		73,447
Shop Operating Expense		33,512
Plant Operating Expense		139,136
House Operating Expense		<u>18,742</u>
Total Expenses		\$480,230
Less Income	<u>68,924</u>	
Net Operating Deficit	\$(411,306)	

ACTIVITIES IN 2021

The Dawn magazine is currently printed in eight languages. In addition, the English Dawn is printed in India for the Indian brethren and their witness efforts. They also translate the English Dawn into some of the local languages. *Hope* booklets continue to be sent upon request to funeral homes in the United States, and are also ordered by brethren to use in local obituary work.

The *Frank & Ernest* radio program is currently broadcast on sixteen stations in the United States, as well as on stations in South Africa, West Africa, India, the Caribbean, Central America, South America, England and North America short wave.

In 2021 the Dawn once again placed ads in almanacs offering various booklets. This continues to be an effective method of advertising, as it reaches an audience which seems to be especially receptive to the message of the Bible.

The Dawn website yields requests for literature from many countries around the world. It also has available for online reading or download thousands of pages of current and archived booklets, books, and Dawn magazine issues.

In 2021 the Dawn's Internet keyword advertising continued to provide many responses. We advertised 39 booklets in English, 12 booklets in Spanish, 8 booklets in French, and 3 booklets in German. During the past year, the number of "clicks" to various keywords, which brings the user to the Dawn's ad page, was over 331,000 for all languages combined. This was an increase of 39% from 2020. The viewing of these ads generated over 2,000 mail responses for booklets. Booklets read online as a result of the same ads totaled approximately 14,600. In 2022 we plan to add new booklet offerings in French and German languages, and also implement other changes in order to further enhance responses in this highly effective area of the Dawn's witness activities.

The Dawn's YouTube channel, *The Dawn Magazine—Monthly Video*, continued to broadcast the message of Truth during the past year. In 2021, 22 new videos were added, bringing the total number posted on the channel to 153. Among those added were the *Parables of Jesus* Dawn article series from 2015-2016, and *For This Cause*. During the year, the videos were viewed 3,128 times, for a total of over 21,000 minutes. In the coming year, we plan to begin adding the weekly International Bible Study lessons which appear each month in *The Dawn* magazine. They will include audio narrations of the original text, with the addition of video content.

In 2021, a new effort was begun in which a free, electronic subscription to *The Dawn* magazine was offered to any who wish to subscribe. The first electronic issue was sent by email in March 2021 to approximately 80 recipients. As of November 2021, the electronic issue of *The Dawn* magazine was sent to 286 email addresses. We are pleased with the results of this effort and expect it to grow more popular in the future.

From December 2020 to January 2021, the Dawn engaged in a one-month billboard advertising effort in the Orlando, Florida area. Fourteen billboard locations in high traffic areas were selected. A beautiful color graphic of the Earth as viewed from space was displayed, along with the simple message, “Peace on Earth” ... Coming Soon, and a website address of the same name. Anyone accessing the website would see the same billboard graphic, with a direct link to the booklet, “Jesus, the World’s Savior,” and an online order form should they desire to have a copy of the booklet mailed to them. During the course of the effort, the Peace on Earth web page was accessed 1,921 times, and the booklet was viewed or requested by mail 79 times. This, of course, does not take into account the many thousands of drive-by views of the billboards, many of which perhaps gave individuals pause to think about the prospect of peace on earth, as promised in Luke 2:14.

TRANSITION OF PLANT OPERATIONS TO FLORIDA

As reported last year, transition of the Dawn’s physical plant operations from New Jersey to Florida began in the spring of 2020, though very cautiously due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During 2021, this transition continued, by the Lord’s grace and over-

ruling providence, and with the assistance of many willing hands and hearts.

In the early part of the year, we resumed production of foreign language Dawn magazines, which had been necessary to put on hold for most of 2020 due to the pandemic. With many thanks to Dawn workers, both remote and on-site, we are presently caught up with all eight languages of Dawn magazine production.

In April, the Florida Dawn facility received two 53-foot semi-trucks loaded with all the literature inventory previously housed in New Jersey. During the ensuing weeks, the inventory was recorded and organized for storage in the warehouse portion of the Longwood, Florida facility. Here again, we offer heartfelt thanks to those brethren who labored for many weeks, both in the sending and receiving of the precious books, booklets, and other literature which contain the message of the Gospel of the kingdom.

In the late spring of the year, another key part of the transition was completed with the sale of the Dawn Home in Rutherford, New Jersey, and the Dawn Plant in East Rutherford. Although we are very thankful that the Lord overruled that these matters were successfully consummated, we cannot help but reflect on the many decades of dedicated service which emanated from these two blessed locations, and the long list of faithful brethren who walked and labored within their walls. Indeed, it is that rich heritage which continues to motivate us to “do with our might” what our hands find to do. —Eccles. 9:10

Most recently, the Dawn began reprinting booklets that have been in short supply or temporarily out of

stock. This has included standardizing size and format as necessary, and will continue as more booklets are reprinted. In November, the Dawn printed and had bound a new softcover book, *The Mind of Christ*. It is 245 pages in length, and is taken from a series of 24 articles which appeared in *The Dawn* magazine in 2013 and 2014. An ad for this new book is prominently displayed on the inside front cover of this issue.

STAFFING

The Dawn could not have accomplished any of the above activities without the assistance of many willing hands. Currently there are approximately twenty brethren in North America involved in these efforts, both on-site and remotely, each one playing a vital role in the work of the Dawn.

Overseas, we have the assistance of brethren in numerous foreign countries, including Australia, Germany, France, India, Italy, and several countries in Africa and South America. We thank all the brethren for their continued work and support. It is our privilege to labor with you in our Father's vineyard.

THE YEAR AHEAD

We are excited about the prospects for 2022, knowing, of course, that all of our efforts and plans are in the all-wise hands of our Heavenly Father. Most of all, we rejoice in the privilege of bearing witness to the Truth given to us by our Heavenly Father.

We ask for your prayers on behalf of the work of the Dawn, as daily we seek to proclaim the Gospel message throughout the earth, and strive to be good stewards over the opportunities which God's providence has made available to us. ■

General Convention Bulletin

July 16-21, 2022—Johnstown, Pennsylvania

THE 2022 GENERAL CONVENTION is currently planned to be held in-person at the beautiful facilities of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, on the dates noted above. If it is determined that an in-person convention is not possible or advisable for reasons related to COVID-19, a live online convention will be held during the same week.

Air conditioned rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style air conditioned apartments with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities will be available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge if both beds are occupied.

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

This year's convention theme text will be taken from Hebrews 10:21,22, "Having an High Priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Other special

program features are planned, to be detailed in coming months.

A complete pricing table and registration form is provided for your convenience immediately following this announcement. We encourage you to register early. Advance payment is not required. If advance payment is made, it will be refunded in full if the convention is unable to be held in-person. We hope that you will begin to make plans now to attend this year's General Convention. ■

	Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast		\$8.00	\$7.00
Lunch		10.00	9.00
Dinner		14.00	13.00
Total, three meals		\$32.00	\$29.00
Lodging (per night)			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$42.00	\$37.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$37.00	\$35.00
**single occ (LLC)		\$76.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$42.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$410*	\$375*
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$275*	\$240*
**single occ (LLC)		\$616*	\$581*
single occ (non-LLC)		\$319*	\$284*

*If no breakfasts, deduct—\$40

**Air conditioned

***100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group.

NOTE: A Convention Fee of \$10.00 per person, regardless of age, length of stay, or lodging and meal arrangements, will be added to your invoice to help offset convention expenses unrelated to lodging and meals.

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707
E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com (407) 670-4189

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 15, 2022				
Saturday, 16th				
Sunday, 17th				
Monday, 18th				
Tuesday, 19th				
Wednesday, 20th				
Thursday, 21st				

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

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

Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)

Address:

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

R. Charlton

Online Broadcast of Convention
Kampala, Uganda, Africa
January 29,30

A. Kopczyk

Online Broadcast of Convention
Kampala, Uganda, Africa
January 29,30

A. Loutsky

Online Broadcast of Convention
Phoenix, AZ January 15,16

H. Montague

Online Broadcast of Convention
Phoenix, AZ January 15,16

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Wanda (Szarkowicz) Kocot, Chrzanow, Poland
—November 27. Age, 90

Brother Peter Cyris, Myslowicy, Poland—December 2. Age, 68

Sister Waclawa Forys, Bukownie-Wodacej, Poland
—December 2. Age, 94

Sister Billie Belea, Clarksville, TX—December 6.
Age, 50

2022 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Thursday, April 14, 2022.

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

CHICAGO CONVENTION, January 1,2—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact C. Martire. Phone: (312) 925-5434 or Email: christina.martire@gmail.com

PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 15,16—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact A. Mengos. Email: samengos@yahoo.com

AUSTRALIAN CONVENTION, January 21-23—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE (UBERCONFERENCE) ONLY—Contact R. Charlton. Email: randscharlton@bigpond.com

KAMPALA, UGANDA CONVENTION, January 29,30—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Jjuuko. Email: eliezer1874@yahoo.com

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 18-20—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact K. Freer. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION—March 5-7—WILL BE IN PERSON, AND BROADCAST ONLINE ALSO—Holiday Inn Orlando Airport, 5750 T. G. Lee Boulevard, Orlando, FL 32822. Contact L. McClellan. Phone: (727) 260-2632 or Email: larrydmcclellan@gmail.com

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, April 2—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

**DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April
2,3—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—**
Contact P. Nemesh. Email: nemeshfp@aol.com

Gratitude and Courage

Our hearts o'erflow in prayer and praise
To thee most gracious Lord,
That thou hast opened up our eyes
To understand thy Word.

That thou hast sought us out to run
This narrow heavenly way.
O lead us by thy Spirit, Lord,
For this we daily pray.

We're thankful for our blessings, too,
We never should complain,
For even trials are stepping stones
That bring us lasting gain.

Sometimes discouragement comes in
To hide our face from thee.
'Tis then, we pray, grasp tight our hand
That we may closer be.

Give us fresh courage to go on,
For in OUR strength, we're weak,
We "need thee every hour," dear Lord,
Thy will alone we seek.

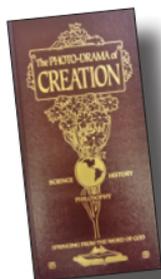
With gratitude and courage then,
O let us follow on,
By faith we see the prize in sight
As we behold the dawn.

—Poems of the Way

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD

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

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

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

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 55

