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Highlights of Dawn

PART 2

The Times of the Gentiles

"Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold."—Daniel 2:37, 38

THE king referred to in our text is Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled the Babylonian Empire during the heyday of its power and glory. He was ruler at the time the Jewish nation was conquered and its people taken captive to Babylon. This occurred in 606 B. C., although some of the Jewish people were taken to Babylon some fifteen or sixteen years before this, among them Daniel and his three friends, who later became high officials in the Babylonian Empire.

The four world Gentile powers, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, are often referred to in conjunction with each other, and one might suppose that these were the only great empires of ancient times, but actually there were others. Egypt was one of these, and then there was the Assyrian Empire which destroyed the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel and took many of these tribes into captivity in Assyria.

Besides, there were almost innumerable smaller Gentile nations and powers. Many of these, such as the Amalaites and the Philistines, were hostile to God's chosen people Israel, and were used by the Lord on various occasions to punish his covenant people because they had been unfaithful to their covenant with him. And there are still Gentile nations and powers quite unrelated to the Babylonian Empire which are not being used by the Lord as that empire was, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Near the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign as king of the Babylonian Empire he was startled by a dream—a dream which he could not even remember when he awakened. The astrologers, or wise men of the realm, were summoned to remind him of his dream, and to give its interpretation. These claimed that if the king could tell them the dream they could interpret it, but confessed their inability to inform the king regarding what he had dreamed.

Then, in the Lord's providence, Daniel, one of the young Hebrews brought early into captivity, was sent for, and with the help of the Lord Daniel was able to inform the king of the dream and give its interpretation. The account of this is recorded in Daniel 2:26-45. According to Daniel's explanation, what the king saw in his dream was a human-like image. It had a head of gold; breast and arms of silver; belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron. Its feet and toes were a mixture of iron and clay. In the dream a stone was cut out of the mountain "without hands" which smote the image on its feet. The image fell.

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and

the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

The Interpretation

Daniel continued, "This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold!"

It should be remembered that Nebuchadnezzar, as head of the Babylonian Empire, was already the most powerful ruler on earth. His capture of Jerusalem, and the taking of the Israelites captive, ended the last shred of resistance to his rulership among the then so-called civilized nations of earth. Thus Daniel's proclamation to the king did not increase his regal authority and power, but it did add something which was not his before, for now he was to rule by the authority of the God of heaven—"The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom."—vs. 37

Not God's Kingdom

The fact that God gave the king of Babylon a kingdom did not mean that the Babylonian Empire became the kingdom of God. Prior to the overthrow of Israel's last king, Zedekiah, God did have what we might call a typical kingdom on earth. At the time of the death of King David it is said of Solomon that he "sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father."—I Chron. 29:23

All the royal descendants of David enjoyed this same status until Zedekiah. Then this special arrangement came to an end "until he come whose right it is," (Ezek. 21:27) which will be the antitypical David, vested with divine

authority to rule over Israel and all nations, to bless all the families of the earth as promised to Abraham.

Meanwhile God's authority and his overruling power was vested in Babylon, to start with, and in the empires which succeeded Babylon right on down to Rome and its divisions in the various states of Europe. Rome was in power in apostolic days, and Paul then wrote that "the powers that be are ordained of God."

This succession of power and authority was represented in the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream; represented, that is, by the breast and arms of silver; the belly and thighs of brass, and the legs of iron. The feet, with its toes, pictured the ultimate divisions of the Roman Empire. As noted, these succeeding world powers were Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. As we know, Rome was not succeeded by a fifth world power, but was divided into the various states of Europe.

The feet and toes were made of a mixture of clay and iron. Concerning this Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: "And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of iron, forasmuch as thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay; and as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."—vss. 41-43

Daniel's explanation that the powerful rulers represented by the feet and toes of the image "mingled themselves with the seed of men" may suggest an admixture of rulers with common people, in the form of parliaments and that it was this that brought about—or initiated—a disintegra-

tion of these dictatorial governments. Others suggest that it represents the union of church and state. The main point in any case is that the foundations of the image were weakened, which, when the time came for its destruction, made its fall the more certain.

The Image Smitten

And the whole image did fall, and was destroyed. Daniel prophesied this to Nebuchadnezzar. We quote: "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away."—vss. 34, 35

There is an unusual statement in this prophecy. It informs us that when the image was smitten on its feet every part of it fell "together." Now the fact is that the Babylonian Empire fell long before the Medo-Persian Empire. The Grecian Empire fell long before to the legions of Rome. Babylon as a city, and Babylon as a nation went out of existence long before those later powers came into existence which are shown in the image picture.

How, then, could it be said that the whole image—the gold, the silver, the brass, the iron—would fall "together"? It is evident that this "together" aspect of the prophecy relates to something which was common to all the powers pictured in the image, which was that the God of heaven had given them a kingdom. It was this dominion that the image represented, more than the mere fact of the existence of certain empires and nations.

The Divided Rome

The various divisions of the Roman Empire, as pictured by the feet and toes of the image, were still in existence

until our modern era. It was these divisions which constituted the various states of Europe which began to make war with each other in A. D. 1914. Men of the world, quite apart from any knowledge of what the Bible has to say about world conditions in this end of the age, recognize the fact of the passing of the various divisions of Rome as a result of the first World War. Writing in 1939 in the London (England) Sunday Express, Mr. C. A. Lyon had this to say about it:

“Who, in 1910, would have believed any of the things that have come to pass among the ruling houses of Europe in a few short years? Consider them as they were—the Romanoffs, the Bourbons, the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns. Before the war they seemed entrenched in power and wealth forever. Think of how for centuries they had owned Europe and ruled it. **How they had told the world that God had appointed them to rule it.** How they called each other ‘Sir, my brother,’ and formed themselves into a little elect intermarrying band. Some had a high idea of their calling. Others abused their power and wealth in loose living and luxury. But they all believed that they were permanent, privileged, irreplaceable.

“And yet, a series of little puffs of wind that blew soon after they assembled in strength for almost the last time at Edward VII’s funeral in 1910 sent them flying. Not one of them, it is safe to say, had the least inkling of the disasters and adventures that were to befall them and their relatives.”

How true a picture this is of what happened to Europe’s royalty as a result of the first World War; and now, more than thirty years after the article was written, the facts are more clearly evident. Significant in the article, because it is pointed out in the Bible, is the statement that these kings believed that God had appointed them to rule, as he had appointed Nebuchadnezzar.

"The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom," Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar. This truth became distorted through the centuries, and finally was referred to as "the divine right of kings." However, this form of rulership was destroyed as a result of the first World War so far as having any active influence in world affairs was concerned. The powerful church-state kings were overthrown, and no one since has advocated a return to the pre-1914 status of European government as a solution to the world's problems.

The kingdom which God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, and which was handed down to the succeeding empires, including Rome and its divisions, was not the messianic kingdom. Through Nebuchadnezzar God had overthrown the last of his typical messianic rulers, namely Zedekiah, and now it was time in the divine plan for his people Israel to be without a government of their own for a period of more than 2,520 years. (See Part 1 of this article, "The Times of the Gentiles.") Israel was to be "trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

God's granting of authority in the affairs of Babylon, and her successors, was in order to overrule in their affairs in connection with the foretold punishment of his people. While at times we speak in general terms of the Israelites being scattered throughout the earth, actually the vast majority of them throughout the centuries did not go beyond the territory ruled by the four great Empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. This was, in general, the habitat of "the wandering Jew."

Incidentally, also, God's giving of authority to these particular powers does not mean that he blessed them in all that they did, nor that he guided their affairs either in war or in peace, but rather he did this in the interest of his people, the footstep followers of Jesus, that "little flock" to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give a share in

the rulership phase of his messianic kingdom. He has seen to it that they will have had experiences best suited to their spiritual growth and development. Sometimes these experiences have been those of bitter persecution, and sometimes of peace and tranquillity; and God's hand has been in the affairs of nations to see to it that each of his saints, as a new creature in Christ Jesus, has just the experiences needed.

It is interesting to note also that the greater proportion of the "little flock" have been gathered and developed in the western world—largely the old Roman world. Even the ancestors of those living in the United States were, for the most part, Europeans. So the Lord, in his foreknowledge, knew where the important events related to his plan would be carried out, and made necessary preparations in advance. Surely God does "move in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

Nations Still Exist

Can we say that "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) have ended while there are so many Gentile nations still existing? The prophetic period which Jesus referred to as "the times" of the Gentiles does not refer to the existence of Gentile nations as such. The period, rather, was one during which the Jewish nation was to be trodden down by the Gentiles. As we saw in our previous article, this situation no longer exists. Today Israel is a free nation among the world of free nations. So from this standpoint alone there is no escaping the conclusion that "the times of the Gentiles" have ended.

The treading down of the Israelites by the Gentiles began in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Babylon as a nation existed prior to this, as did Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. The particular date in which Nebuchadnezzar was given a kingdom by the Lord was

606 B. C., and many Gentile nations existed long before this date. The end of the "times of the Gentiles," therefore, does not imply the end of all Gentile nations.

Nor did the Gentile times' prophecy apply to all the Gentile nations of earth, but only to the Babylonian Empire and its successors on down to Rome and its divisions. As we have noted, these nations shared the idea, distorted and abused though it became, that they ruled by divine right. It was this concept which ended with the closing of "the times of the Gentiles." So from this standpoint also we are assured that "the times of the Gentiles" have ended.

Preparing for the Kingdom

The closing of "the times of the Gentiles" occurs in the end of the age, when the Lord is preparing to set up the messianic kingdom, and the fact that we have seen this prophecy fulfilled gives us assurance that the kingdom is near. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream he saw the image smitten with a stone cut out of the mountain, causing the destruction of its various parts "together." Daniel explains this to mean that "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."—Dan. 2:44, 45

This kingdom of God which was to fill the whole earth started as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and became a great "mountain" which filled the earth.

(vss. 34, 35) The power and authority of God's kingdom as initially represented in Jesus first destroys the kingdoms of this world, and then grows until it fills the whole earth. And this begins "in the days of these kings." With the return of our Lord there comes the resurrection of the sleeping saints. Inasmuch as these shall live and reign with Christ, their resurrection constitutes a part of the setting up, or preparation, for the kingdom. When all the saints are resurrected at the close of the "harvest," then the completed church will be ready to "shine forth as the sun" with Jesus, "in the kingdom of their Father," Jesus then functioning as "the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings." What a blessed prospect! □

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RADIO TOPICS FOR SEPTEMBER

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 5—"When there is no Peace" | 19—"Can the Living
Talk with the Dead?" |
| 12—"Jesus the Son of God" | 26—"The Faith of Our Fathers" |

Bible Study

LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 5

Thinking About God

MEMORY VERSE: "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God."—Psalm 53:2

PSALM 42:1-3

DAVID was "a man after God's own heart," meaning that at heart he desired always to be in harmony with God, and to know the joy of God's rich blessings in his life. How beautifully the psalmist described this: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

This should be the earnest desire of every one who professes to serve the Lord, especially those of the present age who are following in the footsteps of Jesus, laying down their lives in sacrifice that they might prove worthy to live and reign with Christ in his thousand-year kingdom. These are bidden by Jesus to "seek first" the kingdom of heaven, in faith believing that their temporal needs are of secondary impor-

tance, and will be supplied by the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

The search for God has been characteristic of mankind in general in all ages. Anthropologists tell us that the earliest cultures on earth show that men have always attempted to establish contact with a power or powers in the universe beyond themselves.

PSALM 53:1-2

There have been those throughout the centuries who have not shared the desire of the Lord's people to know and serve God. Millions have said, "There is no God," but the psalmist refers to these as having done abominably, and among them "there is none that doeth good." Actually, even among those who are endeavoring faithfully to know and serve God there is none but the imperfect; but in this pas-

sage are described those who are not even trying to be in harmony with God, and who doubt his very existence.

PSALM 139:7

Those who by faith have found God realize that they cannot escape the sense of his presence, for they see and appreciate him in all the experiences of life, and in all with which they are surrounded. "Wither shall I go from thy Spirit?" asked the psalmist, "or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" He enlarges on this thought:

"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." (Ps. 139:8-10) This, of course, is symbolic language, but it denotes clearly the psalmist's firm conviction that God would be with him and bless him in all his ways. He also expresses his hope in the resurrection of the dead: "If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." "Hell" here is a translation of the Hebrew word "sheol," meaning "the state of death." God has not been in a state of death, but he has power over death, and will deliver death's prisoners in the resurrection; thus even in death the

psalmist would not be beyond the tender mercies of God.

ACTS 17:22, 23

Paul's sermon on Mars' hill, in which he referred to the "unknow God" of the Athenians is a reminder that men have reached out for God through many different means. The majority of them, indeed, have not as yet found the true God of the Bible, who so loved the world of mankind that he sent his Son to redeem them.

The "unknown God" of the Athenians remains unknown to the vast majority of mankind even to this day, but we rejoice to realize that a time is coming, and soon, when he will reveal himself to his earthly creatures, and that then the knowledge of his glory will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Meanwhile God is mindful of the efforts of his human creatures to find and serve him. He is able to read the heart of all, and knows from the heart condition those who are suitable to be enlightened and used in his service at the present time.

QUESTIONS

Do all who seek after God in this present age find him?

What did the psalmist mean by God being "in hell"?

Is the true God of the Bible still "unknown" to the majority of the people?

God Transcends Our Understanding

MEMORY VERSE: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"—Romans 11:33

EXODUS 33:19, 20

NO human has seen God at any time. This is in keeping with his statement to Moses, "No man shall see me, and live." He explained to Moses, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee; . . . and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

God caused his "goodness" to pass before us of the present age by granting us a knowledge of his glorious plan of the ages. It is through this grand design that God reveals his mercy, and through it we are assured of his gracious purpose to bless all the families of the earth. Indeed, all the Creator's attributes are revealed to us through his plan—his wisdom, his justice, his love, and his power. These combine to make up his glory, and in his own due time a knowledge of his glory will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

ISAIAH 40:18-26

Many have tried to imagine

what God looks like. They have made images of him out of gold and silver and wood. They suppose that this helps them to understand God better, and to render obedience to him. But in this making of images the people fail to realize the true characteristics of God. They fail to grasp in its fulness the thought that it is God who "siteth on the circle of the earth," and that the inhabitants of the earth "are as grasshoppers" by comparison. In passing, it is interesting to note the reference to "the circle of the earth." It was not until many centuries after this was written that the knowledge became general that the earth was a sphere.

"It is he that . . . stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in," further writes the prophet. Here again is a profound scientific truth. Man does live in an oxygen tent. It is one of the arrangements by which life is sustained in this human "mansion."

A characteristic of many fallen humans is the almost uncontrollable urge to be rulers, to exercise power over others. God gave his human creation dominion over the earth and the lower animals, but not over one another. But eventually all unauthorized rulers will be banished, for God will bring "the princes to nothing," and will make "the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble."

Yes, God is supreme over all! He has no equal. To impress this thought the prophet states, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth."

The magnitude of the universe with its countless millions of heavenly bodies is quite beyond our comprehension, and so much the more is the One responsible for such a vast and glorious creation.

ROMANS 11:33-36

Paul's lesson in Romans, chapter 11, pertains to God's deal-

ings with the natural descendants of Abraham, the Israelites. God had made wonderful promises to these, but their continued disobedience, particularly in their rejection of their Messiah when he presented himself to them, brought about their rejection. To these unbelieving Israelites Jesus said, "Your house is left unto you desolate."—Matt. 23:38

But Paul explains that this did not imply the cutting off of their opportunity to be saved from death, through Christ. Blindness had come upon the people of the nation, but that blindness is to be removed, and, as Paul explains, "All Israel shall be saved." (Rom. 11:26) What a wonderful display of God's wisdom and mercy this will be! And it was concerning this, in part, that Paul wrote:

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Let us continue to rejoice in the attributes of God, and seek to be obedient to his precepts.

QUESTIONS

How does God now reveal himself to his people?

What aspects of God's attributes is Paul referring to in our memory verse?

God Reveals Himself

MEMORY VERSE: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."

—Hebrews 1:1, 2, RSV

JOHN 1:1-5, 9-18

GOD reveals himself, through his Son, Christ Jesus, for his teachings are the very center of the entire divine revelation to the people of God. Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."—John 14:10

The Diaglott word-for-word translation of the first verse of our lesson reads, "In a beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and a god was the Word." Notice the difference this translation makes between the Creator, who was "the" God, and "the Word"—(Greek, "Logos")—which was "a" god. The word "God" in this text simply means "a mighty one," and the text emphasizes that Jehovah, our Heavenly Father, was the mighty One, the Almighty God of heaven and earth, and that the Logos who was with him

was a mighty god, but not the Almighty.

Verse 3 of the lesson explains that "the Word" or Logos was used by the Creator as his agent in the work of creation. The Apostle Paul explains that Jesus was "the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, . . . 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."—Col. 1:15-17

"In him [Jesus] was life," the lesson states. He was used to create life in the beginning, and how appropriate that now he should come to earth, and through a program of redemption by means of the cross, should be in a position to give life to that fallen creature, man.

Men have been groping in sin and darkness and death since the original transgression

in Eden, but now, by virtue of the authority and power invested in Jesus by his Heavenly Father, he is in a position to reveal the light; that light, which when received and obeyed, will give life—by faith in this age, and actually in the age to come—everlasting life.

Although, as the lesson states, Jesus is that true light which eventually enlightens every man that cometh into the world, very few who are now blinded by sin and Satan see and appreciate that light. The world in general did not know Jesus in the true sense at his first advent, nor do they recognize him now. But the time is coming when through him the glory of God will be revealed, and he will be recognized as the One whom God sent into the world, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

But a few did receive Jesus at his first advent—a few, that is, of his own nation, the Israelites. To these he gave the authority, or power, to become the sons of God. The work of God in the earth during the present age has been the selection of dedicated believers, from among Jews and Gentiles, to be joint-heirs with Jesus in his millennial kingdom. Paul wrote, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also

live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him."—II Tim. 2:11, 12; Rev. 20:4, 6

The glorious truth that Jesus would be sent into the world by his Heavenly Father had been clearly foretold by the prophets. However, their testimony is scattered. It is often in symbolic language, and sometimes in types and shadows, as in the typical lessons of the tabernacle and its services. The apostle gives the thought in our memory verse: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he hath appointed the heir of all things."

The message of the beloved Son of God through whom the Father speaks to us is largely an interpretation of what the prophets had previously spoken.

QUESTIONS

How does Jesus reveal his Heavenly Father to believers?

Explain the difference between "the" God and "a" God.

Quote Paul's confirmation of the fact that Jesus was the agent of Jehovah in the work of creation.

How is Jesus the "light of life"?

What is the work of God in the earth during the present age, and when will all men be enlightened?

God Gives Meaning to Life

MEMORY VERSE: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, . . . according to the good pleasure of his will."—Ephesians 1:5

PSALM 73:1-3, 16, 17, 21-26

GOD, through the Law given at the hands of Moses, promised health and prosperity to the Israelites. As the psalmist saw it, this was an evidence of God's good will toward Israel; that is, to those of the nation who had clean hearts. There should have been no difficulty on the part of those who were thus pure of heart to recognize God's love and mercy in this respect, but it required faith and understanding. The psalmist was tested along this line. "As for me," he wrote, "my feet were almost gone: my steps had well nigh slipped; for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

As we read on in the psalm we see that at the time many in Israel who were far from righteous were prospering, spoken of by the psalmist as "the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." He withheld himself from saying too much about his difficul-

ties in connection with this situation lest he "should offend" against the generation of his children.

This made a very difficult situation for the psalmist. He says, "When I thought to know [for understand] this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." Going "into the sanctuary" of the Lord would suggest, for one thing, a closer fellowship with God, and in the present age, also with his people. This communion with God through his people usually results in a better understanding of him and of his will.

The psalmist's heart was grieved and he was "pricked" in his reins, until, through a closer fellowship with God he came to understand him better and to accept his providences in his life, and to trust him, not only for himself, but also with respect to his dealings with others. He recognized that his "pain" over the matter of the

wicked prospering was an expression of his own foolishness. Now he realized that regardless of the position of the wicked, God was dealing with him in a special way, and that he was being held by his "right hand."

The psalmist continues, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (vs. 24) If we think of this as applying prophetically to the church of the present age the "glory" referred to would be the "glory, and honor, and immortality" of the kingdom for all those who prove worthy to live and reign with Christ. (Rom. 2:7) This high reward was not promised to anyone prior to the Lord's first advent, but various writers of the Old Testament referred to it in their prophecies, and this would seem to be one of the instances of the use of prophecy in this manner.

But this high reward will come only to those who are guided by the Lord's counsel, and this guidance comes to them through his Word. These realize that even while in the flesh, the Lord is their satisfying portion; that life is not at all worthwhile apart from knowing and serving him: "There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

EPHESIANS 1:9, 10

Basically, the psalmist's problem was the understanding of the divine permission of evil. However, the Scriptures assure us that the time is coming when all evil shall be destroyed. This is according to the "good pleasure" of the Heavenly Father's purpose, which is that "in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."—vs. 10

In connection with the outworking of this "good pleasure" he predestinates his faithful of the present age to be his children, and these, together with his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, will be the Lord's ruling house in the messianic kingdom. These will share with Jesus in reconciling the world to God and to the doing of his will. All wilful opposers of the divine will, are then to be cut off in death.—Acts 3:23

QUESTIONS

Did God exercise a special care over the faithful of natural Israel, and what was the psalmist's problem in connection with this?

When will all evil and evil-doers in the earth be destroyed?

Christian Life and Doctrine

Compassion

"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick."—Matthew 14:14

LOVE is the very essence of the Heavenly Father's character, for "God is love." It finds expression in various ways. It is manifested in the giving of one's time, strength, or substance that another might be fed, clothed, or instructed; in yielding of one's own will to that of another; in a hundred different sacrifices, large and small, that the lives of others might be made a little brighter, their burdens and griefs less heavy.

But compassion seems to be a very special manifestation of love; it is a form of love that springs from the deepest recesses of the heart. To be compassionate means to be sympathetic, understanding. It means to be moved with pity for the unfortunate, the sorrowing. It means, literally, to suffer together with those who are suffering. It is possessed in abundant measure by our Heavenly Father, and it is shared in like measure by our Lord.

This compassion which the Lord felt toward the sick and dying world, of which we have just read from Matthew's

Gospel, did not begin with his ministry in Palestine. It had older, deeper roots. It began long before, with the creation and ages-long preparation of the earth, which was without form, and void, unprepared for habitation by a new being. The appearance of light to combat the darkness; the establishment of the atmosphere through which would drift the beautiful clouds, gathering up moisture with which to water and refresh the earth; the separation of the far-flung seas from the dry land; the seeding of the earth's hills and valleys to bring forth grass and fruit-bearing trees; the making manifest in the heavens of the sun and the moon to divide the day from the night; the filling of the seas, the land, and the skies with marvelous living creatures—all this mighty and loving provision had first to be accomplished by the Logos, at the direction of his Heavenly Father. For "all things were made by him [the Logos]; and without him was not any thing made that was made."—John 1:3

Then, at last, came the day when man himself would be created, this new being for whose sole benefit and joy all this mighty preparation had been made! The Logos also had a part in that creation. We read in Genesis, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." (Gen. 1:26) Then God planted a garden "eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed."—Gen. 2:8

What a joy to the Logos must have been the creation of this new being, formed out of the dust of the earth! He could think; he could freely make his own decisions; he could praise God; he could even reproduce himself! And what wonderful prospects were promised for his everlasting enjoyment of life on earth!

But he who had shared in this loving work of creating man, to which so much careful attention had been devoted, was also to be witness to his fall; to the advent of sin, and man's condemnation to death. He beheld, no doubt with great sorrow, the terrible downward drift of humankind into sin and sickness, sorrow and suffering, disease and death.

This eventuality was not unforeseen by the Heavenly Father, for he possesses foreknowledge beyond human comprehension. "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isa. 46:9, 10) But one wonders if the Logos also possessed this ability to foreknow events. Was he prepared for the terrible sentence which justly fell on the being in whose creation he had participated with such loving care?

The Apostle Peter writes, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish, and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." (I Pet. 1:18, 19) The Revelator refers to Jesus as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. 13:8) Thus we see that the Heavenly Father foreknew that man would fall. He also knew that his only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus, would give his life that man might be redeemed from the sentence of death. But did the Logos know this? And if not, when did he learn of it? We cannot know; but at last it came time for God to reveal his plan for man's redemption to his beloved Son.

Why did Jesus accept this commission? He had glory, honor, and fellowship with the Father. Why did he come to earth as man's Redeemer? For one thing, he did it simply because it was the Father's desire. "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." (Ps. 40: 7, 8) That it was the Father's will would be reason enough. Even in that final extremity of anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane, before his crucifixion, he said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."—Matt. 26:39

But there was another reason. For some four thousand years he had observed the sorry state of that marvelous human being in whose creation he had been so closely associated. He had noted his fall from that glory and perfection and happiness enjoyed by father Adam in Eden; he had seen him enmeshed in the cords of sin, immersed in strife and wars; laid low by disease, suffering, and death.

Jesus himself tells us of his Father's great love for man, even in his fallen condition: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Jesus shared that same love for mankind, and in his compassion for the human race he gave up the glory he had with the Father; he gave up the fellowship he there enjoyed; and although he was "in the form of [a] God, he took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:6-8) Paul also tells us that he "was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, that he . . . should taste death for every man."—Heb. 2:9

That love, that compassion, which moved our Lord to forsake his high position with the Heavenly Father characterized his entire ministry here on earth. Wherever he went he was exposed to the sorrows, sickness, and suffering of the people, and his heart went out to them. Time and again we read that "great multitudes followed him; and he healed them all." When Jesus heard of the death of

John the Baptist we are told that "he departed by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them and he healed their sick." And then he fed the five thousand.—Matt. 14:13, 14

In another place Matthew writes that "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." (Matt. 9:35, 36) On another occasion we read that "Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." (Matt. 15:32) Finding that the disciples had seven loaves and a few little fishes, he gave thanks, and then proceeded to feed some four thousand men, besides the women and children that were with them.

Seemingly this occurred over and over again. But he did not restrict his attention to the multitudes; he was deeply touched with the infirmities of individuals, as in the case of the leper. "And there came a leper to him, beseeching, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will: Be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed."—Mark 1:40-42

Then there was that pathetic incident in the city of Nain. This is recorded for us by Luke: "And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain: and many

of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother." (Luke 7:11-15) As the woman thus received her son back from death, how the evidence of her joy must have lifted some of the burden of his ministry from the Master's heart!

We recall, too, the death of Lazarus, and how his sorrowing sisters, Mary and Martha, sent for Jesus. Mary, in her grief, went out to meet the Lord, and "when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!" (John 11:32-36) And Jesus restored him to life.

Even in the Garden of Gethsemane, when being apprehended shortly before his crucifixion, he again manifested his mercy and compassion, this time toward one of his enemies. In an impulsive move to protect his Master, "Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? And Jesus touched his ear, and healed it." (John 18:10) There, in the very center of that tumult, was One who was calm; One who never for an instant forgot that he was the Son of

God, and that he had come into the world to be man's Redeemer. With no thought for his own plight, unmindful of the fact that his own death was imminent, Jesus mercifully healed the man's ear. How often must our Lord have longed for that time, still unknown to him, when not just one here and one there would be healed, made to see, restored to life; but when the whole dead and dying world of mankind would come under the healing, lifegiving ministrations of the kingdom!

Not many ever thanked him. On one occasion he healed ten lepers; only one returned, giving him thanks and glorified God. "And Jesus said, Were there not ten cleansed? where are the nine? There are not found any that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." (Luke 17:11-19) But this almost universal ingratitude did not deter our Lord, for he knew that godly compassion is not bestowed only on those who can repay, or may render thanks.

At the very end, we witness Jesus' love for his own; and we hear a despairing cry that seems to come from the depths of his soul, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings—and ye would not." (Matt. 23:37) He had come unto his own, but they received him not; but this did not diminish his love and pity for them. No wonder we read that the common people received him gladly! Truly, we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling for our infirmities! He was moved with pity for all humankind; he suffered with them, and finally he gave his life for them.

Then came his resurrection from the grave. And as he was brought forth from the tomb by his Heavenly Father, to find himself freed from the bands of death, can you imagine that first marvelous, sweet moment of exhilaration

that must have filled his being, realizing that his sacrifice was finished, and accepted of the Father! Perhaps his very first thoughts would center on that wonderful promise of the Father, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell—neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. In thy presence is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore!"

During those lonely years of his ministry, how often he must have thought of that wonderful association he had previously enjoyed with the Creator. How often he must have longed again to be with his Father; to have done with this weary work; to be with the One to whom he had been daily his delight. But before he could present himself to the Father he had yet another task to perform. He must go back to his disciples, those sheep without a shepherd, to manifest himself; to comfort them, to assure them of his resurrection.

And in his various appearances to the disciples we find that same gentle love and compassion that had marked his entire earthly ministry. Recall his patience with Thomas; his tender concern for the two discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus; his kindly revelation of himself to Mary at the tomb. How Mary's grief touched his heart!

Between the time of his resurrection and Pentecost, what was he doing? The recorded appearances that he made to his disciples would occupy but a very small portion of that time. Probably he was engaged in prayer and meditation, communing with his Heavenly Father; perhaps he was preparing himself for that joyous moment when he would actually appear, once more, in the very presence of his Father, the sacrifice of his perfect human life on behalf of the world successfully completed. And then, when he finally ascended to the heavenly realms, his work done, victorious over death and the grave, can you picture that

(Continued on page 34)

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COMPASSION

(Continued from page 31)

first joyous meeting between the Heavenly Father and his obedient, faithful Son?

The apostle tells us that it was for the joy that was set before him that he endured the suffering, the shame, the cross. What was that joy? It could have sprung from many sources. It might have been the anticipation of returning to his Father's home and fellowship; the promise of immortality; the knowledge that he had been obedient to his Father's will—all these. But perhaps his greatest joy was the prospect of blessing all the families of the earth, the blessing of all those dying multitudes, those sheep without a shepherd toward whom his heart went out in pity, and for whose sufferings he was moved with compassion. The knowledge of that joyous prospect would sustain and direct him in the way of sacrifice. And true compassion for one's fellow man can be a source of strength and power in the Christian way.

He had no seed of his own. "Who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living." But the prophet informs us that he will indeed have a seed. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." That pleasure of Jehovah which shall prosper in the hand of Jesus is the bringing of the world of mankind back into atonement with the Creator during the kingdom reign. To these our Lord Jesus will be an "everlasting Father"; the whole restored world of mankind will be his children; not a dead and dying race, but a happy, healthy people, to enjoy everlasting life in a perfect paradise on earth!—Isa. 53:8-10; 9:6

All who are motivated by the same joyous hope of bless- all the families of the earth that moved our Lord to lay down his life in sacrifice; all who are constrained by that same compassion toward the world to walk in his sacrificial steps, will join their Lord Jesus in the presence of the Father. And as our Lord during his earthly ministry healed the sick, the lame, the blind, so it will be our joy in the kingdom to be associated with him in healing and restoring to perfect life here on earth, the whole world of mankind.

Then we too can look forward to the realization of that prospect that so inspired our Lord Jesus: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." □

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts

SEPTEMBER 2—"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."—I Peter 1:22 (Z. '03-207 Hymn 23)

SEPTEMBER 9—"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of

life."—Philippians 2:15, 16 (Z. '03-358 Hymn 45)

SEPTEMBER 16—"The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace."—Psalm 29:11 (Z. '96-163 Hymn 128)

SEPTEMBER 23—"Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3 (Z. '03-423 Hymn 154)

SEPTEMBER 30—"The love of Christ constraineth us."—II Corinthians 5:14 (Z. '03-55, 58 Hymn 44)

Searching the Heart

“The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”—Hebrews 4:12, 13

EVERY true servant of the Lord desires to keep his heart pure and in harmony with the principles of righteousness set forth in the Word of God. It is not enough that we search our own hearts. We must also search the Word of God, with the view of being instructed by the Lord. David, a man after God's own heart, realized that he needed the Lord's help in searching his heart, so prayed, “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.”—Ps. 19:12-14

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that God is able to read our hearts and to know all the secret intents of our thoughts. As for us, we can judge another only by his out-

ward appearance, but God is not thus limited. To the Prophet Samuel the Lord said, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (I Sam. 16:7) That our thoughts are naked before the Lord should make us very alert in controlling them. On the other hand, to know that God is able to read our hearts should also be an encouragement, for he knows our weaknesses, and remembers that we are dust, and deals with us, not according to what we are able to accomplish, but according to what we would like to do and be.

Our High Priest, Christ Jesus, is also sympathetic; and we are invited to go to him at the throne of grace, there to obtain mercy, and to find grace to help in our every time of need. We are admonished to approach the throne of grace "boldly," that is, with confidence. (Heb. 4:16 RSV) We know we can do this, for we are assured that the blood of our High Priest cleanses us from all unwilling sins; and if we are sincere in searching and controlling the intents of our hearts, we can boldly claim the blood of Christ to make us acceptable to the Lord.

Sincerity

Sincerity before the Lord is of supreme importance in searching our hearts. The psalmist wrote, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts." (Ps. 139:23) None but the sincere would presume to ask God to search his heart. Are we willing at the close of each day to ask God to search our hearts because of our knowledge that we have not wilfully transgressed his laws?

Jesus is our great Exemplar. He rejoiced to realize that his Heavenly Father knew every intent of his heart, and whether or not he had been faithful under all circumstances. He said to his Heavenly Father, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest." (Ps. 40:9) "Thou

knowest"—how heart-searching this information should be to all of us who are endeavoring to follow in the footsteps of our Master! Our own brethren in Christ may not know just how faithful we are from day to day, but the Lord does.

Jesus Also

Jesus also was, and is, able to read our thoughts and to search out the true intents of our hearts. An interesting incident in this connection is recorded in connection with Jesus' association with the Apostle Peter. We recall Jesus' prophecy that Peter would deny him; and at the time this was apparently far from Peter's thoughts and intentions, but the prophecy came true, and Peter learned a most valuable lesson from it.

Following Jesus' resurrection, when he appeared to his apostles on the shore of Galilee he entered into conversation with Peter, asking him a very pertinent question: "Lovest thou me?" Was there any resentment in Peter's heart over what had happened in connection with the trial and crucifixion of Jesus? Jesus knew the answer, but he wanted to hear it from Peter's own lips. And perhaps Jesus may also have reasoned that such a confession from Peter would be of value to the other disciples.

Peter assured Jesus that he did love him. And then the Master repeated the question, and Peter again confirmed his love. Then the Master asked essentially the same question for the third time, and Peter, perhaps wondering why he was being asked the same question so many times, replied, "Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee."—John 21:1-17

It seems not unreasonable that here Peter had in mind the fact that Jesus, knowing the inner workings of his mind and heart so well that he could foretell his denial,

certainly did know all things, and therefore now knew that his love for the Master was sincere and genuine; that there really was no need for the Master even to raise the question. But in the divine arrangement it seemed well for Peter, even as it does for us, to tell the Lord that we love him. He appreciates this.

The Seven Churches

Jesus' knowledge of the thoughts and works of his people is revealed in his messages to the seven churches, the account of which is recorded in the second and third chapters of Revelation. In his message to each of these churches Jesus said, "I know thy works." He knew their outward works and their secret works, and he also possesses this same knowledge concerning us. We cannot relax our faithfulness even for a day with the thought that it will not be noticed by our Lord. If this is done through the weakness of the flesh, the Lord understands, and will forgive, and give strength for the future. To whatever extent unfaithfulness is wilful, we will suffer chastisement, but even this will be an evidence of divine love, for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

To the church at Ephesus Jesus said, "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted."—Rev. 2:2, 3

This is truly a remarkable testimony of faithfulness on behalf of the church at Ephesus. They labored diligently for the Lord, and were patient. They had been faithful in watching over the welfare of the church in that they had put to the test those who claimed to be apostles. They had found these to be liars, and undoubtedly had prevented

them from serving the brethren. Yes, the church at Ephesus had labored and had not fainted.

But the Lord saw something in the hearts and lives of the brethren at Ephesus which perhaps they did not recognize themselves, and told them about it. He said. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love." Some may suppose that the "first love" enthusiasm of those who first see and dedicate themselves to the vision of truth is somewhat immature, and that our goal should be to settle down to things more mature. But this is an incorrect thought. It is unfortunate when any consecrated child of God loses his first love enthusiasm for the Lord and for his precious truth.

Under the influence of that "first love" zeal nothing could stand in our way of serving the Lord. There was no task too difficult to undertake for the Lord and for the brethren, and no sacrifice too great. When we saw the vision of truth—present truth—we were so stirred by enthusiasm and love that the dull drab cares of life took on a brightness of meaning which we never knew before. "Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers" all gained new sweetness to us.

Under the sweet influence of that "first love" the Lord's people became our people, not just a people with whom to associate for an hour or two once a week; for then we sought out every opportunity possible for fellowship and service. Is our activity in the service today merely a perfunctory sort of thing, or do we serve with enthusiasm because we love to serve, and because the self-sacrificing spirit of love is impelling us to lay down our lives for the Lord, the truth, and the brethren?

Can we say to the Lord today, as Peter said to Jesus, Thou knowest that I love thee. Yes, Lord, I love thee, and I love thy people and the truth today more than I ever did

before. Thou knowest, Lord, that I have not lost any of my "first love" enthusiasm and zeal. Today, even as when the truth was first revealed to us, we should have the same spirit of sacrifice zealously to serve the brethren, and to tell the whole world the glad tidings of the kingdom. Can we truly say that we have not lost our "first love"?

To Thyatira

In Jesus' message to the church at Thyatira we are presented with a somewhat contrasting thought. He said to these brethren, "I know thy works, and charity [love], and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." What an encouraging testimonial this must have been to the faithful in the church at Thyatira! The Lord knew their love, and he knew about their faith and their patience and their works. But best of all they had not lost any of these qualities. Their "first love" had not slipped away from them, but instead they had increased in all the qualifications he mentioned, including their love. The "last" was more than the "first."

And why should this not be so? Is there any reason why we should be less zealous in works now than in the beginning? As we search our hearts we will discover that there is no reason at all why we should not become more zealous. The Gospel of Christ, the divine plan of salvation, is the same today as when we first learned about it. There are still millions of people in the world to whom it is appropriate to bear witness to this Gospel of the kingdom. There are still many who have broken hearts because of the sadness which has come into their lives, and among these are some who may have a hearing ear for the comforting message of the Gospel, and its assurance of the future blessing of all the families of the earth. Surely there is every reason why we should be more faithful in the

proclamation of the kingdom, and in laying down our lives for the brethren. To be less faithful would be admitting that we had lost our first love, rather than increased in it as had the faithful brethren in the church at Thyatira.

More Faith

Jesus indicated that the faithful brethren in the church at Thyatira had also increased in their faith, and why should this not be true of all the truly consecrated? Day by day the tender mercies of our God are shed abroad in our lives; and we note the many ways in which the Lord is guiding and helping us in our every time of need. Each one of these experiences should serve to increase our faith, and we believe that every truly dedicated follower of the Master will testify that this is true.

It is only if we become weary in well-doing, and when we fail to meet patiently the experiences which the Lord in his love and wisdom permits to come into our lives, that our faith begins to weaken. May we search our hearts to make sure that no seeds of doubt are lurking there, ready to spring forth into a weakened faith when the battles of the Christian way become difficult, and when we need faith most of all to assist us in laying hold upon the precious promises of the Lord. May we be able to say from the heart that there has not failed one word of all the Lord's good promises, and may this assurance enable us to rejoice more and more in the glorious hope set before us, the hope that enters into that which is beyond the veil.

Sardis

To the church at Sardis Jesus said, "I have not found thy works perfect." This would be true, and is true, of all the Lord's people, none of whom is worthy in his own righteousness. Jesus speaks of those in Sardis who were worthy through the righteousness of Christ. We quote,

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”

Every follower of the Master strives constantly to be worthy of his love and care now, and cherishes the wonderful hope of being worthy to enter into that glorious inheritance which he has prepared for all who are faithful even unto death. In our earnest, heart-searching desire to please our Lord let us remember that he knows all things. If we find traces of sin or of disobedience in our own hearts, let us remember that the Lord knows about these even better than we do.

May we therefore seek the Lord's forgiveness, and also his help to overcome any selfish spirit we may have; to help us detect the smallest beginnings of defiling sin in our hearts. Surely we want to walk with the Lord in the white robe of righteousness provided through the blood of Christ. What a comfort it is to realize that the Lord does know the true condition of our hearts, and has provided the necessary help for our every time of need.

This help comes largely through the instructions and warnings contained in his Word. May we make greater use of these as day by day we endeavor more earnestly to know and do the Lord's will. The works of nature reveal some of the glorious characteristics of God, and inspire us to worship and serve him. The psalmist wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork,” but it is only through his Word that we are instructed in the true knowledge of God, and guided in the manner in which we should serve him. David wrote:

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the

commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."—Ps. 19:7-11

How great indeed is the "reward" of the followers of the Master during the Gospel Age! It will be a "crown of life," and sitting with the Master on his throne. It will be eating of the tree of life "which is in the midst of the paradise of God." It will be eating of the "hidden manna," symbolic of the immortality to which all who are found worthy will be exalted.

It will be to receive a "white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." It will be to receive "power over the nations," to bless them with peace, joy, and everlasting human life.

It will be to have our names in the book of life, and to experience that ineffable joy of having our names confessed before the Father and before the angels.

It will also be to have written upon us the name of our God, and the name of the city of our God, the New Jerusalem.

As we continue to search our hearts, let us continue in prayer, asking the Lord to help us obey "What the Spirit saith unto the churches." And may we be able at all times to go to the Lord, and like Peter, say to him, "Thou knowest that I love thee." □



The British Section

Walking With God

AS CONSECRATED people of God, we have learned from the Scriptures that in order to have a close walk with God there are at least three outstanding requirements: (1) Agreement with God by manifesting a living faith and an implicit obedience to his will as revealed through his Word. (2) Separation unto God by full consecration to him; and (3) An intelligent appreciation of his purposes, which he has been pleased to reveal to his children, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

It is generally agreed that the first two requirements are very necessary, but erroneously, some think that the last one is not so important, that it does not matter much whether we have an intellectual understanding of our Father's plan so long as we are in agreement with him and separated unto him. The inspired Word of the Lord, how-

ever, makes it quite clear that growth in grace must be accompanied by a growth in knowledge. If we would walk with God and have fellowship with him, we must, through his plan, have some knowledge of his character.

This principle can be illustrated by picturing a home where there is a little boy who has only just begun to walk. In the evenings his father comes home, fatigued, maybe, by the toil of the day, and the young child learns that his father is pleased when he toddles away and brings him his slippers. He has gained a little knowledge of what is pleasing to his father, and, acting on it, there is fellowship between father and child. But suppose as the child grows up, he never learned to do anything but fetch father his slippers—never understood whether there was anything else that would also be a service—we can imagine how very little fellowship there would be between the father and his son.

On the other hand, suppose that as the child grows in stature he also grows in knowledge and intelligence. Gradually he learns that his father has some particular interest in life, and so he becomes active in that also. In this way the father and the growing lad come closer together. As the years pass, the son further learns that his father has burdens and responsibilities that sometimes weigh heavily upon him, and the young man begins to enter into these and share them sympathetically. Thus they come even closer together and the fellowship is stronger. The son is now capable of shouldering with his father the cares and responsibilities of life; and so they walk hand in hand together.

When we first came into the wonderful family of God our knowledge of the Father's plans was very limited indeed. The healthy child in the Christian way, however, grows in knowledge as the years pass. And as that knowledge of the Father's character and plans increases and there is obedience to that growing understanding, so al-

so the closeness of the walk and communion with the Father increases. "O for a closer walk with God," should be the earnest desire of the heart.

This growth was the fervent prayer of the Apostle Paul: "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Col. 1:9,10) Alas, that so many today should err in believing that it does not really matter what we believe; or, how much or how little we know, so long as we are sincere!—II Pet. 3:18.

A beautiful picture, illustrating the value and importance of a growth in knowledge, is recorded in the account given of the two disciples who walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the Sunday of our Lord's resurrection. (Luke 24:13-32) These two men were loyal, devoted, and sincere. For them it had been a very wonderful experience to enjoy the companionship of their dear Master. But now he had been taken from them

and crucified. This event had completely put them "off balance." They had trusted that it was he who should have redeemed Israel. They understood that certain scriptures had already had their fulfilment in Jesus; and they had fondly hoped that other holy prophecies were just about to be fulfilled. But now all was changed. Jesus had definitely been put to death, and their hearts were full of sorrow.

But unknown to these two disciples, the Lord Jesus was quite near them. He knew all about their difficulties, and was close at hand to help. We can picture that before Jesus was crucified he had walked and talked with these two disciples, and that this fellowship had been sweet. Now, in their present dilemma and lack of understanding, they could not experience so close a fellowship as Jesus could have desired.

And why was this? It was because the plan of God had advanced a step forward. Calvary was now in the past. The man Christ Jesus had laid down his life as a ransom price. He had been raised from the dead a great spirit

being, and had been given all power in heaven and in earth. But these were facts still unknown to those two loyal, devoted, and sincere disciples.

They were deficient in knowledge, and so the Lord knew that his first move was to be their teacher, to lead them into a knowledge of God's plan of redemption. He knew that when this was accomplished there could be a closer walk and fellowship with them than ever before. Certainly the Lord did not conclude that their loyalty and devotion and sincerity alone were basis enough for the fullest fellowship. Instead, his course of action confirmed the fact that knowledge of God's plans and purposes is indispensable to closer fellowship.

Next we find Jesus himself drawing near to them, on that Emmaus road. He appeared to them as a complete stranger. In a beautifully sympathetic manner he inquired the cause of their apparent disappointment. They informed him of their troubles, doubtless quoting various scriptures which they felt sure had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. Then Jesus said to them: "O

foolish men; and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken. Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things; and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:25-27, R. V.) What an opening of the Scriptures that was to these two travellers! How their hearts burned within them as they walked and talked with the Stranger whom later that day they identified as their risen Lord!

There was a time when we, too, walked along life's pathway: loyal, devoted and sincere. But, alas! Like these two disciples, sadly lacking in intelligence respecting our Father's plans. Like these disciples we also had learned to love God, and we knew something of his character and something about the Scriptures. But we were sad because there were many perplexing problems which we were unable to solve; and the explanations which came from religious leaders were anything but satisfactory.

But there was "One" at hand, even our returned and

glorified Lord, who sensed our difficulties, and knew that we needed further knowledge if we were to walk closer in fellowship with him and his Father. And it was while we reasoned and struggled with the perplexing questions respecting God that "Jesus himself drew near." He broke upon our astonished minds the vision of the divine plan of the ages in all its wondrous beauty and simplicity. That was a never to be forgotten experience! Darkness fled away! Superstition vanished! Scriptures were opened! Our hearts did surely burn within us.

Going back to the "Emmaus" incident, we learn that when the three travellers reached the home of the two disciples the Stranger made as though he would have gone farther. But one who had so opened the Scriptures, and set their hearts burning in such a manner, was not to be parted with easily. They constrained him to abide with them, for it was toward evening. The three entered the house and a meal was prepared. They sat down to meat; the Stranger lifted up his voice and gave thanks. What

a familiar voice, and what a familiar giving of thanks that was! As they sat at meat their eyes were opened. They recognized the Stranger to be the Lord, and then he vanished out of their sight.

Have we not noticed that the experiences of many of us today have been somewhat similar? It was after we had received a knowledge of the divine plan of the ages that we found the truth to be like a meal, and we sat down to eat, to digest, and to assimilate it. This has been, and still is, a feast indeed. But perhaps the most wonderful feature of all has been that, as we have appropriated to ourselves the life-giving energizing "food," like those at Emmaus, we also have had our eyes opened to see and recognize the One at the table as none other than our dear Lord himself, now returned at his second advent, as promised to gather his own unto himself.

This has been a very special revelation indeed, and it is granted only to those who, having had the Scriptures opened, continue to investigate the matter until at length they realize they have close

fellowship with Jesus. "He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."—Luke 12:37

Again returning to the "Emmaus" account, we find that when the Lord had vanished, the two disciples, their hearts still burning and their eyes of understanding now opened, rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem. There they sought out the rest of their number who had gathered that Sunday night behind closed doors for fear of the Jews.

It is ever the same with all who contact the Lord and are taught of him. The effect of intelligent understanding is to bring all those enlightened into fellowship with each other, where they can assist and build one another up in the most holy faith. As we do so, Jesus himself draws near with his message of peace to us just as he did on that Sunday night behind those closed doors in Jerusalem.—Luke 24:36

In this scriptural account there is an order of events which we cannot afford to disregard, as it contains a precious lesson. When these

two disciples walked and talked and were sad, and when Jesus came near and walked with them, their first experience was that of having the Scriptures opened to them. Suppose they had been quite satisfied to let the matter rest there, and to let their blessed Teacher go on his way—how much they would have missed! They would have had the Scriptures opened to them, and perhaps for a time, burning hearts, but with still “closed” eyes they would not have recognized their Teacher as their risen Lord. So, too, with many today. They have rejoiced to know of the Scriptures opened to them, and to have had the many perplexing questions answered. Their hearts have burned, too!—but they have neglected really to “sit down to meat” and to appropriate these precious truths to themselves, and consequently they miss the blessing of “opened” eyes, and living contact with the Lord. Let us rejoice, however, that not only have we had the Scriptures opened; not only have our hearts burned; but we have had the blessed experience of sitting down to meat at a richly spread table. And above all, the eyes of our

minds have been opened and we have recognized our dear Teacher as our beloved Lord and Head, who, true to his promise, **has returned** and has come forth to serve us.—Luke 12:37

We are, by divine grace, a greatly privileged people. Let us count our many blessings! We have been brought into “agreement with God,” through faith, obedience, and the justification which is in Christ Jesus. We have been, and are being, sanctified, “separated,” set apart, by him to be his holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. We have been graciously granted an “intelligent appreciation” of the Father’s plans and purposes. Now we can earnestly pray: “O for a closer walk with God.”

This is a companionship in which we can take to our Heavenly Father every joy, and every sorrow. We can take our every problem and have his advice and counsel. It is in and through the name and merit of Christ that we have this precious “walk” with God. Indeed, as day by day we faithfully walk and have sweet fellowship with Jesus, along the “Emmaus”

road, we also "sit down to meat" with him at the richly spread table of truth. Thus we also have communion with the Father, for they are both abiding with us. "If a man love me," said Jesus, "he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—John 14:23

This is a wondrous "walk," or way of life. And we can rest in the assurance that nothing but what is good and

best for us as "new creatures" is being planned. So that whether the path be rough or smooth, it is always acceptable to us, since we have this marvelous companionship.

Our walk is to be constant, not spasmodic, but an unchanging, patient enduring pace—a holy habit, not an odd duty. And if we are faithful, our walk with God and with his dear Son will terminate in the glorious eternal home of our Father. □



BRITISH SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

J. HUMPHREY		E. T. NADAL	
Dewsbury	(Sat.) Oct. 16	Dewsbury	(Sat.) Sept. 25
Latchford	17	Latchford	Sept. 12
		W. F. READER	

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LITERATURE AND SUBSCRIPTIONS—70, Station Road, Gidea Park, Romford, Essex. RM2 6DA.

Talking Things Over

The Unity of the Spirit

IT WILL be thirty-nine years in October since the first issue of *The Dawn* was published, and while we have discussed the general and fundamental teachings of the Bible from month to month as best we could, including Christian unity, we think it well to stress again the importance of this subject as we enter upon a new year of publication. There is very little unity in the world today, in either the civil or professed Christian world. Instead, there is chaos, and much of this chaos is based on fear—fear of actions by others that we regard as being contrary to our own interests.

One small area of unity in the outside world today is the agreement among certain dissident groups that they are against “the establishment”—whatever that might happen to be. How different this is from Christian unity which is not an agreement to be **against** something or somebody, but to be **for** righteousness, for the Lord, and for his people; and to be willing, at whatever cost, to lay down one’s life in his service.

The Apostle Paul wrote of “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The “unity of the Spirit” is a unity which is produced by the indwelling Spirit of God in our lives, and is evidenced by our en-

deavors to obey its holy dictates and influences. And this results in a blessed condition among the brethren. The psalmist spoke of it prophetically in that well-known psalm: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."—Ps. 133

The "unity of the Spirit" is more than just a kindly feeling toward those who are in agreement with us. It is more than "showing a good spirit," as this expression is often used; although those who are united by the Holy Spirit will certainly be kind and loving toward one another. The unity of the spirit is the unity which results from obedience to the will of God as he has revealed it through his Word.

At One with God

Those who are truly united by the Spirit of God must first be at one with God. Amos wrote, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3) The Hebrew word here translated "agreed" carries the thought of having made an appointment. The message is to Israel, who had made an appointment to walk with the Lord in keeping with the terms of the Law Covenant, and the Lord is telling them through Amos that they would be punished because they had not kept that appointment. They had failed the Lord.

We also, through full consecration to do his will, have made an appointment to walk with the Lord; and if we are faithfully keeping that appointment, walking according to our covenant of sacrifice, we must of necessity be united with all others who are likewise walking with him. Any

straying from the path of full obedience to the divine word will in some measure alienate us not only from the Lord, but also from one another. This would represent the influence of a carnal spirit in our lives, rather than a reflection of the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of carnality existed for a time in the church at Corinth, manifesting itself in the tendency to be over-impressed with the influence of human leaders. And there are other forms of carnality. All the works of the flesh and the Devil are carnal, springing from the fallen natures of the Lord's people. The fruits of the Spirit, on the contrary, are the result of the workings of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and in addition to promoting unity will encourage the spirit of kindness, patience, and love.

An Early-Church Issue

Throughout the age various issues have tended to place a strain upon the spirit of Christian unity. Some of these have been essentially the same in each generation; others have been peculiar to the time in which they existed. One of the issues which tested the unity of the Spirit in the Early Church was that which arose when Gentiles began to accept the Gospel and to associate themselves with congregations which had been hitherto exclusively Jewish.

But what did the Holy Spirit dictate with respect to the Jew and Gentile issue in the Early Church? This is the question which we should all ask ourselves in connection with the difficult-to-understand situations which may arise among us. The answer is to be found on the basis of what the Holy Spirit says, through the written Word. One of the greatest tests upon the Lord's people throughout the entire age has been loyalty to the Word of God. All the grossly erroneous doctrines of Christendom have developed through efforts to wrest the Scriptures to make them seem to conform to unscriptural viewpoints.

The Issue Clear

In the Early Church there should have been no difficulty for any of the Lord's consecrated people to know where they should stand with respect to the Jewish and Gentile converts—but there was difficulty, and largely because certain teachers were going about teaching error on the subject. Paul withstood these, as did others. Even Peter wavered in his conduct on one occasion. Racial prejudice doubtless entered into the matter.

True, to begin with, Jesus had instructed his apostles not to go to the Gentiles. Probably some remembered this, but did not keep their instructions up-to-date, for later, after his resurrection, Jesus instructed his disciples, beginning at Jerusalem, to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. And then the Lord performed a miracle in bringing Peter and Cornelius (the first Gentile convert) together. When Cornelius and his household accepted the message, and the Holy Spirit came upon them as it had upon the Jewish converts at Pentecost, Peter, reporting it, said concerning the work of God's grace in their hearts, "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." (Acts 15:8-11) One of the great lessons Peter learned from his experience was that henceforth as between Jew and Gentile "there is no respect of persons with God."—Rom. 2:11

The Basic Fundamentals

In presenting his admonition on the importance of keeping the "unity of the Spirit," Paul gives an outline of es-

sential beliefs involved in this unity. We quote: "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."—Eph. 4:4-6

"There is one body": The Jewish converts were not to think that Gentiles accepting Christ were of another "body"—perhaps a little inferior to themselves. This would be a perversion of the true spirit of unity. We do not have this issue in the church today. But let us watch well our minds and hearts along this line! Let us ever realize that in the Lord's arrangements there is only "one body," and that Christ is the Head of that body. May we realize at all times that our responsibility is to speak the truth "in love," to "grow up into him in all things, . . . from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."—Eph. 4:15, 16

The Revised Standard Version speaks of the "whole body" being "joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love." The "body" illustration here is somewhat different from that in I Corinthians 12, where the head, hands, feet, etc., of the body are mentioned, with emphasis placed on the fact that each member has a function to perform.

The reference here in Ephesians is particularly to the "joints" of the body, and to the fact that the body is held together, or "knit" together, by the joints. This suggests that whatever function we may have in the body of Christ, we are all to serve as "joints," or as binding influences to hold the body together so that it may function properly and mature in love.

This is a searching lesson, for we may well all ask ourselves whether we are binding influences among our brethren; are we truly serving as "joints" to "knit" the body together.

One Hope

In the body of Christ there is but one Spirit, which is the Holy Spirit, and all the members of the body are called "in one hope of your calling." (Eph. 4:4) This is the "heavenly calling," the "high calling." It is the calling to glory and immortality, and to live and reign with Christ for the blessing of all the families of the earth. Let us not assume that the Lord would be pleased for us to do other than to use all our strength and influence to encourage such a noble company, called to such an exalted calling, to fellowship and work together.

We have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (vs. 5) The reference here is to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the body of which we are the members. Our Lord Jesus is to us our "Good Shepherd," our "Advocate," our "Redeemer," and of course also our "Head." What a precious heritage we have in Jesus, and how we should treasure him, and also all those who have been brought into the same blessed relationship with him.

All those who are called into this fellowship have but the one "faith," which is "the most holy faith," the "faith once delivered unto the saints." It is the "good tidings of great joy" which the angel proclaimed to the shepherds the night that Jesus was born. This most holy faith is broad and all-comprehensive; it is not a restricted viewpoint of God's plan. Since God has promised to bless all the families of the earth through Christ and the church, it behooves us to love and help to bless those to whom he has revealed this glorious truth.

“One baptism”: This “one baptism” is our death baptism into the will of God through Christ. It is because of the burial of our own wills into the will of God, and the acknowledgment of Jesus as our Lord and Head, that we have been accepted into his body and enjoy the sweet fellowship of kindred minds, and are privileged to work together in one common cause of truth. Let us be careful lest we do or say something which could mar this sweet fellowship and prove that our death baptism is not so complete as it should be.

One God

Paul continues his summary of the important factors related to our unity in Christ: “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (vs. 6) “One God”—and such a glorious God! He is not a god of wood or of stone, but the true and living God who created the universe. His cardinal attributes are Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power. Our God is “Light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

To contemplate such a God should make us feel very small, and to realize how very limited is our own knowledge. No true child of God would assume for a moment that he knows more than God on some particular subject. But if we read his Word and misinterpret it, or refuse to believe what God says on the case in point, we are in fact acting as though we know more than God. But how insignificant our opinions should become as we compare them with the light of truth which shines out from the Word of God!

“And Father of all.”: The great God of the universe, the Creator of all, means many things to us, and among the most precious of these is the fact that he is our Father. Jesus reminded us that we should hallow the great name of our Heavenly Father, and that he has promised to re-

establish his will on earth even as it is now established in heaven. And this is to be the burden of our prayer. This great work of the kingdom is the hope of the church, and what a glorious hope it is; the more so, because it is set forth in the Bible by our Heavenly Father. He knew that we would need the inspiration of this hope in order to continue our struggle against the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

Our Heavenly Father loves us, and he cares. His ears are ever open to our cries for help, and he never sleeps in the sense of being neglectful of our needs. He is dependable. With him there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning."—James 1:17

God is humble: "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!"—Ps. 113:4-6

Again, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isa. 57:15) Obviously, to obtain the refreshing blessings promised in this text we must be humble and contrite. The proud, the haughty, those who exalt themselves, cannot expect much attention from God until their experiences are such as to make them contrite and humble.

Yes, our God loves and cares, and he pities—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear [reverence] him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. 103:13, 14) Because God knows of our imperfections he has made arrangements to cover us with the robe of righteousness. He will supply all

our needs from day to day as new creatures in Christ Jesus. Let us endeavor to keep our minds fixed more firmly on God and all that he means to us. It will give us a greater appreciation of all those whom he has taken into his family, and give us a greater desire to help and bless them.

Paul reminds us that our God is "above all, and through all, and in you all." Only our great and loving Heavenly Father could be above all, and yet working through and in all his people. Only this high and lofty One is so exalted that he is able to humble himself to work within such imperfect creatures as he has chosen to be joint-heirs with his beloved Son in that glorious kingdom to come for which we continue to pray.

Needed Grace

Paul continues, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Eph. 4:7) Remembering the greatness of God our Father who has called us to such a high and holy calling, we will earnestly endeavor "with all lowliness and meekness, [and] with longsuffering" to forbear one another in love. For God deals thus sympathetically with each one of us, and despite our imperfections he gives us grace for our every time of need—"according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

And what is the "gift of Christ"? Paul answers, "Wherefore he [Christ] saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Eph. 4:8) Continuing, we find that these gifts are, "Some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." These are all ministers or servants of the Gospel of Christ. Some of those mentioned are the inspired servants of the church; some are the uninspired—those provided as teachers, evangelists, and pastors to help us the better to understand the Word of truth.

If we are endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we will accept without question the declarations of God's inspired servants, and will seek the help of the others, always searching the Scriptures to be sure that what we are taught is in harmony therewith. The purpose of our study and searching will always be to attain a more harmonious and inspiring understanding of the Word of truth, the divine plan; and in the spirit of love to assist one another. For it will be thus that we will maintain the unity of the Spirit.

Paul explains the function of the servants which have been provided through Christ as being, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."—vss. 12-15

There seems a fitting distinction in Paul's lesson between the "unity of the Spirit" and the "unity of the faith." Through the Holy Spirit the Lord has revealed to his people the great essentials of his plan, and the knowledge that they should earnestly endeavor to be at one in these things—the one Lord, one faith, one baptism, etc.—but in the great framework of the divine plan there are many details, including the proper understanding of Bible texts themselves.

If we maintain the unity of the Spirit we will progress toward a more harmonious understanding of these many details, and this should be our goal. This should be the motive for our study of the Word and for our fellowship.

Coupled with the unity of the faith mentioned by Paul is his statement, "and of the knowledge of the Son of God." Thus it is indicated that our endeavor to reach a unity of faith refers to the great fundamentals of the plan of God as they are centered in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And our endeavors to find this unity call for "speaking the truth in love." After all, this is the great goal of the Christian life, for without it all knowledge and all other aspects of the Christian life are of no lasting value. It will profit us nothing. So, as we embark on our 39th year of publication we will endeavor to keep these things in mind as best we can. This has been our goal throughout the years, as we know it has been yours; and may we all, through the weeks, months, and years to come, make progress in the unity of the Spirit in keeping with our Master's prayer that we might all "be one." □

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Dear Christian Friends: I can hardly wait for The Bible Answers program each week. I have been over the scriptures it discusses time and time again, and your discussions make them more easily under-

stood. I enjoy them so much. I thank my God for you all, and for the program. May he continue to bless and to prosper both you and it.—Kentucky

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PITTSBURGH, PA. AREA, Sept. 18, 19—Swickley Grange Hall, Route 136, 4 miles E. of West Newton, Pa. Mr. Carl S. Boughton, 126 Slater Dr., Pittsburgh, Pa.

ST. LOUIS, MO., Sept. 18, 19—Mrs. D. E. Prutzman, 2035 Jannette Drive.

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POTTSTOWN, PA., Sept. 19—YWCA, 315 King St. Mr. Byron S. Van Horn, 1101 N. Evans St.

CHICAGO, ILL., Sept. 26—Masonic Temple, 5352 W. Chicago Ave. Mr.

Albert Sheppelbaum, 5739 S. Normandy Ave.

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

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

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

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

That the hope for the world lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ's millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isaiah 35