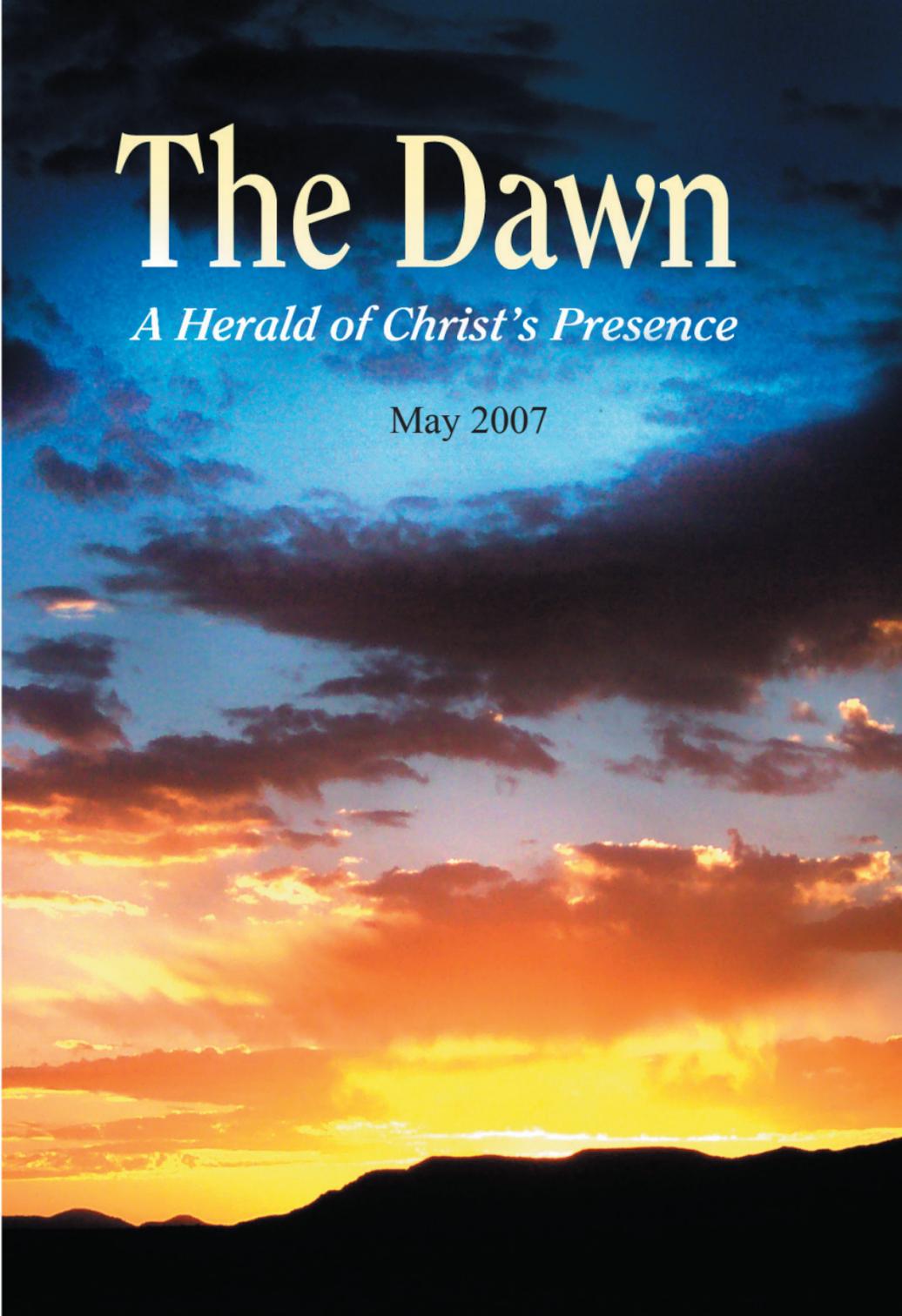


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Strife Amongst Brothers: The Shiites and Sunnis

“I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.”
—Haggai 2:22

ONE OF THE FIRST SCRIPTURAL accounts of man’s earliest history records the murder of Abel. This occurred when the hand of Cain—the jealous elder son of our first parents, Adam and Eve—was raised up against his younger brother Abel to slay him. This terribly violent and unmerciful act was committed because of pent-up jealousy that arose when Cain’s offering of the fruit of the soil was less acceptable to God than was his brother Abel’s offering. Abel had given God the firstfruits from his flock of sheep, which involved the shedding of blood, and was thus a more valuable sacrifice.—Gen. 4:3-8

This tragic scene was a result of sin and disobedience to the laws of God when they were violated by Adam and Eve, and the sentence of death being pronounced against them. The whole human family has thus inherited this penalty. Death became a reality because of sin when it was played out in the heart of Cain. “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.”—Song of Sol. 8:6

Since that time more than six thousand years ago, the downward spiral and terrible consequences of Adam’s, and then Cain’s, actions have resulted in the human creation’s history having been written in blood. Many times over has the hand of one brother been raised up against another with mortal consequences.

HAGGAI’S PROPHECY

In our featured text, Haggai’s prophetic words reveal the sobering fact that the end of the present Gospel Age will culminate in a violent struggle with sin and evil when every man’s sword will be raised against his brother. The prophet began to record his prophecy soon after the Israelite nation returned from their seventy years of captivity and exile in Babylon. He was the first of the prophets to whom God spoke at that time in connection with Israel’s restoration, and he began to write on the first day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius’ reign. (Hag. 1:1) Our text was written on the twenty-fourth day of the month (Hag. 2:20), which was the ninth month.—vs. 10

It is also noted that Zechariah, another of God's Old Testament prophets, began to write his prophecy in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, which was about two months later than Haggai. (Zech. 1:1) These two contemporary prophets of God thus spoke of the same momentous period of Israel's history, their restoration period and Israel's hope for rebuilding their Temple, which represented the very center of their religious life and observance.

ZERUBBABEL

One of the principal characters in Haggai's prophecy relates to Zerubbabel, to whom the prophetic words of our text were addressed. He was a direct descendant of David, and one of the ancestral links in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus. (Luke 3:27,31) He also became Israel's first governor of the repatriated Jews when they returned from Babylon. We read, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth."—Hag. 2:21

The prophet further reveals the eternal purpose of God concerning the overthrow of the kingdoms of this world, and the armies that would be gathered together to support them. This, he writes, will culminate in the hand of everyone being raised up against his brother.—vs. 22

Addressing the one to whom God would select to carry out this great work, the prophet writes, "In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts."

(vs. 23) Thus was a special sign, a ‘signet,’ given to Zerubbabel, who was especially chosen to be a servant of God.

A SECOND WITNESS

Concerning this servant of God, the Prophet Zechariah serves as a second witness to the Divine purpose and arrangements. He wrote, “This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might [army, *Marginal Translation*], nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Zech. 4:6) This great work would not be accomplished by the worldly wisdom of men, nor by their superior military might, but by the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

The prophet describes earth’s present kingdoms as a symbolic great mountain, and that the ultimate purpose of God is to destroy this man-made institution, which will be brought down even as a level “plain.” “Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.” (vs. 7) In the words of Zechariah’s prophecy, we read that the hands of God’s servant would also lay the foundation of a great house of God, and we are also told that his hands would finish it.—vss. 8,9

Zechariah’s concluding remarks speak of a far grander and future time, “Who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.”—vs. 10

FOLLOWERS OF MOHAMMED

Many years after the prophets Haggai and Zechariah recorded the visions that had been revealed to them, Islam's prophet Mohammed was born in Mecca, which was in the province of Hagaz, Saudi Arabia, in the year A.D. 571. Although he was brought up under humble circumstances, his life changed abruptly when he relates having received revelations that he claimed were dictated to him by the angel Gabriel around the year A.D. 612. It is also claimed that Gabriel became very important to him, and was the authority for the whole Koran as further revelations were abundantly poured out to him.

Mohammed's followers believed that the archangel Gabriel had also taken a black stone from space and presented it to the patriarch Abraham, and that it was preserved at Mecca. Later, Mecca became the scene of annual pilgrimages where the 'Holy Stone' was kept. The stone was located in a specially prepared building in a holy square where the pilgrims would gather to circle around.

MOHAMMED DIES

Upon the death of Mohammed in A.D. 632, a major split gradually developed between his Muslim followers to select a successor—a caliph who would carry on with his religious beliefs. He had ruled as the temporal and spiritual head of the Muslims and during the years following his death various attempts were made to find a successor. Some of these caliphs were selected with much opposition, and in some cases even ending in violence.

A line was beginning to be firmly drawn between two groups of believers over the issue of selecting

successors. This split resulted in an official division between the two factions in the year A.D. 680. One group of Mohammed's followers, the Shiites, insisted upon their belief that succeeding caliphs should only be selected from the genealogical line of the prophet Mohammed himself. The Sunni division, on the other hand, wanted to follow the tribal tradition of having a council of elders select the successor. They believed that successive leaders to Mohammed could be chosen by a consensus vote of general agreement.

SHIITE AND SUNNI HOSTILITY

Although modern Islam continues to be divided between Shiites and Sunnis, these two groups of believers agree that Allah is the only true god, and that Mohammed was their last prophet. They also agree that Allah will, at some future time, resurrect all dead humans to question their beliefs and actions. However, there are other points of difference concerning religious beliefs, practices, and observances between the two factions of Islam, in addition to the general disagreement involving the selection of successors.

Until recent years, many Americans had paid little attention to middle-eastern religious practices. But today it must be acknowledged that Islam is the second largest religion in the world with over one billion followers and growing rapidly. The two major branches of Islam continue to divide Mohammed's followers more than thirteen hundred years after his death. At the present time, the Shiites have approximately 120 million believers, while the Sunnis have about 940 million. Each of

these two sects also have separate divisions within their own ranks, but the Wahhabi branch of the Sunnis is one of the largest and better known.

If history had taken a different turn, and all Muslims were firmly united under one central cause, they would have been much more powerful to deal with today than they already are, and there would doubtless be many more problems to settle. With the American-led invasion of Iraq, and several years of war and increased violence that has followed, a most profound impact is now being felt throughout the Middle East. This has been especially true in Iraq where the Shiite population stands at about 50%, while the Sunnis have approximately 40%. Non-Muslims and others make up the balance.

PERSIAN IRAN

The situation in Iran is much different than in Iraq which has an almost evenly divided population. Iran is a Persian nation, and not Arabic, and in recent decades it has reemerged with a new sense of national pride which is fostered by its 93% majority Shiite population. Until 1979, Mohammad Reza Shah had controlled the country with a strong hand which included the Savak, his secret police, while Ayatollah Khomeini had been living in exile in Iraq, and then later in France.

Growing opposition to the Shah's reign ended in a landslide victory in which a national referendum had been held on April 1, 1979. There was only one choice offered to the people at that time for an either Yes or No vote to install a Shiite-controlled Islamic Republic. Ayatollah Khomeini became the supreme spiritual leader of the country and declared

Iran an Islamic Republic with a new constitution that reflected his ideals. With the fall of the Shah, and the Islamic revolution which followed, a Shiite government was thus installed in Tehran.

This situation exists in marked contrast to the ruling powers in the Arab Islamic nations where the Sunnis exert control, although there are in some cases large and often impoverished Shiite populations in these areas. Iranian-based mullahs, the religious clerics who perform duties in Islam that are comparable to other faiths—such as ministers, priests, and rabbis—have stirred up Shiite communities throughout the Middle East and have encouraged them to take control of their respective governments.

GROWING DILEMMA

In the meantime, radical terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Al Qaeda continue to exert their powerful influences as the age-old rivalry continues between the Sunnis and the Shiites. For the past few years, the battle between radical Islam and the West has been dominated by Al Qaeda and its leaders—including the notorious Osama Bin Laden—who are members of strict Sunni sects, including the Wahhabi group. Afghanistan's Taliban are also adherents of the Sunni sect.

Some of the insurgent groups operating in Iraq—most notably Al Qaeda—are Sunni, while the Mahadi Army, also operating in Iraq, is a Shiite militia group. Hezbollah is a Shiite group backed by Iran which battled against the powerful Israeli Army in the summer of 2006 with greater effectiveness than has any other group in recent times. The group's

struggle is often expressly linked to the Shiite cause.

Failure to properly understand the historical background of this conflict has led to devastating effects for the administration of the United States government, especially in connection with its Middle-East policy in general, and more particularly its war in Iraq. Some critics say that senior policy-makers have been too slow to recognize the extent and complexity of the lingering animosity that exists between the two major groups of Muslims. Some Iraqi people are once again embracing the Shiite form of Islam that Hussein's Sunni regime suppressed for over three decades.

The lack of a cohesive postwar political and economic strategy for Iraq threatens the chances for the development of a workable, secular democratic government in the country. Iraq has instead developed into a battleground between Shiite and Sunni Muslims, who both seek to fill the leadership void created by the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime.

WIDENING STRUGGLE

Iran, which is predominately Shiite, is now challenging what was once the traditional Sunni dominance in the area, and intensifying violence between the two groups that has raised awareness of a widening conflict across the entire Middle East. The stakes are very high in this conflict, including the control of oil which is the very lifeblood of the American, as well as the European, democracies.

The problem has carried over into Lebanon, where the continuing conflict between Sunnis and Shiites is at the very heart of the present dilemma,

and threatens the outbreak of civil war. The Shiites, led by Iranian controlled Hezbollah militia, have made war on the democratically elected government of Lebanon; and, during the recent war with Israel, they virtually became the government of the Lebanese nation.

Among the ruling monarchy in Saudi Arabia, governed by a conservative Sunni regime, there is fear that the large Shiite minority will assert its political rights in the country. The situation is dangerous because the Shiites inhabit the oil-rich eastern district of the kingdom. Also, in oil-rich Bahrain the Shiites comprise a majority of the population, and are attempting to gain control from the Sunnis who have governed the country for decades.

PERILOUS TIMES

The words ‘perilous times,’ and other ominous expressions, are often heard in our day when describing the chaotic situation that exists in the turbulent Middle East and other places in our increasingly violent world.

When writing to Timothy, whom he addressed as his “dearly beloved son” (II Tim. 1:2), the Apostle Paul spoke of the time in which we are now living, and referred to it as the “last days”—the closing years of this present Gospel Age. He said, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”—chap. 3:1

The apostle used the word ‘perilous’ to identify our day as one in which there would be many evidences of violence, lawlessness, and unrighteousness associated with it. He enumerates some of the various characteristic signs that would prevail at

that time in the verses immediately following.—
chap. 3:2-5

The word perilous has been defined as something that is very difficult or dangerous to deal with. It also carries the thought of being fierce or furious, and has thus been variously translated in our modern-day Bibles. The Greek word that Paul used when writing to Timothy is only found in one other instance in the New Testament where the translators used the combination of words “exceeding fierce” to describe the Gadarene demoniacs that Jesus once encountered. Of this account we read, “When he [Jesus] was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.”—Matt. 8:28

When Jesus confronted these ‘exceeding fierce’ demons they challenged him: “And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” (vs. 29) It was at this point in Jesus’ early ministry that we witness the tremendous power that he possessed over evil and evildoers, when he commanded the devils that had inhabited the two men to enter a herd of swine, which in turn ran violently down a steep hill into the sea where they perished. (vss. 30-32) We may be sure that our Lord has all things well in hand to deal with the rising tide of evil that prevails over the earth during the foretold end of this age.

THE GREATER ZERUBBABEL

Haggai and Zechariah, the two contemporary prophets of God who spoke of Israel’s first governor

Zerubbabel, upon their return from Babylonian captivity, were unaware of the grander significance and spiritual meaning associated with their respective accounts. Haggai tells us that the heavens and the earth will be shaken by his powerful hand (Hag. 2:21), and that this shaking would culminate in the total destruction of the kingdoms of this earth and man's rule over them. (vs. 22) Zerubbabel, in turn, was given a "signet" or special mark in recognition of the authority that had thus been entrusted to him. This sign, however, pointed directly to our Lord Jesus who is the antitypical Zerubbabel, and to the administration of his future kingdom of peace and righteousness that will be established over all the earth. (vs. 23) The significance of the 'signet' is also brought to our attention by the Prophet Jeremiah.—Jer. 22:24

Zechariah provides even more pictorial detail concerning Zerubbabel. He writes that the "LORD of hosts" has promised that the power of the Holy Spirit from on high will accomplish this wonderful and most blessed work. (Zech. 4:6) By the hand of the antitypical Zerubbabel—our glorious Lord Jesus—the great mountain of Satan's present world empire will be brought down to its ultimate and inevitable destruction.—vs. 7

It was the hope of the returned Israelites to rebuild their Temple, and in due time the foundation of that house of God was laid by the hands of Zerubbabel. Furthermore, it was by his hands that the building of the house would be completed. (vss. 8,9) We see the grand and wonderful antitypical work accomplished by our Lord Jesus in laying the foundation of the spiritual temple of his body members

during the course of his earthly ministry.—John 2:18-21

In reference to this, the prophet was posed the question, “Who hath despised the day of small things” (vs. 10), that some would be unable to discern. It may appear to some that it has been an insignificant time, but unknown to the worldly-wise the entire Gospel Age has been a time for calling and selecting those who would share in the work of blessing all mankind as the bride of Christ during his future kingdom.

We see a deeper understanding in Paul’s perspective on this question concerning ‘the day of small things.’ “Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” (I Cor. 1:26,27) In that he spoke of the spiritual temple of our Lord’s body he added, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”—I Cor. 3:16

The call to the footstep followers of our Lord Jesus is being accomplished throughout the nearly two thousand years since the building of the spiritual temple began. The people will ultimately rejoice when they see the plummet displayed in the hand of our Lord Jesus, the greater Zerubbabel. They will be glad when they come to understand the marvelous oversight of the seven eyes of our Lord God who will have then brought all things to their glorious fulfillment.—Zech. 4:10, *Marginal Translation*

A MIGHTY HAND

The powerful hand of Almighty God was manifest to Gideon and the small band of men that accompanied him during one of the most dramatic encounters recorded in the Bible. We read, “The three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man’s sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host.” (Judg. 7:22) At the close of this age, we are now witnesses of a corrupt and violent society that is moving ever closer to the foretold anarchy which marks our time and place in earth’s history. Although the level of violence will no doubt increase, we may rest in full confidence of faith that God’s eternal purpose is soon to be accomplished. The hosts of sin and the powers of evil will fall upon one another, brother against brother, to bring about their inevitable destruction, and to prepare the world for the glorious reign of our Lord and Savior during his future kingdom of peace and righteousness. ■

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 Helica O. U. Ohiri, Ohoba, Nigeria—March.

Sister Ruth Smith, Delaware Valley—March 13.

Brother Joshua Boadi, Anyefuri, Ghana—March 24.

Age, 61

Sister Frances McKee, Springfield, OH—March 26.

Age, 85

Sister Irene Mitchell, Portland, OR—April 3. Age, 92

Finding Community

*Key Verse: "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."
—Revelation 19:6*

*Selected Scripture:
Revelation 19*

THIS MONTH WE WILL CON-sider lessons from the closing chapters of the highly symbolic book of Revelation. They detail to us the climactic events which will bring to completion God's plan of salvation, through which all families of the earth will be blessed. (Gen. 12:3) Today's lesson focuses on the authority and honor due God and his son Jesus as they, with singleness of purpose, go about the process of ending earth's old order, the results of which have been sin and death under the rulership of Satan, after which will be ushered in Christ's kingdom of righteousness, and the prospect of everlasting life for mankind.

Verse 2 of our lesson indicates, in symbolic language, that one of the steps of ending this old order is the judging and bringing to an end the false religious systems, which Satan has authored over the many centuries since Jesus and the Apostles put forth the pure Gospel message. Thus illustrated is the important principle that before Truth and righteousness can hold sway, false teachings, and the sources which promulgate them, must be dealt with. The teachings of Truth which will be the foundation of Christ's kingdom cannot be made

known to mankind in general until the false teachings of error are removed, never to rise again.

Our Key Verse shows the tremendous praise given to God throughout his heavenly realm as he uses his omnipotent power at the end of this present Gospel Age to once and for all rid the earth of all false religious systems. Verses 7-9 continue this song of praise, only now it is directed further to God's son Jesus, "the Lamb," and the church "his wife." The completion of this "little flock" (Luke 12:32) of faithful followers of Jesus will take place also at the close of this same period. This will be a time of great rejoicing, "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."—Rev. 19:7,8

In verses 11-21 of our lesson is detailed, again in symbolic language, the final battle between the then completed Christ, head and body, pictured in verses 11 and 14 as riding "white horses," and the remaining forces of evil in the earth which must be destroyed in order that the kingdom of righteousness, referred to earlier in our lesson, can be established. All remaining evil forces, whether they are religious, social, economic, or political, will be brought to destruction by the one whom God has given this authority—his son Jesus, and his bride the church. How appropriate will be these words concerning Jesus at that time, "He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."—vs. 16

Thus God, his son Jesus, and the completed bride of Christ, will bring to a conclusion this "present evil world" (Gal. 1:4), in order that the kingdom so many have prayed for—"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth" (Matt. 6:10)—can be established for the teaching, blessing, and ultimate giving of everlasting life, to all the willing and obedient of mankind. ■

The Eternal Home

Key Verse: *“I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”*
—*Revelation 21:3*

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 21:1-8

God, is shown as “passed away” in John’s vision, replaced by God’s new order centered in the righteous government of Christ’s kingdom. His words echo those spoken by Apostle Peter, who said, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”—II Pet. 3:13

The righteous government of this future kingdom is spoken of in verse 2 of Revelation 21, as being “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Just as literal Jerusalem was the center of all the religious and civil affairs of Israel in the Old Testament types, so symbolically speaking, the new Jerusalem will

JOHN THE REVELATOR

opens this chapter by stating what he had seen in vision, “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1), and that they were to take the place of the former heaven and earth. He was not speaking here of the literal heavens or earth, as Revelation is a book of symbols, but of the heavenly and earthly [religious and civil] order of things. The old order which, through the rulership of Satan (II Cor. 4:4), has led mankind into darkness, sin, death, and alienation from

be the focus of this new kingdom arrangement. It will not be a literal city but, as John explains, will be Christ Jesus and his bride, the church, complete in heavenly glory and power as the rulers of the ‘new heaven and new earth.’ We also understand John’s words ‘coming down from God out of heaven’ as symbolic, not that Christ and his church will literally come down to earth, for they will be Divine, immortal spirit beings, incapable of being seen by the human eye. Rather, they will ‘come down’ in the sense that the purpose of their rulership from heaven will be earth-directed, for the purpose of helping mankind back to perfection of human life enjoyed by Adam and Eve before they sinned, and back to sonship with God as his perfect human creation.

The Key Verse of our lesson states this ultimate purpose of God’s plan, and the reason for Christ’s kingdom, that God might once again dwell with man, and that man might again feel the favor and blessing of God, the ultimate blessing being the gift of eternal life. All those willing to learn, and who obey the righteous laws of Christ’s kingdom, will be taught righteousness and, if proven faithful, will be brought back to a complete standing before God their maker in perfection of mind, body, character, and heart. During this time of teaching man, all the stumbling stones that have hindered him from learning righteousness will be removed, not the least of which will be Satan himself, who will be rendered powerless (see Rev. 20:1,2) during that kingdom.

God’s ultimate goal of bringing man back into harmony with him, is shown beautifully in these words of our lesson, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”— Rev. 21:4,5 ■

Living in Our New Home

Key Verse: *“There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”*
—*Revelation 22:5*

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 21:9-22:5

As we continue to read John’s words, we realize his description is not that of a literal city, but the governing and kingly authority which will be placed by God in the hands of his son, the Lamb of God. “I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” (Rev. 21:22,23) The ruling authority of earth’s future kingdom will not be in a temple or any other literal building, but in the Christ, head and body. Likewise, the light that will shine in that city will not be from the sun or moon, but from the Gospel light of Truth which will come from God through his Son, the Lamb. Of God it is stated, “God is

THE NEW JERUSALEM, THE

heavenly phase of Christ’s future kingdom, is symbolically described by John the Revelator in great detail in today’s lesson. His vision of this city (Rev. 21:10-21) as having a great and high wall, twelve gates, twelve foundations, twelve precious stones garnishing the foundations, twelve pearls making up the gates, and a street of pure gold, causes us to marvel at what such a city will be like.

light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (I John 1:5) Likewise, of the Son it is said that he is the “true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” (John 1:9) With such light shining forth from the heavenly kingdom, its message of Truth and righteousness will surely spread rapidly throughout the earth as prophetically stated, “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9

The light of the new Jerusalem, the heavenly phase of the kingdom, will be for the benefit of those dwelling on the earth. “The nations [peoples] . . . shall walk in the light of it. . . . And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations [peoples] into it.” (Rev. 21:24-26) It will be the peoples of earth who reap the benefits of the light of the new Jerusalem. As the understanding of Truth is spread abroad in the earth, man will learn God’s true character, that he is a God of wisdom, justice, love, and power, and that he desires “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”—I Tim. 2:4

John continues this symbolic lesson in chapter 22, stating that in this kingdom there will be a “pure river of water of life,” a “tree of life” which bears twelve kinds of fruit throughout each month of the year, and that the leaves of this tree will have a healing effect upon mankind. (vss. 1,2) These are further illustrations which show that all the means will be provided for man to partake of the water of Truth, to eat and appropriate to themselves the fruitage of holiness in their character, and to heal their minds and hearts from the results of sin that have so plagued them at this present time under the dominion of Satan. Even the earth itself will be transformed back to its original perfect condition, “There shall be no more curse.” (vs. 3) Our key verse summarizes the beauty of this coming kingdom, which will bring blessings to all the willing and obedient of mankind. ■

The Ultimate Happy Ending

Key Verse: “*He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*”
—*Revelation 22:20*

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 22:6-21

To the remainder of mankind is reserved the prospect of living on a restored perfect earth, walking up the “way of holiness” (Isa. 35:8) and, through obedience to the laws of the earthly phase of Christ’s kingdom, attaining human perfection and its resulting everlasting life.—Rev. 21:3,4

In the closing verses of Revelation, we are reminded that it will be up to each individual in Christ’s earthly kingdom, after having learned righteousness, to themselves choose to follow after it from their heart, or to follow after evil. “Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.” (Rev. 22:11, *New American Standard Bible*) As verse

FROM THE OPENING CHAPTERS of Genesis to the closing verses of Revelation, the Bible contains the glorious message of salvation for all mankind. To those striving to live in the footsteps of Jesus in the present age, a part in the heavenly phase of Christ’s kingdom is promised, “glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7)

12 further states, “My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Every man will be rewarded according to his work during that kingdom time. Those who work righteousness from the heart will receive the reward of everlasting human life. Those [few we believe] who continue to work evil, with no heart’s desire to reform even under perfect conditions, will be judged unworthy of life and will be cut off in everlasting death.

The vast majority of mankind will gladly take full advantage of the blessings of Christ’s kingdom and come quickly into line with its righteous laws. To those the promise is given, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” (Rev. 22:14) The prophet Isaiah expresses beautifully the glorious results of Christ’s earthly kingdom, which he pictures as a mountain, “In this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”—Isa. 25:6-9

Our Key Verse fittingly brings to a climax the Bible narrative of God’s plan by stating very simply it is by the coming of the Lord Jesus, both at his First Advent as well as at his second, that God’s ultimate purpose for mankind is to be accomplished. “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift”—the unspeakable and precious gift of his only begotten son Jesus!—II Cor. 9:15 ■

Changed: From Glory to Glory

“We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

—*II Corinthians 3:18*

IN THIS MONTH’S SERIES of “Treasures of the Truth,” we will consider the words of the Apostle Paul in our featured text. He wrote to the brethren at Corinth and he told them that we behold the glory of the Lord as with an ‘open face’ and that we are being changed from ‘glory to glory.’ From these assuring words, the apostle teaches that the Lord’s people are thus being changed into the same image of our Lord Jesus by the wonderful workings of God’s Holy Spirit.

A TRANSFORMING WORK

The word ‘open’ means to uncover, or to unveil (#343, *Strong’s Bible Concordance*), and it is in this manner that we have revealed to us the plans and eternal purpose of our loving Heavenly Father. Communion with God and faithfulness to his Word

of Truth is a transforming process of character development, and a growing up into the likeness of our Lord Jesus. The development of these godlike graces of the Spirit may not be immediately apparent from the human standpoint, “for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” (I Sam. 16:7) But, when the heart is filled with the Spirit of God, even the outward development in righteousness may become more discernable.

Regardless of faith, zeal, or the spirit of self-sacrifice, unless our hearts are filled with the spirit of love, and our words and deeds are thus motivated, we can not be well pleasing to the Lord. Love is the sum total of all the Christian graces. It includes love for God, for his Word, and for his ultimate plan regarding his people. An indwelling spirit of love which transforms us into the image of God and of Christ is possible only to the extent that we have become emptied of self.

OVERCOMING SELF

Self-will bars the way to all true Christian growth and fellowship, and blinds us to the true meaning of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit transforms us into our Lord’s image, and functions through the Word of Truth. Any measure of self-will, therefore, may cause us to turn a deaf ear to the plain teachings of God’s Word, and hinder the wonderful workings of the Holy Spirit of God in our hearts and lives.

If we are striving to be transformed into the likeness of our Lord and his image, ‘from glory to glory,’ as in the words of our text, it is essential that we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We are to seek him earnestly and in the spirit of humble

obedience to know and to do his will. It is one of the fundamental works of the Holy Spirit and its operation, but its significance and purpose have often been misunderstood. “We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6: 4) Walking in newness of life means much more than merely living a holy life to attain to the “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”—Heb. 12:14

“FLESHY TABLES OF THE HEART”

When the Apostle Paul spoke of being transformed from glory to glory through the influence of the Spirit of God, we must consider the context from which our featured text—II Cor. 3:18—has been selected. We read, “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” (vss. 2,3) The apostle is here speaking of the work that is presently being accomplished by the Holy Spirit of God. By that Spirit, God is writing the ‘epistle of Christ’ in the ‘fleshy tables’ of our hearts.

We note an important difference here from God’s promise to establish a New Covenant with the house of Israel during Christ’s future kingdom. At that time, God will write his law in the hearts of all the people, as the Prophet Jeremiah wrote. “This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it

in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”—Jer. 31:33

TABLES OF STONE

Paul is making a distinct comparison between the writing of God’s law on fleshly tables of the hearts of his people at the present time, and with the writing of his Law Covenant which was written upon literal tables of stone that took place prior to the inauguration of the old law. (Exod. 34:4) The writing of the epistle of Christ takes place during the present Gospel Age, and is upon the antitypical hearts of God’s people. This work also precedes the inauguration of the New Covenant that will be made with the house of Israel of which Jeremiah wrote.

This wonderful manifestation of the Spirit becomes more discernable when the apostle explains that those in whose hearts the epistle of Christ is now being written, takes place by the workings of the Holy Spirit of God. “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament [covenant]; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life [quickeneth, *Marginal Translation*].” (II Cor. 3:6) The typical tables of stone that were given to Moses were used by him to teach the people the law of God as we read, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”—Gal. 3:24

LIVING EPISTLES

The living epistles of Christ that are presently being prepared will serve, when all have been brought together, as the Mediator of the New Covenant together with Christ during his future kingdom.

They are designated the epistles of Christ, and their hearts are being written on by God's Spirit to carry the message of Christ and his atoning work to the people. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; . . . Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—II Cor. 5:18-20

BASIS FOR RECONCILIATION

The term covenant signifies an agreement, and to be in lasting covenant relationship with God requires being at one with him, enjoying his favor and blessings. The human family, however, is alienated from him through disobedience and sin, and a reconciliation between God and men will be necessary before an everlasting covenant relationship may exist. It was to bring about this reconciliation that Jesus came to earth to die for the people and to satisfy justice.

The perfect man Jesus willingly assumed that obligation, and gave up his perfect humanity in death as a substitute for Adam and the whole human family that had lost life through him. Jesus' sacrificial work constitutes the basis of reconciliation between God and man. (I Tim. 2:4-6) This opened the way for man to be restored to life and to return to God in faith and obedience to his laws of righteousness.

SHARING WITH CHRIST

Members of the faithful body of Christ will be the "ambassadors" for Christ in carrying forward the work of reconciling the world to God. (II Cor. 5:20) Members of the church do not give their lives as a

ransom for the people. This basic feature of the work of reconciliation was accomplished alone by Jesus. As members of the fallen race they could not possibly give their lives as a ransom to God. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."—Ps. 49:7

The faithful church is invited to participate in a sacrificial service that is associated with the work of reconciliation, as Paul writes, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—Rom. 12:1

It is the privilege of sacrifice that the followers of Jesus are even now engaged as servants or ministers of the New Covenant. (II Cor. 3:6) The matter of being "able ministers" of that covenant is a wonderful prospect. It is illustrated by the type, for Moses as the Mediator of the old Law Covenant served in that capacity. He offered sacrifices prior to the actual inauguration of the covenant. This work included the slaying of the sacrificial animals and filling the basins with blood. This was later used for sprinkling, both the book and all the people.—Exod. 24:5-8

In the antitype, Jesus served in this same manner when he laid down his life as a sacrifice. He referred to his own blood as the blood of the New Covenant, and said, "This is my blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:28) The work of sacrifice is still being carried out in preparation for the inauguration of the New Covenant. Paul explains that this work was not fully accomplished at Calvary.

“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.”—Col. 1:24

ALIVE UNTO GOD

The Apostle Peter teaches that the church of Christ is a priesthood. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” (I Pet. 2:5) The faithful members of the church are thus dying with Christ unto sin, even in the same manner as did Jesus as an offering for sin. Paul said, “If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” (Rom. 6:8) He further explains, “In that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—vss. 10,11

As shown in the type, until this sacrificial and preparatory service of the New Covenant has been completed, the covenant cannot be inaugurated with those for whom it is now being prepared to bless. God’s promise is to “make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.” (Jer. 31:33) The purpose of that covenant, made with Israel and the world of mankind, will be to reconcile them back to God during the thousand-year Millennial Age. At the close of that age, they will be fully at one with him.

BETTER SACRIFICES

There are various steps in the making of that covenant. The necessary sacrifices, referred to as the

“better sacrifices” of this present Gospel Age must be completely offered. (Heb. 9:23) When this part of the process has been finished, then will come the inauguration of the covenant with the living generation of Israel and mankind at the beginning of Christ’s kingdom. Following this, and throughout the thousand years of the kingdom, the work of education and reformation of all who will then be awakened from the sleep of death will be judged accordingly. “I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”—Rev. 20:12

The church shares in this work of making or bringing to pass the covenant, but they do not share in the work of ransoming the people from the power of death, nor are they themselves developed under that covenant. Paul’s reference to Christians as ‘able ministers of the new covenant’ means that even now they are helping to make that covenant by participating in the necessary sacrificial work prior to its establishment. Therefore, it is important to note that the New Covenant is not now functioning on behalf of Israel or the world, and cannot be established until the sacrificial work of the present Gospel Age is completed.

MINISTRY OF GLORY

The sacrificial work associated with making the covenant will be followed by a ministry of glory during the future administration of that New Covenant. Paul speaks of this saying, “If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children *(Continued on page 35)*

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(Continued from page 31) of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.”—II Cor. 3:7-9

Paul recalls that when Moses came down from the mount bearing the typical tables of stone on which the old law was written, there was a brilliant glory upon his countenance. “Not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.” (vs. 13) It is to this ‘vail’ that Paul refers when speaking of the glory that is associated with this work.

It was only after the law had been written upon the typical tables of stone that the glory of that ministration appeared. In a similar sense, it will not be until all of the antitypical tables of the law, the epistles of Christ, shall have been written. Then it will come to pass, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Col. 3:4) This will not occur until the full end of this present Gospel Age of sacrifice has been completely accomplished.

The apostle says, “Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.” (II Cor. 3:10) Futhermore, he says, “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.” (vs. 12) The glory of which Paul speaks is yet but a hope in our hearts, but we may still share in the ministry of the New Covenant. The fact that we now have only a hope

of glory as able ministers of the New Covenant clearly shows that the inauguration of that covenant is still future. We are still living during the age of sacrifice of that ministry, inspired to faithfulness in laying down our lives with Jesus with the hope of being associated with him as his bride during the time of his future kingdom of glory.

WITH UNVEILED FACE

In our featured text, the expression ‘open face’ [unveiled face] means that we behold ‘as in a glass the glory of the Lord,’ and are thereby being changed into the same image. This is very revealing, for Moses found it necessary to put a veil upon his face to hide the glory of God when he appeared before the people. But when he went into the presence of the Lord he removed the veil, so it was with an open face that he entered into the presence of God.—Exod. 34:29-35

The Apostle Paul thus places the church in the same relationship to the New Covenant as was Moses to the old Law Covenant. It was Moses who wore the veil when he appeared before the people, but when he was in the presence of God he removed the veil. This points to Moses as being a servant of the old Law Covenant, and so too are we servants of the future New Covenant.

We read in the scriptural account that Moses entered into the presence of God. (Exod. 34:34,35) Paul also says that we behold God’s glory as in a glass. The glory of the Lord is mirrored to us through his Word and it is a reflection of God’s glory. This is the transforming work of the Holy Spirit of God, from glory to glory. It is being accomplished by the

same spirit that is writing the epistle of Christ upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. These scriptural illustrations bring to our attention from different standpoints the same work of grace in our hearts that is preparing us for the future work of glory with Christ in his kingdom.

HEAVENLY GLORY

The account tells us that Adam was created “a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.” (Ps. 8:4-6) We also learn that there is a glory of the terrestrial, and another glory of the celestial. (I Cor. 15:40) The apostle explains that the church class who have borne the image of the earthly glory shall also be changed in the resurrection to bear the image of the heavenly glory.—I Cor. 15:48,49

When Jesus was made flesh to become the world’s Redeemer, he was crowned with the glory and honor of the perfect human nature. He had laid aside the glory as the Logos which he had with the Father before the world was created. (John 17:5) When he was raised from the dead, he was exalted to a still higher glory of spiritual nature, even the Divine nature, being made “the express image” of the Father’s person. (Heb. 1:3) Concerning Jesus’ high exaltation, we learn how very high it truly is—“Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”—Eph. 1:21

God has promised that Jesus’ faithful future bride will share this glory with him, as declared by the apostle, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding

great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (II Pet. 1:4) In view of this “high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14), how true are Paul’s words, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Rom. 8:18) At another time, he also said, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”—II Cor. 4:17

THE GLORY OF OFFICE

In addition to the glory of the Divine nature to which we are called, and for which we are now being prepared, the Scriptures also show a high degree of official glory to which the church is now being called. This glory of office is reflected in the many titles that are ascribed to our Lord Jesus.

The revelator said, “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints [nations, or ages, *Marginal Translation*].” (Rev. 15:3) Our Lord will be the great Judge in the world’s coming judgment day. “I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” (Rev. 19:11) Jesus will be the Mediator of the New Covenant, “Now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” (Heb. 8:6) Further, the New Covenant will be inaugurated with the house of Israel.—vs. 8

MINISTERS OF RECONCILIATION

The glorified Christ, head and body, will be the Mediator of the New Covenant, and this title reflects the official glory conferred upon Jesus by his Heavenly Father. It was this particular aspect of his glory that was typified by the shining countenance of Moses when he descended from the mount bearing the two tables of the law. But the typical glory was insignificant as compared with that excelling glory, and we have the hope of sharing also in that glory. The glory of the office of Mediator is indeed a part of that “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” promised to the body of Christ.—II Cor. 4:17

The work of a mediator is that of bringing about reconciliation between those who are estranged. The entire human race is alienated from God, and a reconciliation is to be effected. In accomplishing this great work, Jesus will be the Mediator together with his body members—his bride—who will share the privileges of that work as ministers of reconciliation with him.

Paul wrote, “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:5,6) From this scripture we learn that there are two phases of the work of Mediator, first the giving of the ransom, and then later testifying the knowledge of this certainty to all. It should be made very clear that Jesus alone provided the ransom as a corresponding price for the sin of Adam.—I Cor. 15:21,22

The church will share with Jesus in the work of Mediator of the New Covenant (Gal. 3:19), as part of the seed of promise. (vss. 16,29) If faithful, we

will have the privilege as the epistles of Christ to testify to all mankind the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. We will then have opportunity to testify to his ransom sacrifice, love, mercy, and righteousness. These wonderful graces of the spirit are also now being written in the fleshy tables of our hearts by the indwelling Spirit of God.

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

While the epistle of Christ is being written in our hearts more particularly in preparation for our work with the Mediator in the next age, we should not hide the message from the world today. What a blessed privilege and foretaste of future heavenly joy. If the epistle of Christ is really being inscribed upon the fleshy tables of our hearts, we will have no greater joy than that which results from showing forth the Truth. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I Pet. 2:9

We are being changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Let us yield ourselves more fully each day to the molding and transforming power of the Spirit, that later we may be counted worthy to rule as kings with our Lord Jesus. Let us be just and loving, that we may be worthy to share with him in administering justice to the world in the future day of judgment. May we be faithful witnesses of the grace of God that has been made available to us through our dear Redeemer. May we also, as ministers of God's wonderful plan of reconciliation, have the blessed privilege of testifying to the Truth

and share in the uplifting process that will be made available to the whole world of mankind.

This wonderful scene has been well described by the Prophet Habakkuk when he wrote, “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Hab. 2:14 ■

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WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MAY 3—“Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”—Hebrews 5:14 (Z. '03-167 Hymn 20)

MAY 10—“Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over.”—Psalm 23:5 (Z. '03-413 Hymn 286)

MAY 17—“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”—John 16:2 (Z. '97-57 Hymn 272)

MAY 24—“Love ...is not easily provoked.”—I Corinthians 13:5 (Z. '97-247 Hymn 130)

MAY 31—“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”—Romans 14:21 (Z. '03-43 Hymn 143A)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

QUESTION: Please explain the resurrections to “life” and “damnation” mentioned by Jesus in John 5:28,29. Does this text prove that we will live forever either in heaven or in hell?

ANSWER: The passage cited in the question reads, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his [Jesus]’ voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” The true meaning of this scripture has been obscured by the word ‘damnation,’ which is an incorrect translation of the Greek word *krisis*.

This same Greek word appears in verse 24 and is translated “condemnation.” In verse 27, *krisis* is correctly translated “judgment.” In this verse, Jesus explains that the Heavenly Father had given him authority to execute judgment—that is, *krisis*.

In verse 24, Jesus explains that those who now hear his words, and believe and obey the One who sent him, “hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [*krisis*, judgment]; but is passed from death unto life.” Believers now receive life by faith, but will receive it actually in the resurrection. It is these who will ‘come forth’ from death to a ‘resurrection of life.’ As Jesus explained, they will not come into judgment—their trial, or judgment being past.

However, those who do not now believe will, when awakened from the sleep of death, come into judgment, just as Jesus indicates in verse 24. These are the ones who ‘do evil.’ They fail to believe, therefore do not receive the imputed righteousness

of Christ, apart from which there is none righteous, for “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”—Rom. 3:10,23; 5:12

Their coming forth from death unto judgment does not imply that they will be eternally condemned, or ‘damned,’ as the *King James Version* indicates. The word *krisis* includes the idea of a test. It has the same meaning as our English word ‘crisis.’ The unbelieving world, when awakened from death, will face a crisis, which, if properly met by turning to the Lord in belief and obedience, will result in eternal human life. Those who do not meet this crisis successfully will be cut off in death.—Acts 3:23

In John 12:47,48, Jesus elaborates further on this theme, saying, “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.” In verses 49 and 50, Jesus further explains that the word or “commandment” which he had received from the Father, that word which will judge believers in the last day—the time of resurrection—is “life everlasting.” Believers by faith receive life now, and actually in the resurrection. Unbelievers who obey the word when awakened from death will then obtain everlasting life.

So we see that Jesus is not talking about heaven and hell, but about life. Other texts reveal that the life received in the resurrection by faithful believers will be immortality, the Divine nature. Mankind who, in the earthly resurrection pass through their crisis successfully, will receive everlasting human life in a global paradise. ■

Trip To Europe

Ken and Carmelita Fernets

OUR PILGRIM TRIP began on September 21, 2006, when we landed in Moldova at 9:30 P.M., and our fellowship began with a meeting at 10:30 the next morning with 100 brethren present. There were many young people, young couples with children, older brethren, and all the children were very well behaved; most of them had Bibles in their hands. Our lesson that morning was “Why are we here?” The points focused on the last days of the Gospel Age, building up our faith, standing firm, holding fast, building up one another, and also the work required to build our characters and our faith. A young sister translated from English to Romanian while another brother read the scriptures. There were many questions asked after our meeting such as, “If we are several years into the kingdom, why do we still have people getting married and having children?” “After all,” the questioner added, “there is to be no marriage or children born in the kingdom.” It sparked many rich and thoughtful comments from amongst the class, including many comments from the younger brethren.

After the meeting, we visited more families and

isolated brethren in the area. One of the families visited had a daughter who had married a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses. However, the husband's family forced him to leave his young wife, and baby because she would not join with the Jehovah's Witnesses. It was a very sad situation, and we gave them as much comfort and encouragement as we could.

That night we stayed at the home of brethren with whom, after much visiting and discussion of the Scriptures, we retired at 2 A.M. Early the next morning, 90 friends came and attended a meeting in this home, filling every room. The lesson was the test of the faith and trials of the prophets of old, and what they went through in their lifetime. What a lesson for us of their endurance and courage! At this meeting, we had a young sister translate into their language. As usual, many good questions were asked afterward, and discussion continued as to how these faithful prophets might relay messages to mankind in the kingdom, what kind of rule would be in effect then, and other questions.



Meeting of brethren from Piatra Alba and Tinterine, Moldova in home

The warm fellowship and discussion continued outside of the house where tables were quietly set up. Lunch for everyone was a beautiful temporal and spiritual feast.



After meeting lunch in Piatra Alba

That evening we traveled into the city of Chişinau to visit other dear brethren, and it was a lovely meeting with those of like-precious faith. That same evening, after three hours of traveling, we came to the city of Drochia to spend the night with brethren.

The following day was spent visiting isolated brethren, including some ex-Jehovah's Witness families who had many questions. One family had the Tabernacle chart for a long time, but they could not understand it and knew little about it. A discussion ensued about its details and they had many questions. With very little room in the home, the precious chart was laid on the floor, and all eight of us gathered close around it. After discussing the symbols of the Tabernacle, they replied, "We have never heard anything like it." They were amazed at how the Tabernacle reveals the plan of God and

shows that the great company class is not an earthly class. The discussion on the Tabernacle lasted a good three hours. This was an eye-opener for them, and since we spoke their Ukrainian language it made it much easier for discussion. They had other questions concerning the history of what happened in 1916 when Charles Russell died. We discussed these matters until 1 A.M., and had a nice midnight lunch afterward. We parted as dear friends although this was the first time we had met.

The next morning we left Moldova for Romania. A seven-hour drive brought us to the city of Targu Mures, where we met a dear brother who took us to his residence and served supper before a class meeting. One brother translated into Romanian and another into Hungarian, as this class is comprised of both nationalities. They asked about what happened when Pastor Russell died and the beginning of the Dawn's activities. Later the host's son Ezekiel, and Hannah Megacz, arrived, and we had another one-hour study about the righteous kingdom. Later in the evening, we were treated to McDonalds by Sr. Hannah Megacz, a nurse visiting from New York, and we had great fellowship. That night we had the blessing of staying in Targu Mures at the Tosas' home.

The following morning we visited isolated brethren in the surrounding area, all of whom made us feel welcome in their homes. Neighbors were also invited to visit with us asking many questions pertaining to the Truth in the Bible. After this discussion, it was obvious that their greatest desire was to see the kingdom come as soon as possible. The village they live in is very poor. It was sad to see

their living conditions, and it was difficult to leave them behind. They are so thankful to receive Truth literature from the Dawn, and to receive the Zorile Magazine in their language. They often share the message with friends and neighbors in their village and asked for more Truth literature to continue their witness efforts.

Our diligent driver took us to various villages and classes in Romania as we made our way to the southern Ukraine convention. We were thrilled to see the brethren from Poland, Russia, Romania, Moldova, as well as Ukraine. Many thoughts were presented at this convention. Particularly memorable were the Polish talks presenting the message of Truth very clearly by using Bible scriptures.

The day after the convention, our driver took us to the city of Lvov, where we had a wonderful study and warm fellowship with various classes including some elderly brethren. The class welcomed us warmly and it was as if we had come home. Speaking their language was a bonus, and it was so good to be together. It is like being with family and more, because we gathered to praise our Heavenly Father, gave encouragement and were encouraged by being together. We were able to visit more isolated and elderly brethren in the surrounding area. They requested that we continue to send them Truth literature in their language for witnessing to others. The love and fellowship cannot fully be expressed, and you must be there to feel it.

Our travel continued the next day with a visit to our loving brethren in the city of Tarnopol. In the evening, we met at the home of Br. Vladimir Symchuk, where we had a very pleasant Bible

study and discussion with the class there. There were questions concerning the activities of the Dawn after Charles Russell died and how the brethren were united again. We had supper at 10 P.M., and what a wonderful evening of fellowship! Many brethren in Ukraine have health problems and their medical system leaves much to be desired. The brethren there express that only the kingdom will solve those problems. Their hope, faith, and trust in the Lord's promises keep them going and close to him.

Early the next morning we started our long journey back to Moldova, stopping at a brother's house to pick up the remainder of our luggage. We journeyed from there to the southern part of Moldova where there was one more class meeting and a great feast. They had prepared homegrown fresh pork which they barbecued for everyone attending.



Meeting of young people in Moldova

Later in the evening we shared more loving fellowship with the young and the old. As we were departing, some of the young folks expressed a sincere desire that they could come to the United States. They mentioned with tears that there were few jobs and they could not afford proper schooling past the eighth grade. It was a most difficult and heart-rending time for us to part from them. We will never forget the pain on their faces as they expressed their hopelessness in this world, desiring relief, and praying for a better future. Their expressions have not left us. The world situation needs a complete change. The world needs the kingdom as Romans, chapter 8, says, "The whole world groans and travails in pain . . . waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." The promise is to introduce a new world order, and a kingdom of peace that will bring health, joy, happiness, and everlasting life to the poor groaning creation.

That evening we went to our place of abode, packed our luggage, and visited with a few of the friends who lingered. The following morning, accompanied by a group of brethren, we said our farewells at the airport and boarded the plane back to New York. It was a blessed trip.

The brethren asked that we would visit again soon, and our hope and prayer is that we will be able to see them, Lord willing, this year. We tried to comfort and encourage them, even as we were encouraged by their wonderful zeal for the Truth. No matter how difficult life is, they are thankful to know the Truth and the end result of the coming kingdom that will bring life and happiness to the whole world. ■

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Dear Dawn: I just wanted to thank you for the free booklet sent to me, *Archeology Proves the Bible*. I had a lot of questions which have since been answered in your booklet, especially on the Old Testament and the stories. God bless—
E-mail

PUZZLE PIECES FIT TOGETHER

Gentlemen: Wanted to take the liberty to write and send a donation for all the truth and understanding I have received from your literature, monthly magazine, and books. Have been studying it for several years and have found it worth its weight in gold.

I have an old Bible program in my computer which enhances my study as I search for answers that I was not taught as a child. I was

raised as thousands of Protestants on the old dark age doctrines. These, of course, including the immortal soul theory, eternal torment in hell fire, and the trinity theory.

It is a pleasure to find that God did have a plan for mankind in store, and the book is not just a collection of unrelated facts that don't really harmonize, therefore not making much sense.

I had little or no interest in just reading the Bible as none of the pieces seem to fit until you put the pieces of the puzzle together. I still have never read the Bible through as I study by subject instead (here a little and there a little.)

Thanks again for how you have helped me to get the big picture of the "Plan of the Ages."
Sincerely—CO

SEARCHING FOR MANY YEARS

Dear Brethren: I am a 75-year-old man. For most of my life I have been searching for truth. This quest has lead me down many paths.

Many times I found things I felt were true, but there were many things I could not get answers for. I could not find many of the doctrines I was hearing to be in harmony with God's Word, the Bible; there always seemed to be something lacking.

I remember as a young boy in the 1940's my grandmother would talk to me about the Bible and its teachings. I can remember in particular how she was opposed to the teaching of hellfire. I can remember attending a meeting with her in Los Angeles, I believe the speaker was a man by the name of Pollock. I later learned that she was a Dawn Bible Student.

In March I purchased a computer. I was surfing the web about religion and I found your website. I began to download your booklets, and listen to *Frank and Ernest*. I viewed the video *For This Cause*. I now subscribe to your magazine. I have also obtained your six-volume set of Pastor Russell's *Studies in the Scriptures*. I have also sent for your convention CDs.

Since I have found your website I can't seem to get enough. It's as if a bright light has been turned on. Thank you so very much—NC

THE RANSOM

Dear Dawn: I am so thankful to have found you and to see the truth about the ransom. I can see the helps Bro. Russell brought out are true and harmonize with the Bible. I enjoy *The Dawn* so much, I can't stop reading it. God bless—FL

General Convention Bulletin

July 14-19, 2007—Johnstown, Pennsylvania

THE 2007 GENERAL CONVENTION will be upon us in less than three months. If you haven't yet made plans to attend, now is the time to do so. We encourage as many as are able to join in the blessings of this annual gathering of the Lord's people. The convention will be held on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style apartments (also air conditioned) with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities are available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge in their own sleeping bag if both beds are occupied. If a child is alone in a bedroom sharing the bathroom with other adults, the double occupancy rate will apply to all family members.

The convention program appears in this issue of *The Dawn*, on the pages following the General Convention registration form. In addition to the discourses, panel discussion, and testimony meetings, there will be two assigned topics, one titled "Where is the Promise of His Presence," and the other "The Sure Mercies of David."

The cost of meals for those 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. Once again 50% of the cost of those from 13 through 17 will be refunded if the young person attends at least 75% of

the studies for his or her age group. This subsidy does not cover meals paid in cash at the door.

The convention will provide one shuttle bus leaving the Pittsburgh airport in the early evening for the college in Johnstown on Friday, July 13. There will be one shuttle bus leaving the college in the early morning hours for the Pittsburgh airport on Friday, July 20. We encourage you to make your plans now to attend, and participate in the blessings of this year's convention. ■

	Ages	18 & up	**13-17
Breakfast		\$6.00	\$5.00
Lunch		7.00	6.00
Dinner		9.00	8.00
Total, three meals		\$22.00	\$19.00
Lodging (per night)			
*dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$25.00	\$20.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$20.00	\$18.00
*single occ (LLC)		\$45.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$25.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals			
*dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$275+	\$240+
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$195+	\$160+
*single occ (LLC)		\$395+	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$235+	n/a
<p>If no breakfasts, deduct—+\$30 *Air conditioned **50% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group ***For the package of 7 nights, 18 meals, or 7 nights, 12 meals, a one-time \$20 per person discount from these prices is being offered in 2007</p>			

General Convention Registration

1425 Lachman Lane — Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

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

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 13, 2007				
Saturday, 14th				
Sunday, 15th				
Monday, 16th				
Tuesday, 17th				
Wednesday, 18th				
Thursday, 19th				
Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals <input type="checkbox"/>				
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts) <input type="checkbox"/>				
Check: <input type="checkbox"/> private bath or <input type="checkbox"/> shared bath				
<input type="checkbox"/> double occupancy <input type="checkbox"/> single occupancy				
<input type="checkbox"/> interested in APTS				
Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)				
Address:				

Saturday, July 14

Chairman: Rick Sconyers, *Orlando FL*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Orientation by College

10:00 **Welcome Address**

Ernie Kuenzli
Orlando FL

10:45 Intermission

11:15 Discourse

Carlton Chandler
Portland OR

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Bernard Boulier
France

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse

Carl Hagensick
Chicago IL

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Byron Keith
Seattle WA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Lessons learned from three kings:
Saul**

Dennis Carmer, *St. Petersburg FL*

David

David Blencowe, *Vernon BC*

Solomon

Richard Doctor, *Milwaukee WI*

8:15 Songs in the Night

Sunday, July 15

Chairman: David Rice, *San Diego CA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse Daniel Wozniak
France

10:30 Intermission

11:15 **Theme Discourse—I Timothy 2:4**
“Who desires all men to be saved . . .”
Homer Montague
Highland Park NY

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony Walter Blicharz
Detroit MI

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Russ Marten
Chicago IL

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Ken Fernets
The Dawn

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Where Is the Promise of His
Presence?** Robert Goodman
Orlando FL

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Tuesday, July 17

Chairman: Ed Byrd, *Pittsburgh PA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 **Baptismal Discourse**

Stephen Jeuck
Orlando FL

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Immersion Service**

Immersioner: David Christiansen
Seattle WA

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony Robert Gorecki
New York NY

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Mike Balko
Dawn Pilgrim

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Brian Montague
Highland Park NY

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

Wednesday, July 18

Chairman: George Balko, Jr., *West Newton PA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Convention Business Meeting

Robert Gorecki
New York NY

10:30 Short Recess

10:45 Convention Business Continues

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Frank Nemesh
Detroit MI

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony

Arbur Fernets
Vernon BC

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Jim Parkinson
San Gabriel Valley CA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **“The Sure Mercies of David”**

O. B. Elbert
New Brunswick NJ

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Thursday, July 19

Chairman: George Tabac, *Chicago IL*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Praise and Testimony Wade Austin
Portland OR

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Symposium: “Let us lay aside . . .”**

Every weight: Jonathon Freer
Sacramento CA

The sin which doth so easily beset us:
Ray Luke
Jersey City NJ

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse Len Griehs
Delaware Valley PA

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Edmund Blicharz
Orlando FL

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Richard Suraci
New Haven CT

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 Closing Discourse Tim Thomassen
Albuquerque NM

7:45 Melodies of Praise

8:30 Love Feast

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

W. Austin

Kettle Falls, WA	May 4
Spokane, WA	6
Colfax, WA	7
Clarkston, WA	9
Seattle, WA	13
Warrenton, OR	15
Rogue River, OR	20

M. Balko

Germany	May 24-28
Ukraine	29-31

K. Fernets

Los Angeles, CA	May 26-28
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R. Gorecki

Kettle Falls, WA	May 4
Spokane, WA	6
Colfax, WA	7
Clarkston, WA	9
Seattle, WA	13
Warrenton, OR	15
Rogue River, OR	20
Los Angeles, CA	26-28

The speakers listed below, in cooperation with the Dawn, are invited by individual classes, or their services have been arranged by their home classes:

Todd Alexander

Chicago, IL	May 26-28
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G. Balko

Buffalo, NY	May 19,20
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M. J. Balko

St. Petersburg, FL	May 20
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B. Clark

West Newton, PA	May 6
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R. Goodman

Jacksonville, FL	May 6
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L. Griehs

Detroit, MI	May 5,6
Chicago, IL	26-28

D. Grudzien

Chicago, IL	May 26-28
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S. Jeuck

Los Angeles, CA	May 26-28
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E. Kalinski

South Bend, IN	May 20
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T. Krupa

Los Angeles, CA	May 26-28
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R. Liberda

Chicago, IL	May 26-28
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J. Mottie

West Newton, PA	May 6
Buffalo, NY	19,20

R. Sconyers

Louisville, AL	May 27
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CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

METROPOLITAN DETROIT SPRING CONVENTION, May 5,6—Southfield Hotel & Convention Center, 17017 Nine Mile Road, Southfield, MI 48075. Phone: (248) 552-7790. Mention “Bible Student Convention” for special rate through April 27. For other information, phone: (586) 759-3459

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 6—Embassy Suites Hotel, 9300 Baymeadows Road, Jacksonville, FL. Phone: (904) 448-6933. Contact R. Wyatt. Phone: (904) 378-1996

WEST NEWTON CONVENTION, May 6—Sewickley Grange, Route 136. Contact J. Krasonic. Phone: (724) 872-6215

86th ANNUAL INDIA GENERAL CONVENTION, May 12-14—K. M. T. Marriage Hall, Coimbatore. Contact J. Udhaya Kumar. Phone: 044-26440753

AGAWAM CONVENTION, May 19,20—Captain Leonard’s House, 63 Main Street, Agawam, MA. Contact F. Sansom, 46 Mountainview Drive, Norwich, CT 06360-1444. Phone: (860) 889-7517 or (860) 861-6881

BUFFALO CONVENTION, May 19,20—Holiday Inn, 5440 Camp Road, Hamburg, NY 14075. Contact R. Morin. Phone: (585) 322-7459

CHICAGO MEMORIAL DAY CONVENTION, May 26-28—Elk Grove High School, 500 W. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. Contact J. Vasilevich. Phone: (312) 391-4376

LOS ANGELES MEMORIAL DAY CONVENTION, May 26-28—Holiday Inn, 150 E. Angeleno, Burbank, CA 91502. Contact R. Bieniak. Phone: (949) 457-0894

WATERBURY CONVENTION, June 2,3—Saturday in Morris, CT. Sunday, Litchfield Firehouse Hall, Litchfield, CT. Contact: H. Tsimonis, PO Box 1494, Waterbury, CT 06721. Phone: (860) 567-0109

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 15-17—Ramada Inn, 6221 NE 82nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97220. Phone: (503) 255-6511. Contact J. Black. Phone: (503) 659-6930

PRINCE ALBERT-SASKATOON CONVENTION, June 30-July 2—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak. Phone: (306) 764-7692

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 14-19—(See Registration Information on pages 59-61 of this issue.) University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, PA. Contact M. Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone: (310) 454-5248

NIGERIAN GENERAL CONVENTION, August 15-19—Emmanuel College Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. Egbu, #2 Darlington Street Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Phone: 2348033339949 or 2348082146621

PORTLAND AREA CONVENTION, August 24-26—Collins Retreat Center, 32867 SE Highway 211, Eagle Creek, OR. For information, contact T. Krupa. Phone: (503) 436-2296. For reservations, contact C. Grigalunus. Phone: (503) 667-2797

JACKSON CONVENTION, September 1,2—Fa-Ho-Lo Camp and Conference Center, 3000 Mt. Hope Road, Unit 1, Grass Lake, MI 49240. Contact R. Lumley. Phone: (517) 782-7252

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DAWN PUBLICATIONS

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

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

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

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

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

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35