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“BLESSED ART THOU AMONG WOMEN”

“The virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the LORD is with thee: Blessed art thou among women.”

Luke 1:27,28

THE NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE of August 25, 1997 contained an article entitled, *“Hail Mary.”* It tells of a growing movement in the Roman Catholic Church which asks the pope to proclaim a new controversial dogma: that Mary is a Co-redeemer. It also asks the questions, “Will he do it? maybe in time for the millennium? should he?” We read:

“This week a large box shipped from California and addressed to ‘His Holiness, John Paul II’, will arrive at the Vatican. The shipping label lists a dozen countries—from every continent but Antarctica—plus a number: 40,383, indicating the quantity of signatures inside. Each signature is attached to a petition asking the pope to exercise the power of papal infallibility to proclaim a new dogma of the Roman Catholic faith: that the Virgin Mary is ‘Co-

TALKING THINGS OVER

“I WISH I KNEW WHAT TO DO!”

HOW OFTEN WE hear this statement made by those who are zealous for making known the glad tidings of the kingdom. May we suggest one thing that practically all can do is to send one or more ‘*Dawn*’ gift subscriptions to their friends. Just think, one gift subscription means that “*The Dawn*” magazine enters the home twelve times during the year as your messenger of truth. Isn’t this something worthwhile doing? Each subscription is only \$3.00, and you can have four names entered for just \$10.00! It is simple to do when you use the coupon(s) below and on the next page:

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of papal infallibility to proclaim a new dogma of the Roman Catholic faith: that the Virgin Mary is 'Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces and Advocate for the People of God'.

"Such a move would elevate Mary's status dramatically beyond what most Christians profess. But in the last four years, the pope has received 4,340,429 signatures from 157 countries—an average of 100,000 a month—supporting the proposed dogma. Among the notable supporters are Mother Teresa of Calcutta, nearly 500 bishops and 42 cardinals, including John O'Connor of New York, Joseph Glemp of Poland and half a dozen cardinals at the Vatican itself. Nothing like this organized petition drive ever has been seen in Rome. But then, it isn't often that Catholics beg a pope to make an infallible pronouncement.

"If the drive succeeds, Catholics would be obliged as a matter of faith to accept three extraordinary doctrines: that Mary participates in the redemption achieved by her son, that all graces that flow from the suffering and death of Jesus Christ are granted only through Mary's intercession with her son, and that all prayers and petitions from the faithful on earth must likewise flow through Mary, who then brings them to the attention of Jesus. This is what theologians call high Mariology, and it seems to contradict the basic New Testament belief that 'there is one God and one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus'. (I Timothy 2:5) In place of the Holy Trinity it would appear, there would be a kind of Holy Quartet, with Mary playing the multiple roles of daughter of the Father, mother of the Son and spouse of the Holy Spirit."

Catholics are split on this new concept. Some of their theologians are at the forefront of promoting its adoption. A large number, however, see many problems arising and are opposed. Not surprisingly the attention given by the media to this new dogma has launched blistering criticism from other Christian denominations. Since this dogma is likely to cause serious rupture among Catholic theologians as well, the Holy See at the Vatican, a year ago asked a commission of 23 Mariologists, specialists in the theology of Mary, to study the proposals. By a vote of 23 to 0 the commission advised against promulgating the new dogma, because it was contrary to the teaching of Vatican Council II. This council, in the 1960's, had bishops fighting among themselves as to what to teach about the Virgin Mary.

DOGMAS CONCERNING MARY

The editors of *Newsweek* performed a laudable task in documenting Marian history, and scripture citations concerning Mary, proclamations of dogma started in AD 431 when the third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus made Mary's title, 'Mother of God', official and was incorporated in prayers. In 1854 Pope Pius IX declared Mary preserved from original sin by virtue of a special grace of God, and in view of her being the mother of Christ. In 1950, the Assumption was declared. The issue of what happened to Mary at the end of her life was settled when Pope Pius XII declared Mary taken up, body and soul, to heaven. This was the last time to date that papal infallibility was invoked to define dogma. Also included in *Newsweek's* documentation were eleven instances of appearances of Mary to individuals—some a number of times.

In Amsterdam, between 1945 and 1959, Mary appeared to an Ida Peerdeman, telling her to petition the pope for the 'last dogma in Marian history', including the titles Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate. These petitions have exceeded four million over the last four years.

MARY IN THE BIBLE

To the credit of the *Newsweek* editors, they call attention to the fact that very little is written about Mary in the Bible, and that much of what is now believed and taught about her came later. The Scriptural references to Mary were given as: Luke 1:26-38; 2:15-19; Matt. 12:46-50; John 2:1-7; 19:26,27. The list was incomplete. Added to it should be the following: Matt 1:18-25; 2:11-15; Mark 3:31-35; 6:3; Luke 2:4-7,21-52; 11:27,28; Acts 1:14.

Contrast these mentions of Mary in the Bible with the manifold scriptures mentioning Jesus, and we see an overwhelming bias toward her son, our Lord Jesus, as the important figure in the Bible. How then, did the concept arise as to Mary's importance, and the need to worship her? The answer lies in an erroneous concept that preceded the veneration of Mary, namely, the doctrine of the Trinity. This teaching started after the Apostles died and new leaders took over in the church. It was amplified and established as a teaching by the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicea in AD 325, convened by Constantine. As a teaching, it says that God exists in three persons, all coequal, coeternal, and indivisible, of the same substance—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

As theologians accepted this teaching and meditated upon it, they started to realize that Mary had given birth to a Trinity of persons which included God the Father. This eventually—106 years later—at the Third Ecumenical Council, led to the dogma of Mary, the mother of God, and made her more important than God himself. Ever since that date, the veneration of Mary has not only been practiced, but has received much attention by many Christian believers. Certainly none of these teachings are supported by the Bible.

As the veneration of Mary continued for many centuries, there also came a realization that the Bible clearly defined Jesus as being “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” (Heb. 7:26) If Mary was the mother of God she had to be free from Adamic contamination. This led to a declaration by Pope Pius IX in 1854 that Mary was preserved from original sin by a special grace of God. Finally, in 1950, Pope Pius XII declared that she had an assumption into heaven of body and soul. Little wonder that a review of Mary’s position in heaven has led to the current petitioning that she be made a Co-redeemer, Advocate, and Co-mediatrix with Jesus. The first two of these titles belong to Jesus only. He shares only the role of mediator with his church in the millennial kingdom.

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MARY’S ROLE

What is the true Biblical view of Mary’s role in the plan of redemption, and what is her position in God’s plan? First, it is necessary to look at the doctrine of the Trinity. The editors of *Newsweek* are to be commended in mentioning I Timothy 2:5 as being in conflict with ‘high Mariology’, even though they misquoted the text. It says: “There is one God

and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” That text contradicts the Trinity. If God and Jesus are the same person, how can Jesus be a mediator between God and men as the Son of God? Misquoting this text, the editors omitted “the man” as defining Christ Jesus. This is important and should not be omitted, for the following verse of this quotation says: “The man Christ Jesus; . . . gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:6) It is important to know that ‘ransom’ means ‘corresponding price’ and that the only way a ‘corresponding price’ could be provided was to have a perfect man—Christ Jesus—be a ‘corresponding price’ for the perfect man—Adam—who had forfeited his life and the lives of all his posterity, of whom Mary was one.

Not only is one God emphasized by the Apostle Paul in I Timothy 2:5, but he also explains, “To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” (I Cor. 8:6) The thought is repeated in the book of Ephesians where Paul again says: To us there is but “one God and Father of all, who is above all.” (Eph. 4:6) The Nicean Council defined the Trinity, saying that all three (God, Jesus, the Holy Ghost) are coequal, coeternal, indivisible and of one substance. Jesus contradicted such a definition when he said, “My Father is greater than I.” (John 14:28) And, when called “Good Master” by the rich young ruler, Jesus asked, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.”—Matt. 19:17

In writing about God the Apostle Paul tells how Jesus will introduce the world to his Father, and says of God: “Who only hath immortality,

dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” (I Tim 6:16) This corroborates what God told Moses: “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.”—Exod. 33:20

JESUS, THE IMAGE OF GOD

It is noteworthy that God is described as the only one originally possessing immortality. For centuries some have taught that man has an immortal soul, which is not true. Also it is said, no man has ever seen God. We are reminded of the conversation of Jesus with his disciples when Philip requested, “Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” to which Jesus replied, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” (John 14:8,9) Jesus was “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), both as the *Logos* in his prehuman existence, and in his life upon earth as a man.

This is also corroborated in Paul’s letter to the Colossians when he wrote: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” (Col. 1:12-15) Since Jesus was the image, or likeness, of the invisible God, it was possible for Philip to see what the Father would be like, because, as Paul so plainly says, God himself is invisible.

The definitions of the words ‘father’ and ‘son’, also shed light on the relationship between God, the

Father—the great supreme Creator of the universe—and his first direct Creation, the *Logos* or Jesus, the son. ‘Father’ means one who *gives* life; and ‘son’ means one who *receives* life. Originally, God was alone. His first direct creation was Jesus in his prehuman existence, or the ‘firstborn of every creature’. Jesus uses the same expression when he says of himself: “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”—Rev. 3:14

THE FIRST DIRECT CREATION OF GOD

To speak of Jesus as being the first direct creation of God appears demeaning to many who believe in the Trinity. This is far from being so. Jesus in his prehuman existence was at God’s right hand in his great creative works. As the Apostle Paul writes of him, “By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him; And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.—Col. 1:16-19

The Apostle John was given insight concerning this ‘beginning’. He shares it with us when he writes: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1) The Vatican Manuscript, No. 1209—one of the earliest manuscripts known—in the Greek interlinear says: “In a beginning was the *Logos* [Word] and the *Logos* [Word] was with *the Theos* [God] and *a theos* [god] was the *Logos* [Word].” (John 1:1, *Wil-*

son's Emphatic Diaglott) This mighty one, **a** god, was the **Logos**, and was distinguished in this citation from **the** God, the Heavenly Father. "This was in a beginning with **the Theos** [God]." (John 1:2, *WED Interlinear*) John then confirms what the Apostle Paul told the Colossians, that "all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."—John 1:3

It is important to note the careful wording of John's writing because he later says that "the Word [**Logos**] was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1:14) It was not '**the Theos** [God]' who was made flesh. On the contrary, the Logos is described in this same verse as "the only begotten of the Father." How was this accomplished? This is where the virgin, Mary, entered upon the scene. The prophecies given to Israel spoke of a Messiah, an anointed one, to come who would be a mighty king for Israel.

THE SELECTION OF MARY

Every maiden of Israel hoped that she might give birth to the prophesied deliverer. Mary, descended from the house of David, was the one chosen by God for this task. She was engaged to be married to Joseph, who also was a descendant of David. Her lineage was through Nathan, King David's son, and back to father Adam. Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli, Mary's father. Joseph's lineage is given in Matthew 1:1-16 and it came through David's son, Solomon. In that genealogy it tells which father begat which son. Joseph's father was Jacob, not Heli.

God's selection of Mary is spoken of in Luke 1:26-38. The angel Gabriel had, six months earlier, appeared to Zacharias to announce that a son—

John the Baptist—was to be born to Zacharias and his wife, an aged couple, and was to be the forerunner of Messiah. Now he went to Mary, saluting her in the words of our theme text, “Hail thou that art highly favoured, the LORD is with thee. Blessed art thou among women.”—Luke 1:27,28

Gabriel then proceeded to tell an astonished and troubled Mary that she was to miraculously conceive and give birth to a son whose name would be Jesus. The throne of his forefather, King David, would be given to him, he would reign over Israel, and of his kingdom there would be no end. (Luke 1:29-33) When Mary asked Gabriel how this would be possible since she had not known a man, it was explained to her that this child would be begotten by God’s Holy Spirit, and that he would be God’s Son, since God would be his Father.—vss. 34,35

To satisfy justice, a perfect man was required to offset the perfect life forfeited by Adam. God, the Father, would supply this perfect life—of the *Logos*—and Mary was chosen to provide the organism, a human body. Thus it was that the ‘Word [*Logos*] was made flesh’ (John 1:14) and that “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4), who was also the seed of Abraham and the ancestor of King David, since Mary was descended from both.

When this conception took place, Joseph, who was espoused to Mary, was surprised, and being a just man wanted to put her away privately. (Matt. 1:19) An angel of the LORD appeared to him in a dream and explained that Mary was involved in the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14: “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” He was told not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, and that this son. con-

ceived by the Holy Spirit, would be named Jesus and he would save his people from their sins. Joseph did as he was bidden by the angel, Gabriel.

Galatians plainly states: "God sent forth his Son." (Gal. 4:4) If God—the great supreme Creator of the universe—had transferred himself into Mary's womb, who would be running the universe while he was in this embryo condition? This is one of the questions which indicates why the Trinity is an erroneous concept. During the time of the nine months Jesus was in Mary's womb, as well as the years of his infancy and childhood, he was not in a position to make decisions concerning the universe.

For that matter, this was not a task given to the man, Christ Jesus. It was not necessary that he be able to do so during this period of his life, because it was not God the Father, who was in the embryonic and infantile state, or in manhood as the man, Christ Jesus. It was the *Logos*, "who, though being in God's [a mighty one's] form, yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God, but divested himself, taking a bondman's form, having been made in the likeness of men."—Phil. 2:6,7, **WED**

The birth of Jesus was without fanfare and of very humble circumstances. Jesus would have been born in Nazareth if it had not been that a taxation law was decreed by Augustus Caesar forcing all Israelites to travel to their home territories. It was a difficult time for Mary to travel, but they had to leave Nazareth and go to Bethlehem. There is no record that Mary or Joseph were aware that the Messiah had to be born in Bethlehem, the City of David, as prophesied in Micah 5:2. But, who was directing the matter? It was God, the Heavenly Father. He certainly was not in Mary's womb.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Jesus was born in Bethlehem under very humble circumstances—there was no room for them in the inn—and no one was made aware of the event except a few shepherds watching their flocks at night on the hills of Judea. God sent his angels to announce the birth of Jesus and they promptly went to Bethlehem. Finding Mary and Joseph, they made known their visit by the angels and of their finding the infant, Jesus. The Scriptures say: “Mary kept all these things [words], and pondered them in her heart.” (Luke 2:19) It was confirmed to her that this child was to be Israel’s Savior as told her by Gabriel. The events were no doubt as amazing to her as they were to any of the children of Israel.

According to the Law, when Jesus was eight days old he was to be circumcised. The Law required that Mary continue thirty-three days more of purification. (Lev. 12:2-4) When this time was completed, she and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the LORD. There they met Simeon and Anna, who were guided by God’s Holy Spirit to prophesy concerning Jesus. This could only be done by God, the Father, directing the matter. Simeon cited a prophecy from Isaiah 9:2. He also told Mary that this child, Jesus, “is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul, also.)”—Luke 2:34,35

There is no record of Mary’s reaction to Simeon’s words. We are prone to think that she pondered these, too, in her heart. If Mary were truly the ‘mother of God’, she would be teaching Simeon, instead of vice versa.—*To be continued* ■

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 7

LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT

KEY VERSE: *"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."*—I John 1:7

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: I John 1:5-10; 2:3-11

OUR LORD JESUS is a source of great light in a world covered by much darkness. (Luke 1:79) There is a special blessing promised to those who seek his fellowship during the present Gospel Age. The justified Christian who desires to know and to serve God, thus walks in the illumination of that great light. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." — John 8:12

After his ascension to heaven, Jesus presented the merit of his sacrificial blood shed on the cross, to

the Heavenly Father on behalf of his consecrated followers. In due time the value of that blood will be made available for the whole human family, who will then be given an opportunity to walk in the light of the kingdom of righteousness that will then be established on the earth.

Truth and righteousness are symbolized by light, while sin and evil are represented by darkness. The Heavenly Father is seen as the ultimate source of light, and in him there is no darkness at all. (I John 1:5) Any desire for fellowship with God. therefore

must be along the lines of truth and righteousness. It would be wrong for anyone to say to others, or to imagine in their own hearts, that they were walking with God and having fellowship with him while, at the same time, living a life of unrighteousness. They would not be deceiving God by their actions, nor would they receive the blessings designed for those who are striving to walk righteously in the light.

To the extent that consecrated Christians seek to walk in the light and to enjoy the promised fellowship with God, they will also be privileged to have Christian fellowship with others who are like-minded and have similar desires. If, therefore, they do not love their brethren whom they have seen (I John 4:20), it would indicate that they were lacking in love, and were not walking in harmony with God.

Our Lord tells us: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21) It

is the doing of our Heavenly Father's will, rather than the mere profession of our beliefs, that is acceptable to God. This is further emphasized by our Lord who said, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother."—Matt. 12:50

This message is addressed to those believers in Christ who have made a full consecration to do the will of God, and are thereby justified. These are no longer in their sins, but have a new standing before God. The ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ has made this possible—a fact which must be appreciated by all who seek to live in God's light.

We cannot have true fellowship with all who claim to be in Christ, but we can, however, expect to enjoy true fellowship with those who earnestly seek to do the will of God, and are striving to serve him and his cause in holding forth the glad tidings, the message of light, in an otherwise very dark world. Soon Jesus will illuminate the world.—John 8:12 ■

LIVING IN GOD'S LOVE

KEY VERSE: "This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."—I John 3:11

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: I John 3:1-5,9-18

THE EPISTLES OF John were most likely written in the Greek language, as was all of the New Testament. The word 'love', which is the principal thought in this lesson's Key Verse, has been translated from the Greek word '*agape*'. In the Greek, two words are found that have been translated into the English word 'love': '*phileo*' and '*agape*'.

Phileo love is a love of emotion, and is associated with a love of family, being given out of a sense of duty, it is of a lesser value. Brotherly love is a translation of the Greek word, '*philadelphia*', having a '*phileo*' root. *Agape* love, which is a love based on principle, is of a higher form, and has a

great deal more value. It expresses the standard toward which all Christians should strive. This is the kind of love expressed by the Apostle John in the Key Verse.

The Apostle Peter uses both of these Bible words in a single verse in one of his epistles, therefore making the distinction between them. He says: "Now that, through your obedience to the truth, you have prepared your souls by purification for sincere brotherly love [*phileo* root], you must love [*agape* root] one another heartily and fervently."—I Pet. 1:22, *Weymouth Translation*

There is a natural love that is possessed essentially by all mankind. Al-

though it is an honorable quality of character, it may manifest itself, to some extent, by selfish tendencies. Those who seek to know God and to be led by his Spirit should endeavor to have their love deepened, enriched, and enlarged. As the Christian strives to grow in the graces of the Holy Spirit, and to be more like God, the characteristics of *phileo* love lose much of their selfish tendencies, becoming more and more *agape* love—more intense and generous. This is a good mark of growth in the LORD's people. *Agape* love is identified by a self-sacrificing spirit, founded upon the principles of truth and righteousness. This kind of love is possessed by the Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus, and must be the Christian's ultimate goal.

Evidence of increased *agape* love in the child of God indicates that there has been progress in the thoughts and intentions of the heart. This is in full accord with the general testimony of the Scriptures which admonish that we are to grow in grace,

knowledge, and love. This is the standard set forth for the LORD's people, and all should make every effort to reach that standard of perfect *agape* love.

Speaking of the remarkable relationship and blessing awaiting those who give diligence to their Christian walk, the Apostle John says: "Behold, what manner of love [*agape*] the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. . . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (I John 3:1,2) God's love for his people is of the highest quality—*agape*—and those who respond to his providence enjoy the relationship as 'sons of God'.

The faithful sons of God will share with our Lord in the promised spiritual kingdom, to assist in the teaching and uplifting of the world of mankind. At that time everyone will be given an opportunity to love God and their neighbor. ■

CELEBRATING GOD'S LOVE

KEY VERSE: *"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."*—I John 4:9

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Matthew 1:20,21; I John 4:7-17*

GOD'S LOVE IS shown in many ways, but the gift of his only begotten Son, Jesus, manifests the depth of his great love for all mankind. The human family has been born into sin and death as a result of the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Jesus, by his faithfulness and obedience to the will of his Father, gave his life as the only way for redemption, and a future life.

In his Gospel, John expresses a similar thought in one of the best known, and most often quoted passages of scripture in the Bible. "God so loved the

world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) We rejoice in the prospect that in God's due time his earthly children will be given opportunity to learn and appreciate his great provisions of love on their behalf.

John says: "God is love" (I John 4:8), which emphasizes the fact that he is the very source and personification of this central attribute. His other characteristics of justice, wisdom, and power are balanced by love. This attribute of love

can be demonstrated by a father of an earthly family who spares nothing which will not in due time prove to be good for the family's everlasting welfare. The most loving thing that God could do as a parent for his earthly family was to give Jesus as the world's Savior.

For untold ages, Jesus in his prehuman existence was closely associated with his Father—the fountain of love. He knew him intimately and completely, and during a conversation with Philip, who had asked to see the Heavenly Father, he said: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?" (John 14:9) Jesus further explained that his earthly ministry was a manifestation of God's will and purpose in him when he said, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me."—John 14:10

Jesus' love also was complete. On another occasion when he was with his disciples our Lord said to them: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay

down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) Jesus willingly laid down his perfect human life to redeem all mankind from the curse of sin and death.

That truly was perfect love. Christians also must strive to develop love in their own hearts. We are admonished to love our neighbors even as we do ourselves (Matt. 22:36-40), a commandment which, throughout the centuries of the Gospel Age, has proven difficult. Many have attempted to keep the letter of the law while lacking its spirit, thereby doing injustice to the commandment.

Love is one of the fruits of God's Spirit, and those who seek to emulate it must first of all appreciate its finer qualities. We learn to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Although it is primarily a quality of the heart, the Christian learns to motivate himself by directing his mind and strength to perform acts of kindness. In Christ's thousand-year kingdom, the whole world of mankind will learn to appreciate the love of God. ■

LIVING VICTORIOUSLY

KEY VERSE: *“Whatsoever is born [begotten] of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.”—I John 5:4,5*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *I John 5:1-12*

A VERY SPECIAL calling has been going out during the past two thousand years, inviting Christians to put their total trust and confidence in the Heavenly Father. It is a heavenly calling requiring total consecration to follow our Lord Jesus during the present Gospel Age. Those who respond are persons of great determination and faith, and they are asked to walk by faith and not by sight.

The Apostle Paul says: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1) Faith involves the mind of the child

of God. He reasons on the facts he has found in the Bible, and by doing so has hope and trust in the great promises of God, which have been set forth for the people he is calling.

Christians who are victorious are promised a share with our Lord in the heavenly kingdom, and the future work of blessing all the families of the earth. They will have been found faithful in overcoming the spirit of this present evil world, tested and proven worthy of such a great and exalted position. “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that

cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”—Heb. 11:6

To work as an overcomer suggests conflict, and the consecrated child of God endeavors to put away the things of this old world. Much diligence and faith is required to develop new higher aims, hopes, and ambitions. The overcomers are a special class who are no longer in sympathy or affiliation with the general spirit of the present evil world with its selfishness, pride, and ambition. The victory that overcometh the world is our faith, and the Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are to walk by faith, and not by sight.

Faith is a necessity in all of God's children, and its possession is essential for developing a Christlike character. Those having hearts that are motivated by faith must of necessity display works which will correspond to that faith, for the Apostle James tells us that “faith without works is dead.”—James 2:26

Works of faith include complete trust in God, putting one's life in his hands while fulfilling a total commitment to do his will, striving to become more Christlike. This requires time and effort for development and our whole being must be energized and permeated with the desire to bring our every thought and motive into subjection to the will of God.

Faith is essential for the child of God to learn an appreciation of the graces of the Holy Spirit. Each should be encouraged to examine themselves to note in themselves greater zeal and activity while setting aside the things of this world, and to focus on the things of the new world to come.

Faith is the victory that overcomes the spirit of the world. (I John 5:4) By exercising that faith, the victorious will have proven themselves worthy to be in the spiritual phase of God's kingdom. It is God's good pleasure to give them eternal kingdom blessings, because they demonstrated their love and devotion to him.—Luke 12:32 ■

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

THE PLAN OF GOD IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS— PART 6

THE COVENANT AND THE SEED

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

VERSES 1-12 “And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations;

“That these made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar.

“All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.

“Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

“And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim,

“And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto Elparan, which is by the wilderness.

“And they returned, and came to Enmishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar.

“And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;

“With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five.

“And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.

“And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

“And they took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.”

Critics have scoffed repeatedly at this account, which tells how Abram and his servants rescued Lot and his family from the combined armies of four powerful allied kings. Historians had said that the story was fiction, that no such kings as these mentioned in the Bible were reigning in the days of Abram.

Archeological research has thrown entirely new light upon this ancient period of human history, and this record emerges as absolutely authentic. The kings mentioned in this passage are now identified as true historical characters, and contemporary tablets show that they were reigning at

the very time when, according to Bible chronology, Abram was living in Canaan.

Furthermore, archeologists have discovered that these four kings were actually confederated, and at this time were dominating most of the land known in recent times as Palestine, just as this account indicates. Kudor, or Chedor-laomer, as expressed in the Hebrew language, was apparently the chieftain in this alliance of kings. His three allies were Hammur-abi (or Ammur-aphel) of Babylon, which was the land of 'Shinar'; Eriaku (or Arioch) of El-lasar, or Larsa, which was a district in southern Mesopotamia between Babylon and Elam; and that his third ally was the ruler of the Hittite empire, whose capital was at Boghazkeui, in Asia Minor.

This ancient Hittite empire was really a confederacy of several tribal nations, and the excavations show that the Hittite kings always called themselves "king of the nations," or "king of countries." Clearly, therefore, "Tidal, king of nations", mentioned in this account was one of the Hittite confederated kings of Abram's day.

The archeological records reveal that King Kudar, Chedor-laomer, the Elamite monarch, was nearly eighty years old when he directed this allied raid against Palestine to put down the rebellion against him. He had conquered Ellasar forty-three years before, and had placed his son, Warad-Sin, upon its throne. That son died a few years later; but his second son, Eriaku (also called Rim-Sin), was king of Ellasar at the time of this Palestinian revolt. Chedor, it is now known, conquered Palestine about twelve years before this revolt occurred, exactly as the Genesis story declares.

VERSES 13-17 “And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

“And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

“And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

“And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

“And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king’s dale.”

These four allied kings probably did not need a force of more than a few hundred men to put down this rebellion of petty tribal chiefs of the valley people around the Dead Sea. They conquered them easily, and proceeded to loot the rebellious towns, notably Sodom and Gomorrah. When they sacked Sodom, and captured Lot, and his family and his goods, Abram was aroused.

Abram was very wealthy, employing hundreds of servants; and he quickly mobilized 318 of them and went in hot pursuit. Overtaking the remnant of the satiated and exhausted troops that night, he proved his prowess by making a successful surprise

attack from two sides and quickly rescued the prisoners and their goods.

Some have hastily concluded that Abram and his servants actually slew these four powerful monarchs. But manifestly this is not the case, for the archeological records reveal that they lived for many years thereafter. This account of the raid merely mentions that Abram rescued the prisoners and goods, and says nothing about his killing any kings. The seventeenth verse speaks of his returning from the slaughter of Chedor-laomer and the kings which were with him, but the Hebrew word *nakah*, translated 'slaughter', means merely 'to smite', and is so translated many times throughout the Old Testament, and, indeed, is translated 'smote' in the fifteenth verse of this narrative. 'Smiting' the armies of these kings would properly be referred to as a smiting of the kings themselves.

VERSES 18-20 "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

"And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

"And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

When Abram returned from his successful smiting of the four kings he was heralded as a hero by the afflicted survivors around the Dead Sea, whose cities these monarchs had just ravished, and the 'king' or 'mayor' of Sodom went out to meet him. Melchizedek, who not only was ruler of the city of Salem (Jeru-salem) but also its high priest.

likewise met Abram, and blessed him, and Abram paid him tithes of all that he had captured.

This Melchizedek is said to have been a "priest of the most high God," and not a director of idol worship. This seems to suggest that he may have been a Semitic kinsman of Abram, rather than a member of some idolatrous Canaanite tribe. Although Abram had been in Canaan only twenty-five years when this incident occurred, there were probably many hundreds of Semites there at that time. Abram's household alone contained hundreds of persons, and possibly Melchizedek had become a ruler over a Semitic settlement at a peaceful place west of the Jordan which later came to be known as Jebu-salem, or Jerusalem, and there directed his kinsmen in the worship of the true God.

Melchizedek's identity has been made mysterious by a statement in Hebrews 7:1-3, which says that he was "without father, . . . without descent." This has been explained to mean that he was without father or mother in the priesthood, and we do not know his genealogy. Recently deciphered tablets unearthed at Tel Amarna, in Egypt, substantiate this thought. They indicate that the portion of Palestine in which Jerusalem was located was claimed by Egypt in Abram's day, and that the pharaohs appointed all the kings or chieftains of that particular district.

Although no tablet has yet been found that mentions the name of Melchizedek, yet the Tel Amarna records of this period do declare that Palestinian appointees of the pharaohs in those days were obliged to foreswear all hereditary rights before being enthroned, and were made to take the following oath: "It was not my father, and it was not

my mother, who established me in this place; but it was the mighty arm of the king [pharaoh] himself who hath made me a ruler.”

This was a very unusual regal arrangement, not only for those days but since then as well. Probably Melchizedek's priestly office had been given to him by Divine appointment, hence the statement in Hebrews would also be true of him as a priest. He is used in the Scriptures as a picture of Christ Jesus in his official role as King and Priest over the whole earth during his kingdom reign. The psalmist says of Jesus, “Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”—Ps. 110:4

Not only are we glad to see even the historic portions of the Bible substantiated by the research of modern science, but we are especially glad to learn from its pages that the antitypical Melchizedek, the great King of Peace and Priest of the Most High God, is soon, together with his church, to manifest himself to all mankind, extending blessings of joy, health and life to all the willing and obedient.

VERSES 21-24 “And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

“And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

“That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

“Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with

me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”

In these closing verses of the story of Abram's encounter with the four kings we have another example of his generosity, and his lack of self-seeking in material things. He had risked a great deal to rescue Lot and his family, but he wanted no reward for it. No doubt he felt that the satisfaction of having done something for his relatives was reward enough. Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre cooperated with him, and he was quite willing that they share in the spoils of the victorious battle; but, as for himself, he would take nothing. Abram's purpose in moving into Canaan was a higher one than that of material gain—especially the spoils of battle.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

VERSES 1-7 “After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

“And Abram said, LORD God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

“And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

“And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou

be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

“And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

“And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.”

‘After these things’—that is, after the rescue of Lot, the paying tithes to Melchizedek, and Abram’s refusal to share in the spoils of battle, the LORD spoke to him and said, ‘Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward’. One cannot but think that the LORD took particular notice of Abram’s refusal to accept any of the goods offered to him by the King of Sodom, and was pleased, and that now he is assuring him of a much better portion—‘I am thy shield, and exceeding great reward’. This was God’s promise to protect the patriarch, and to supply all his needs.

Before Abram left Ur of Chaldees, God had made a promise to him involving a ‘seed’, a child. Sarah, his wife, was barren, and it would seem that Abram was beginning to wonder just how that promise would be fulfilled, so he said to the LORD, ‘Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir’. This appears to be Abram’s way of asking the LORD if this is the arrangement he had in mind when he made the promise of the ‘seed’.

The LORD explained to Abram that the one he referred to was not to be his heir, that he would have a child born of his ‘own bowels’. Abram had great faith, yet it was being tested by his long wait for the birth of the promised heir. But the LORD

strengthened his faith by reaffirming the promise. He told Abram to look at the stars, and then assured Abram, 'So shall thy seed be'.

'He believed in the LORD', the account states, 'and he [the LORD] counted it to him for righteousness'. Here was the exercise of a faith that justified, a faith that trusted implicitly in the promises of God. It was upon the basis of this confidence in the Word of the LORD that Abram became a friend of God. All true friendship is based on confidence—mutual confidence. Abram believed God, and God had confidence that Abram would do his will.

VERSES 8-21 "And he said, LORD God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?"

"And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

"And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

"And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

"And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

"And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

"And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

"And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good age. *(Continued on page 33)*

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(Continued from page 31)

“But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

“And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

“In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

“The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

“And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

“And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

The remainder of this chapter is chiefly concerned with the LORD's answer to Abram's question: 'LORD God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?'—that is, the land. The term 'whereby', rather than 'when', makes the question pertain to how the patriarch would know for certain that he would inherit the land, not when he would know. We should expect, then, that the LORD's answer would be in keeping with this.

The LORD instructed Abram to prepare a sacrifice, which he did, and the pieces were cut and separated to make it possible for one to pass between them. This seemed to be a custom of ancient times in connection with the making of a covenant. See Jeremiah 34:18-20. When the evening came Abram fell into a deep sleep. It was then, and apparently as in a vision, that the LORD said to him.

‘Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs—and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them—four hundred years. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance’.

In brief, God’s answer to Abram’s question as to how he might know that he would surely inherit the Land of Promise, was this combined prophecy and covenant pertaining to the experiences of the ‘seed’, virtually from Abram’s day to the time they left Egypt en route for Canaan. Instead of passing between the pieces of the sacrifice himself in order to confirm the covenant, the LORD caused the furnace and the lamp—symbolic of the experiences outlined in the prophecy just given—to pass between them. See Deuteronomy 4:20; I Kings 8:5; 11:36; and II Samuel 21:17.

This would be another way of saying that the fulfillment of the prophecy as here given would substantiate the LORD’s Word, and would thus be a guarantee that both Abram and his ‘seed’ ultimately would inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

VERSES 1-3 “Now Sarai Abram’s wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

“And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

“And Sarai Abram’s wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.”

When studying God’s dealings with Abram it is important to keep in mind the Divine promise concerning a ‘seed’. Abram was to have an offspring, a progeny, that would occupy an important place in the plan of God. When this promise was first made to the patriarch, his wife Sarai was childless. Nevertheless, they both believed God’s promise, and waited patiently for a child to be born. But no child came.

It was a long wait. To begin with, there was the time that elapsed from the making of the promise until the death of Abram’s father Terah, just before they entered the Promised Land. Now another ten years had passed, and still no child. Sarai, in addition to being barren, was well along in years, and her faith that she would become the mother of the promised seed began to wane. Apparently she still believed God’s plan concerning a seed, but began to wonder if it were his will that she should be the mother.

Meditating along this line, and desiring to cooperate with the LORD, if possible, she suggested to Abram that Hagar, their bondmaid, mother a child for him. According to Christian standards today this was a very unethical procedure, but apparently it was not considered improper at that time. In any event, neither Sarai nor Abram were rebuked for it by the LORD, although he did not acknowledge the child of this union as being the promised seed.

An interesting sidelight on this incident is the discovery in 1901 by archeologists of the Code of Amraphel (Khammurabi)—a code of laws which apparently served as a standard of living at that time for the people in Canaan and surrounding territory. According to this code Sarai's giving Hagar to Abram for a wife was quite proper.

VERSES 4-6 "And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

"And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

"But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face."

Even from a natural standpoint, however, it did not turn out to be a satisfactory solution to the matter. Quite unexpectedly to Sarai, as soon as Hagar learned that she would bear a child, she became insolent to her mistress. In those days the ability to have children was prized very highly, and evidently Hagar began to feel that she was quite superior to Sarai, and acted accordingly.

Sarai reported the situation to Abram, exclaiming, 'My wrong be upon thee'. *Leeser's Translation* reads, "I suffer wrong through thee." It is quite possible that Sarai expected that in the event Hagar had a child, she would in some way become its foster mother, and Hagar would step aside, not claiming the rights of motherhood. But now Sarai realized

from Hagar's attitude that there was no hope for an arrangement of this sort, so she knew that she had done wrong in suggesting this method to obtain a seed for Abram and the LORD—that it would not solve the problem.

Abram also realized that matters were not working out as they had hoped, so in loyalty to Sarai he permitted her to deal with Hagar in any way she saw fit. According to the Hebrew text, Sarai afflicted Hagar, probably by increasing her duties and tasks. Her burdens were increased, perhaps with the hope that she might desert the household and run away, which is exactly what she did.

VERSES 7-16 “And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

“And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

“And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

“And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

“And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

“And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

“And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?”

“Wherefore the well was called Beer-la-hai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

“And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son’s name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

“And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.”

At this juncture, the LORD took a hand in the matter. His angel, or messenger, found Hagar ‘by the fountain in the way to Shur’. Shur was the name of the great fortified wall shutting Egypt off from Israel. Evidently Hagar was endeavoring to make her way back to her own people in Egypt; but the LORD interfered, and through his angel, instructed her to return and be subject to her mistress.

Then the angel uttered a remarkable prophecy (vss. 10-12), one which many now see fulfilled in the experiences of the Arabic race. Today, many Arabs trace their ancestry directly back to Hagar’s son, Ishmael. Hagar was greatly impressed by the visit of the angel of the LORD, and the well where the angel found her was called Beer-la-hai-roi, which according to the *Marginal Translation* means ‘the well of him that liveth and seeth me’. Hagar seemed to realize that the LORD had been watching over her, and that although she had escaped from Abram and Sarai, she had not been able to escape from the God of Abram. She returned to her mistress, and in due time Ishmael was born.

There was a lesson in this for Sarai, also, and indeed for all who are endeavoring to serve the

LORD. The lesson is that nothing is accomplished by endeavoring to run away from our trials, or to force them away from us. Sarai's lack of faith had brought a severe trial into her life, and she thought to get rid of it by forcing Hagar to run away; but the LORD brought the trial right back to her. Probably the experience softened Hagar's attitude also; but in any event, the two women lived together after this for sixteen years. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

DECEMBER 4—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"—Luke 11:13 (Z. '01-271 Hymn 205)

DECEMBER 11—"My Son, give me [Jehovah] thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways."—Prov-erbs 23:26 (Z. '01-324 Hymn 208)

DECEMBER 18—"The LORD is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."—Hebrews 13:6 (Z. '02-45 Hymn 186)

DECEMBER 25—"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 Savior, which is Christ the Lord."—Luke 2:10,11 (Z. '03-457 Hymn Appendix H)

GOD'S GREAT GIFT

*"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."
II Corinthians 9:15*

THE HOLIDAY SEASON toward the end of the year is when the spirit of giving is more universally manifested than at any other time. How appropriate that Christians should, now and always, remember that in God we have the greatest of all examples of unselfish giving. Indeed, the gift of his Son is so far beyond our ability to comprehend fully that it can be truly described as 'unspeakable'. How very practical is Paul's reference to God's great gift, for he reminds us of it as a climax of an appeal to the Corinthian church for funds to be used on behalf of their brethren in the famine-stricken land of Judea.

Little mention is made in the New Testament of the financial needs of the brethren, or of the LORD's work in the Early Church, although the subject is not entirely ignored. Jesus and the apostles had a treasurer. For a time after Pentecost, the disciples put all they had into a common treasury, to be used as needed by the brethren and for the work. This arrangement, of course, did not continue long.

When famine conditions arose in Judea, Paul did not hesitate to collect funds for brethren elsewhere to help supply the needs of the brethren in the stricken areas. He complimented the brethren at Corinth for their generosity, and assured them that the LORD loves a cheerful giver. (II Cor. 9:7) In all these various references to finances, however, there is no indication that the brethren of that day engaged in specially planned campaigns of money-raising, nor that every meeting of the disciples for study and worship was made an occasion for taking up a collection. They were not ashamed to mention the subject when the need arose, but money-raising was not the major business of the Christian life.

In the Early Church, gifts of money were an obvious manifestation of the true spirit of Christ in the hearts of those who had consecrated themselves to follow in his footsteps. In setting forth the terms of discipleship Jesus told the rich young ruler that he should sell all that he had and give the proceeds to the poor. As the Early Church understood it, consecration to the LORD meant giving everything to him, even life itself, and that the LORD in turn made them stewards of that which now belonged to him, including their time, strength, money, their all, to be used in his service.

So we find that the subject of giving to the LORD, whether it be for the furtherance of the Gospel, or for the spiritual or material needs of his people, was far from taboo in the church. Indeed, quite the contrary is true, for in our text the Apostle Paul lifts it up to a sacred position in the hearts of the Corinthian brethren by likening it to what our Heavenly Father has done for us and for the world by the gift of his Son. It is after using such

expressions as: 'He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly'; 'Let him give, not grudgingly'; and, 'Your liberal distribution unto them', that he closes his appeal, saying, 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift'.

The apostle reminds us that God's gift of his beloved Son to the church and to the world is the most precious of any and all gifts ever bestowed, costing our Heavenly Father more in sacrifice and suffering than has ever been equaled by any disciple of Christ; approached only by Jesus, who, in following the example of his Father, gave himself to die on the cross that all might have an opportunity to live. It is this principle of giving, this true spirit of charity, or love, that is emphasized in the New Testament, and its outworking in the details of our Christian lives will of necessity cause us to be unselfish and liberal in the use of whatever resources may come under our control as the LORD's stewards.

THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

In the act of giving, both the giver and receiver are made happy. We know how much joy God's gift to us has brought, and we believe it must be true of our Heavenly Father, as stated by Jesus, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) The joy of both the giver and receiver is enhanced when the gift is specially examined and appreciated. Should not our joy, then, be increased by refreshing our memories concerning some of the virtues of God's unspeakable gift to us, for in doing so we are sure to find in him the one who "is altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand."

Who, then, was Jesus, this one whom the Heavenly Father gave to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world? John identifies him in his prehuman existence as the "**Logos**," or 'Word', declaring, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with [the] God, and the Word was [a] god. . . . All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."—John 1:1-14

In Revelation 3:14 we read, "Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the Creation of God." The Heavenly Father himself, speaking to us through the psalmist concerning his Son declares: "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." (Ps. 89:27) In another scripture, where the **Logos** is personified as 'Wisdom' he is quoted as saying, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. . . . Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."—Prov. 8:22-30

The scriptural testimony is clear that the one whom our Heavenly Father chose to be his gift for the redemption of the world was the highest of all his creatures, and the very beginning of his Creation, and that he participated in all the remaining Creative work. The Scriptures also indicate that

the association of the Father and the Son was a very intimate one, that the Son was constantly a delight to his Father, doing always those things which were pleasing to him. This fellowship of interest is revealed in the Genesis account of Creation, where we find the Father saying to his Son, "Let *us* make man in *our* image." (Gen. 1:26) Who among us today would not thrill to have our Heavenly Father speak to us in such an intimate manner. Surely the partnership of the Father and the Son must have been hallowed and sweet, and their love for each other deep beyond the ability of the human mind to grasp.

It was this beloved Son whom the Heavenly Father elected to give for the redemption of the sin-cursed and dying race. No wonder that John, in writing about such a gift, emphasized the extent to which it manifests God's love for the world, saying that he "so" loved the world "that he gave his only begotten Son." (John 3:16) Among the angelic sons of God there were doubtless many who would gladly have served their Creator in this manner, and the 'gift' of any one of them would not have been without cost to God—for he loved them all—but he chose to give the one who meant the most to him, the one dearest to him of all his obedient and treasured creatures.

A gift reveals the love of the giver, not so much because of its intrinsic value as by what it represents to the giver. This is why Jesus called particular attention to the widow's mite. To the wealthy, the mite had little value; but, because it was all that the widow had, her giving it to the LORD represented a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice far beyond that sometimes possessed by those who out-

of their abundance are able, without sacrificing their material comforts, to give large sums.

We know that in the very nature of things our Heavenly Father is not 'poor'. Poetically, the psalmist, in describing God's riches, declares that the "cattle upon a thousand hills" are his. (Ps. 50:10) "For every beast of the forest is mine." The entire universe is God's creation and is owned and controlled by him. There is nothing that we can give to God to make him rich, nor does our withholding make him poor. How, then, could any gift which he might make be akin to the widow's mite?

The **Logos** was God's only direct creation, so from this standpoint, giving him to be the world's Redeemer meant the giving of all that he had. While the **Logos** in his prehuman existence was not on the Divine plane of life, and could not reach up to the great heights of his Father's thoughts, he was the highest of all in the spirit realm, hence in him the Creator enjoyed a larger measure of fellowship and companionship than with any of his angelic sons. To give him up to die, then, meant the giving of that which costs the Creator more than anything else, for as we have seen, in a sense, the **Logos** was all that he had.

ONLY THE FIRST STEP

The **Logos** was "made flesh, and dwelt among us" wrote John, "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." (John 1:14) We may be inclined to think of the natural process of begetting and birth as being something which our finite minds are capable of understanding and explaining, but in reality they cannot. All life is a mystery to us and, from the standpoint of our in-

ability to understand it, is in the realm of the miraculous. Nor can we understand the manner in which the life of the *Logos* was transferred to Mary, and in due time born as a babe in Bethlehem.

In Philippians 2:8 Paul speaks of Jesus as being "found in fashion as a man." This suggests that to the heavenly hosts the *Logos* was 'lost' for a while, and discovered only when they recognized him as having been made flesh. This, of course, emphasizes how completely he was given up by the Father for a time, and yet his being made flesh was only the first step in this supreme sacrifice of the Father, the 'unspeakable gift' which so effectively reveals his boundless love for his fallen and dying human creatures. The *Logos*, now made flesh, was yet to give his flesh in death for the life of the world.

As a child, and until he was thirty years of age, Jesus seemed to have an increasing understanding of the fact that he had been born into the world for a special Divine purpose. This is indicated when, in the Temple at the age of twelve, he inquired of his mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49) Not, however, until he was thirty years of age, when he presented himself to John at Jordan to be baptized, did the Father communicate directly with him. At that time Jesus was assured of his true relationship to God by hearing the voice of his Father saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Matt. 3:17

Here a sweet fellowship between the two was established, and later Jesus said to his Father, I know that "thou hearest me always." (John 11:42) But of necessity it was a limited communion. Jesus was no longer living on a high plane of spirit life. His ability to comprehend his Father's thoughts

was limited by his human mind, and although it was a perfect human mind, it was still greatly circumscribed as compared with the intelligence he possessed as the *Logos*, that mighty one who shared in all the work of Creation.

While in the former association of the Father and Son great works were done by them—Creation and otherwise—there is no reason to suppose that sacrifice and suffering were involved. But now it was different. Jesus was being offered in sacrifice, and the manner in which this must have affected the Heavenly Father is well represented by the experience of Abraham in offering up Isaac as a burnt offering to God. It was a three days' journey for Abraham and Isaac before they reached the land of Moriah where Isaac was to be offered in sacrifice, and the account says that "they went both of them together."—Gen. 22:6

So it was with the Heavenly Father and with Jesus. They went 'together' toward Calvary. While Jesus had a general idea that he was to die, he seemingly did not understand all the details involved until he reached Gethsemane. But the Father did, and in the unselfish and complete giving of his 'unspeakable gift', his sympathetic and loving heart must have ached as he witnessed the hardships through which his Son was passing—sufferings which he knew would increase until he would hear his beloved one cry out, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me."—Matt. 26:39

Just as Isaac in the type displayed no opposition to his father, and willingly allowed himself to be placed on the altar to be sacrificed, so it was with Jesus. As he walked 'together' with his Heavenly Father during the three and one-half years of his

that thus on him would be laid the iniquity of us all, and a way of escape from sin and death provided.

From the time of his baptism, when Jesus said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart," he began to realize the true purpose of his coming to earth. (Ps. 40:7,8) During his forty days in the wilderness he no doubt learned that he was to die for the sins of the world. Later he explained to his disciples that he expected to give his flesh for the life of the world. (John 6:51) He knew now that in being "made flesh" the body which had been prepared for him was "for the suffering of death."—Heb. 10:5; 2:9

We know, however, that Jesus' understanding of the Divine plan, and of his own part in that plan, was progressive. Near the close of his ministry he acknowledged to his disciples that he did not then know the time of his Second Advent. Seemingly, also, he did not fully comprehend the extent to which he was to suffer in connection with his death until very near the end. Thus each painful experience which came to him would serve as a further test of his obedience to the Divine will; and how wonderfully victorious he was in them all!

One of the most crucial tests came in Gethsemane. He knew that he was to die. He knew that this had been written of him in "the volume of the book" (Heb 10:7), and symbolically speaking, he had, like Isaac, willingly and gladly placed himself on the altar to be slain. But now circumstances closed in around him which perhaps he had not foreseen in detail. He was to be accused of blasphemy against the God whom he loved more than

life itself. His sonship and kingship were to be denied.

Jesus prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." However, even in this there was not the slightest tendency on his part to hold back from full obedience, for he added, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. 26:39) As his Heavenly Father heard this impassioned cry deep from the heart of his beloved Son, how it must have pained him not to 'let this cup pass'. He did, however, grant comfort to the Master.

We cannot be too sure of all that may have been involved in Jesus' crucial test in Gethsemane. Paul explained that he "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5:7), to him who was able to deliver him from death, and that he was heard in that he feared. It seems unlikely that Jesus asked to be delivered from dying as man's Redeemer. The 'death' from which he sought deliverance was probably the "second death" (Rev 20:6), a death into which he would fall if he had not faithfully carried out every detail of his covenant of sacrifice. And he 'was heard in that he feared'—yes, favorably heard, and given the assurance that his Father was pleased with him, and by this he was comforted.

The value of God's gift, in terms of suffering, becomes even more apparent as we note the manner in which the Father and Son continued to walk 'together' through the hours of the Redeemer's trial before the High Priest and before Pilate. Each grim scene during those hours of ridicule and scoffing further enhances the value of that 'unspeakable gift'. Jesus was given opportunity to gain his freedom and to escape crucifixion. but he did not accept

it. He voluntarily “poured out his soul unto death,” and allowed himself to be “numbered with the transgressors.” (Isa. 53:12) Since in Jesus we see the Father, we know that his part in this offering was no less costly, that he suffered with his Son.

Perhaps one of the most crucial moments in this whole ordeal was when Jesus was hanging on the cross, and the crowd cried out, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” (Matt. 27:40) Again they cried, “He saved others; himself he cannot save.” (vs. 42) Here was a final opportunity on the part of the Father to take back the gift. The Father had said concerning Jesus, “This *is* my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17) Must he not have yearned to demonstrate to this sin-stained crowd that the one whom they were jeering and crucifying was indeed his Son! Certainly Jesus also would have been glad to convince them that their conception of him was wrong, that he was not a blasphemer, but he did not, instead he “endured” this “contradiction of sinners against himself.”—Heb. 12:3

“Let him save himself,” the rulers shouted. (Luke 23:35) How little they realized that by his refusal to save himself, Jesus, in cooperation with his Heavenly Father, was providing salvation for them and for all the families of the earth. What a Savior! What a gift—truly an ‘unspeakable gift’.

When Abraham and Isaac ‘went . . . together’ to Mount Moriah, the final test upon them was when Isaac was stretched out on the altar, and his beloved father raised the knife to slay him. Could we imagine anything that would place a greater test upon a father’s love, or upon a son’s confidence in his father? It must have been something akin to

this that Jesus and his Heavenly Father experienced when finally, on the cross, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46) It was as though, having trusted his Father all along the way—and even as recently as in Gethsemane being assured of his love and confidence—he now saw him, as it were, raise a knife to slay him.

This cry of anguish was a quotation from the prophecies, but this does not mean that it was any the less real. (Ps. 22:1) Perhaps the recognition of the meaning of this prophecy indicates that by it the Master was made to realize even more deeply that his Father had actually forsaken him. True, the fact that this final test had thus been foretold would assure Jesus that nothing had gone wrong in connection with the offering, still he was forsaken. The sunshine of his Father's smile had disappeared under a cloud, and now he was alone.

Perhaps Jesus' recognition that this crucial moment in his experience had been foretold in prophecy served to give him strength to endure the remaining moments of his suffering. In any event, his last outcry was one of confidence in his Father, as well as full surrender to his will—"Into thy hands I commend my spirit," my life, my all. (Luke 23:46) Now the 'gift' had been fully given. The Heavenly Father had not only given his Son to be made flesh, but had traveled with him all the way to his cruel death on the cross, had sympathetically endured and suffered with him, and voluntarily so, for by design, and because he 'so loved', the Father had laid upon his Son "the iniquity of us all."—Isa. 53:6

THE COSTLY METHOD OF GIVING

Our appreciation of God's 'unspeakable gift' is thus greatly increased by the costly manner in which the atoning blood of the Redeemer was made available for the church and for the world. The great principle of Divine love represented both by the gift and by the manner in which it was given is held out in the Word of God as the only proper motivating power in our lives as we endeavor to be conformed to the pattern set before us, in both the Father and the Son. We, too, are to give all, and are never to take our sacrifice off the altar regardless of the suffering which may be involved in our offering.

An understanding example of how this principle operates in actual practice is the unselfish love of the Philippian church for Paul, as manifested by sending him a gift while he was in prison at Rome. Of what the gift consisted the Scriptures do not disclose. This is not important. Our interest is in the fact that the Philippian brethren loved Paul, and demonstrated their love by sending him a gift. Paul appreciated this, and indirectly alludes to it in his epistle, saying, "I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more." (Phil. 1:9) This was not a solicitation for another gift, but a compliment to their unselfish interest in him as a servant of God and a brother in Christ. Their love had prompted the gift, and Paul wanted their love to abound in all ways approved by their knowledge of the Divine will.

The gift itself meant much to the apostle. But that gift was even more precious because of the great cost involved in its delivery. It had been brought to him by Epaphroditus, a member of the Philippian church, who, because of the hardships

involved in making the journey to Rome, had become seriously ill—'nigh unto death'. In sending this faithful servant back to the brethren at Philippi, Paul wrote, "Receive him therefore in the LORD with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me."—Phil. 2:29,30

No wonder Paul appreciated that gift. In this sacrifice he saw the same spirit as manifested by the Father in the 'unspeakable gift' by which his love is so completely demonstrated. This gift truly is 'unspeakable', but the Father's further love manifested in his manner of giving, and the great cost in suffering attached thereto is so overwhelming in its implications that our finite minds are lost in efforts to comprehend it, much less to describe such love.

The only adequate expression of appreciation we can make, in the face of the love manifested by God's 'unspeakable gift', is in the offering of our all to him—life itself—with no reservations as to what may be involved in the way of hardship or trial as daily we present our offering on the altar of praise to him who is the greatest of all givers. ■

THE TIME OF trouble will overtake the reaping work and bring it to a close. Meantime, before the 'dark night' fully sets in, we are to go right on with the work which the LORD has put into our hands. The truth is designed, not only to perfect the bride of Christ, but also to be a witness to the whole world. Any carelessness on our part, or any cessation of activity in the service of the truth while opportunity yet remains, would be a great mistake.

“SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS”

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER of John's Gospel brings us to the final week of our Lord's earthly life. His teaching and miracles of the previous three and one-half years had given him some popularity among the people; and the stupendous miracle of the raising of Lazarus had still further increased the favorable sentiments of the people toward him, causing the Pharisees to say among themselves, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him."—John 12:19

This popularity caused some of the Greek proselytes, or, as some think, Greek-speaking Jews, who had come to Jerusalem to the Passover feast, to make a request of Philip: "Sir, we would see Jesus." (John 12:21) Philip tells Andrew of this request, and together they approach Jesus concerning the matter. To this our Lord makes a somewhat unusual reply saying, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified."

Perhaps we may see in this statement an intimation on our Lord's part of the privilege of approaching him during the time of the kingdom, when people will come from the ends of the earth to

hear the wisdom of the greater than Solomon. "Before him shall be gathered all nations." (Matt. 25:32) This desire on the part of these Greeks must sooner or later be the desire of every human being: 'We would see Jesus'. Jesus means 'Savior'—the one appointed to save men from sin and death.

During the nineteen centuries of this Gospel Age, few have seen Jesus in the true sense. Some think they have seen Jesus, but have only known him after the flesh, as a great moral leader and teacher, a particularly bright specimen of the human race, and a noble pattern to copy. Others, belonging to orthodox Christian communities, see Jesus as God, who came to earth to show men how to suffer and die—the second person of a so-called Trinity, not taught in the Scriptures.

If it is so important to see Jesus as man's Savior, why have so few up to the present time been thus privileged? Paul tells us that this is largely the result of the influence of Satan. He says, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (II Cor. 4:4) In John 12:40 we read, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."

This blindness and hardness of heart affects the majority of mankind. Hence, we may say that there are two principal reasons why so few up to the present have seen Jesus and the blessings that center in him: (1) Blindness and hardness of heart—lack of desire; (2) The fact that God's time has not yet come to remove these impediments.

The fact that some have had their eyes opened to see Jesus, and others have not, may be explained by the fact that God's providences have such a different effect upon some from what they have upon others. This can be illustrated by the difference in the effect of the heat of the sun upon clay and upon wax—the former is hardened, the latter, softened. If then we would be of the class who rightly respond to God's providences, and are ready for the eyes of our understanding to be opened, in what sense is it necessary for us to see Jesus?

Some see him first as a great Prophet, Teacher, the Channel of the wisdom that comes down from above, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom." (I Cor. 1:30) "Never man spake like this man." (John 7:46) No teaching can compare with that of the Lord Jesus as found in the four Gospels. Literature of every kind is more or less permeated with what he said and did, as well as influenced by his spirit. Eliminate this from the world's books, and the residue would be very cold, empty, lifeless.

Further, we must see Jesus as our High Priest, whose precious sacrifice is a ransom price to release us from death. Hence we see Jesus as our justifier, our righteousness; the one to whom we can continually come for forgiveness; our Advocate, who ever liveth to interpose on our behalf, that is, to come to our succor, our assistance in every time of need.—Heb. 7:25

We see Jesus, too, as our High Priest, offering up the members of his 'body'—the church (Col. 1:18), as a part of his own sacrifice. This was pictured on the typical Day of Atonement, when the goat was offered by the High Priest, following the sacrifice of the bullock. (Lev. 16:3,7,9,15; Heb.

13:11-13) Again, he is the giver of the Holy Spirit, one of the principal agencies in our sanctification.—Acts 2:33; Matt. 3:11; John 1:33

Finally, we see Jesus as our King, our Deliverer—the One who leads his own to victory. “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Cor. 15:57) In Revelation 19:11,14 John is given a vision of Jesus as King, riding on a white horse, and those who have followed him, on white horses. John sees him gaining victories over all his enemies, smiting the nations with his truth, bringing them under the iron rule of his kingdom, “for he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” (I Cor. 15:25) So we look by faith to our Lord to give us the victory day by day, until the final one—deliverance in the first resurrection.

Having seen Jesus as our Prophet, Priest, and King, let us never forget that he is also our great Exemplar. By seeing the perfections of his character we see the glory of the LORD, Jehovah, the Father, revealed in him. As we endeavor to copy him we are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory. (II Cor. 3:18) To such as become like him in character is promised the great reward of being made like him in nature—partakers of the Divine nature. (II Pet. 1:4; I John 3:2) May the good work of transformation, both of nature and character, go forward. ■

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things.”
—Revelation 21:7

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

PASSING BOOKLET TO A FRIEND

Dear Dawn Publishers: I really learned a lot from the booklet, "*When a Man Dies.*" Thank you for sending it. I'm passing it on to a friend. Sincerely.—MO

RENEWING 'THE DAWN' MAGAZINE

Dear Sir: I've read *The Dawn* for a while, and thoroughly enjoy it. It is a lovely book. Enclosed find renewal for one year. I love the Sunday School Lessons and other subjects. Thank you.—CO

THE GREAT PYRAMID

Please send me a copy of "*The Great Pyramid.*" I found the television program very interesting and would like to know more.—PA

IMPRESSED BY BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Sir: "*Why God Permits Evil.*" Please send me a copy of that booklet. I'm

a Christian, and after watching your program today over the TV I was impressed by your Bible references on why God permits evil. Kindly mail same to me to enable me on my commission. God bless you. Sincerely.—NY

A DEAR SON'S MEMORIAL SERVICE

Dear Brethren: My family and I wish to thank you all for the cards and letters that have come from all over the country, including England and France.

Through the prayers of the brethren, we have received strength which has sustained us. Each day we become stronger. Throughout this tragedy [the loss of a dear son] we never faltered because we knew that God had a plan for us, and our strong faith has upheld us.

May I share with you the wonderful witness of

our Master's plan that we were privileged to give? My family and I decided that we would have the memorial service for our son, Greg, at our home in the country which he loved so much.

On Sunday, August 24, a wonderful witness of the future hope of all the world was given to 153 family members and friends. What an honor and a tribute it was to our Heavenly Father, who will never leave us nor forsake us. We will continue as usual our daily lives although our hearts are heavy, but we are strong. Thank you again, dear brethren, for all your support. Your sister in Christ.—NY

"EYE OF THE HURRICANE"

Dear Folks at the Dawn: God bless you all in the name of our precious Lord Jesus. I just wanted to express my gratitude to you all for the special work you are engaged in. I appreciate

it. I have been meeting with a small group every week right here in my home town. Currently there are only five of us, but sometimes we gather together with the larger class in Seattle.

We appreciate very much the blessed privilege of meeting together, and also of receiving the many great helps through the mail, such as yours. They are the 'eye of the hurricane' in this present evil world! May you continue to bless others and may you get a blessing from your outreach efforts. May we soon see the kingdom which will bring its peace and joy! Yours in the blessed Truth! P.S. Christian love from all of us here.—WA

FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING

This brief note is to request the Creation booklet. I want to better understand God's righteous purposes.—NJ ■

THE SON OF GOD

EACH YEAR AS we celebrate the birth of Jesus we like to recall the events surrounding his birth, and their meaning to us. We want to tell our children the story that never grows old. Although the narrative of Jesus' birth brings joy to millions throughout the world, and is basic to their faith as Christians, yet most miss much of the joy of Christmas because they interpret the results of that miraculous birth in a restricted way. The magnitude of God's grace and love toward mankind is not yet fully understood.

To understand the grace and magnitude of the gift which God gave to mankind when he sent his only beloved Son, Jesus, into the world as a tiny babe in Bethlehem, we must be familiar with the lesson of Creation. Let your mind go back into the distant past when God, who is from everlasting to everlasting, created the *Logos*. The *Logos* was his first and only direct creation—and how beautiful he must have been!—John 1:1, Rev. 3:14

The *Logos* was the one who offered to leave heaven—to go down to earth as a man—to be the willing, corresponding price for Adam. As the time drew near for our Lord to depart from his heavenly home, we can envision the painful parting of the Heavenly Father and the *Logos*. At that moment an angel was visiting Mary, informing her of the opportunity God had for her to be the mother of the Savior of mankind. (Luke 1:26-35,38) As she accepted God's arrangement to be "blessed . . . among women" (vs. 28), in just a moment, the *Logos* van-

ished from heaven and a new life began in Mary's womb.

Nine months later, Jesus was born in a lowly stable and put in a manger. The words of the scripture, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given" (Isa. 9:6), had come to pass. The *Logos* was God's Son, his beloved creation, and he was given to mankind in the person of the babe, Jesus. The angels recognized the importance of his birth, and heralded it forth with joy, praising God.—Luke 2:13,14

The prophecy of Isaiah 9:6,7 foretold the time when Jesus would establish his earthly kingdom: "The government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

The birth of Jesus has inspired us to "preach the Word!" (II Tim. 4:2) Preach the birth of Christ. Preach the good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. Preach that whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved, for there is still a harvest work to be done. But, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"—Rom. 10:13-15; Isa. 52:7 ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

G. Passios

Claymont, DE

December 7

E. Worfler

Middletown, NY

December 7

OBITUARIES

The following brethren have recently finished their Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to the families and friends in the loss of these dear ones. We appreciate information concerning any brethren to be included in this list.

Brother Robert Leslie, San Luis Obispo, CA—
November 2. Age, in his 90's.

Sister Ardelle Davis Pierson, Estill, NC—No-
vember 5. Age, 78.

*Tell me the old, old story, of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love;
Tell me the story simply, as to a little child,
For I am weak and weary, helpless and defiled.*

Tell me the old, old story, Of Jesus and His love.

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 Ave., East Rutherford, NJ 07073

PHOENIX NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, January 1,2,3,4—Quality Hotel, 3600 N. Second Ave.

Phoenix, AZ 85013. Make reservations directly with hotel: (602) 248-0222. Mention Phoenix Bible Students. Contact Esther Bachorski with meal count and for other information.

Phone: (602) 546-0430

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA CONVENTION, January 10,11—Cape Coral Masonic Temple, 244 Santa Barbara Blvd., Cape Coral, FL 33910. For information contact: Ed Futchkar, 3460 N. Key Dr. #306E, North Fort Myers, FL 33903

Phone: (941) 997-3008

SACRAMENTO, CA, February 13-15—Beverly Garland Hotel, 1780 Tribute Rd, Sacramento. Contact: Betty Lankford, 6000 19th Avenue, Sacramento. Phone: (916) 457-0569

ROCKLAND CONVENTION, February 22—Comfort Inn, Nanuet, NY. Contact: Mrs. Russell Shallieu, 1041 Johnston Drive, Watchung, NJ 07060

Phone: 908-756-4954

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 7,8,9—Holiday Inn at the Orlando Arena, 304 West

Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL 32801. Contact Robert Goodman for meal count & information, 426 Sundown Trail, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 695-6815

FRESNO, CA, 45TH ANNUAL PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 27,28,29—Holiday Inn, Fresno Airport, 5090 East Clinton Avenue, Fresno, CA 93727. Contact: Mrs. Robert Wilson, 2103 N. Price #112, Fresno, CA 93703 for reservations *before March 13*.

Phone: (209) 255-2214

COLUMBUS, OHIO BIBLE STUDENTS PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 28, 29—Contact secretary, Lisa Knapp, 1855 San Remo Drive, Columbus OH 43204 for location and directions.

Phone: (614) 486-0431

1998 BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 25-30—Johnstown, PA

1998 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 9-14—Miskolc, Hungary