

“Who Shall Ascend?”

***“Who shall ascend
the hill of the
LORD? And who
shall stand in his
holy place?”
—Psalm 24:3,
English Standard
Version***

WHEN THE PSALMIST

asked the questions found in our opening text, he went on to answer them in the verses that follow. “He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”—vss. 4,5, *ESV*

The “hill of the LORD” referred to by the psalmist is where one receives the blessing of salvation during this present Gospel Age. It is the holy place of which Isaiah spoke concerning the dwelling place of God. “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) “Place” often means a condition in the Scriptures and does not refer to a

literal location, but to a state of being. The wonderful blessing of understanding God's secrets will be conferred only upon those who have figuratively ascended unto him in the condition of full consecration and faith in the precious blood of Christ, wherein they have received justification. (Rom. 12:1; 5:8,9) They demonstrate contrition and humility by evidence of having "clean hands and a pure heart," which express the conditions under which God will confer eternal life upon those whom he calls and chooses at the present time.

MANKIND TO BE BLESSED

The world does not have faith in God, but has placed its faith in the promises of governmental leaders, superior military power, and religious dogmas. However, the people are becoming increasingly aware that they have been betrayed by those very devices, and thus they ponder the consequences. Luke wrote, "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." (Luke 21:26) Mankind has growing distress and fear concerning the events that are taking place throughout the world today, and looks to the future with great alarm regarding the things that are coming upon society.

The process of liberation from mankind's condemnation to sin and death will only be completed under the administration of Christ's kingdom of truth and righteousness. Then the world will be methodically instructed of God's righteous ways. The instruction to which they must give heed may be characterized as being of the same nature as that to which the nation of Israel had historically failed

to attend, and of which the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."—Isa. 28:10

THE GOSPEL AGE CALL

Having received the highest order of life—the divine nature—after giving his perfect human life in sacrifice, the Lord Jesus, since Pentecost, has offered that same grand prospect to those who are willing to follow him into the likeness of his death. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23) The world in general is not presently interested in following Jesus' steps since such a course will certainly lead to suffering and sacrifice. Thus, only a relative few choose to accept the invitation during this age.

Christ's spirit of sacrifice is the example to which the called and chosen of God aspire to follow. "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (I Pet. 2:21) "If we [the called and chosen] have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."—Rom. 6:5

SACRIFICIAL DEATH

As the nature of Christ's death was sacrificial, so the deaths of his footstep followers are also to be of the same kind, as the Apostle Paul emphasizes: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but

not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”—II Cor. 4:8-10

Christ’s resurrection was to the divine nature. His faithful followers in this age are also promised a resurrection to that same spiritual condition. “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.”—II Pet. 1:3,4

THE DIVINE NATURE

Christ’s faithful disciples go into death as fleshly beings. At their resurrection, they receive a heavenly spirit body. “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. ... As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” (I Cor. 15:44,49) These “sons of God” are promised that they will see Jesus in his resurrected heavenly body, and that they will have bodies of the same nature. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—I John 3:2

This wonderful prospect is summarized by the revelator who wrote, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) The promise of life from the dead on any plane of

existence is indeed wonderful, but the prospect of being raised from the tomb and fashioned in the likeness of Christ Jesus, who is now the “express image” of God, is nearly beyond the capacity of our human minds to grasp. (Heb. 1:3) It is this calling that Jesus alluded to, saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”—John 5:24

HEARING AND BELIEVING

The attainment of divine immortality for any is dependent upon their hearing, understanding, and believing God’s promises of life from the dead through Christ. From the divine perspective, one who believes and who is fully committed to follow in Christ’s footsteps has, as the foregoing verse states, “passed from death unto life.” They are no longer considered dead in the flesh, condemned in Adam, but are seen as alive through the Holy Spirit of God. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”—II Cor. 5:17

We read further, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”—Rom. 8:8-10

STAGGER NOT

The Apostle Paul characterizes the true disciple of Christ as one who, from the first moment

of consecration until the moment of death, remains convinced and determined that the promises of God in Christ are true. "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." (Heb. 3:14) The Lord's people are to have faith that is similar to that of Abraham, who was not confounded at the promise of an heir in his old age. Paul explained, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."—Rom. 4:20,21

Those who have such faith during this present age will not stagger at the marvelous prospect of resurrection to the divine nature, which is neither beyond the ability or everlasting will of God to confer upon his faithful people. True disciples must hold their confidence to the very end of their Christian course. This is stated emphatically by Jesus in the Gospel of John: "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."—John 6:28,29

Let us therefore continue to rejoice in the age-long promise of our loving Heavenly Father concerning those whom he has called and chosen to "ascend the hill of the LORD" to a position alongside our dear Lord and Savior, for the blessing of all the families of the earth to be testified in due time. (Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10 ■