

The DAWN

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ARGENTINA: A. Lupsor, Calle Almirante Brown 684, Monte Grande C.P., 1842 Buenos Aires

AUSTRALIA: Berean Bible Institute, P.O. Box 402, Rosanna, Victoria 3084

BRAZIL: A Aurora, Caixa Postal 77204, Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro, CEP 26210-970

BRITISH ISLES: Associated Bible Students, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, HP5 3ED, England

CANADA: P.O. Box 1565, Vernon, British Columbia, V1T 8C2

FRANCE: L'Aurore, 45, Avenue de Gouvieux, 60260, Lamorlaye

GERMANY: Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung, Postfach 11 03, 64368 Ober-Ramstadt

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073 USA

INDIA: The Dawn, Blessington, #34, Serpentine Street, Richmond Town, Bangalore 560025

SPAIN/ITALY: El Alba/Aurora, Associazione Studenti Biblici, Via Ferrara 42, 59100 Prato—Italia

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The Surety of the Resurrection

“If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”
—I Corinthians

15:13,14

TO ONE WHO HAS COMPLETE confidence in the promises of God, the hope of the resurrection should mean more this year than ever before. Only those who are thus blessed by the vision of faith are able to pierce the dark clouds of the present and see beyond the perplexing problems of today to the life-giving blessings of God’s tomorrow. Faith in God’s promises that he will raise the dead is strengthened by the fact that in the past he has done this very thing. With assurance we can say with the apostle, “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”—I Cor. 15:20

There was high hope among the disciples of Jesus when he was with them in the flesh, teaching and performing miracles, that at long last God’s promises respecting the Messiah were about to be fulfilled. They were Jews, and he was their

Messiah, of whom great things had been promised. Daily he demonstrated that divine authority and power were operating through him for the ultimate accomplishment of all God's good purposes concerning the children of men. He who healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out demons, and raised the dead, could surely deliver their nation from the Roman yoke. The disciples were certain that Israel's Messiah, together with their help, would shortly establish the long-promised kingdom of God on earth.

Suddenly and unexpectedly, however, the Messiah was taken from his disciples and crucified. Their fond hopes and inspiring dreams must have been dashed to the ground. Their Master, Teacher, and Lord was dead. Mixed emotions of bewilderment, disappointment and sorrow must have plagued those ardent followers of the Master during the days of awful darkness between the time Jesus hung upon the cross and the morning that the angel standing guard at his tomb announced, "He is not here: for he is risen." (Matt. 28:6) Quickly that heart-gladdening news spread from one to another of the disciples. There was great joy and revival of hope on their part.

PAUL'S TESTIMONY

In his first letter to the brethren at Corinth, the Apostle Paul lists the evidences by which the fact of Jesus' resurrection had been established. He said that the risen Lord "was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen

asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”—I Cor. 15:5-8

As the apostle indicates, there were still many living in his day who had been personally acquainted with Jesus while in the flesh, and who had seen him after he had been raised from the dead. The testimony of these faithful witnesses was all sufficient to convince new believers of the great miracle that God had wrought in raising the Master from the dead. Apparently, however, there were some in the Early Church who doubted that anyone else besides Jesus could be resurrected, for the apostle inquires, “How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?”—vs. 12

The Jewish sect of the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, and possibly some from this group had come among the early Christians. They, perhaps, partially accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but were not willing to believe all that he taught nor all that the prophets had foretold concerning him, including his resurrection. In combating this false viewpoint, Paul goes on to show how it would take away the whole foundation upon which Christian faith and hope are based. It would mean, he reasons, that even Jesus himself, their leader and Messiah, was dead, not alive. This, in turn would mean that all who had borne testimony of his resurrection were false witnesses.—vss. 13-15

If Christ is not risen, Paul further reminds us, it means that we are serving a lost cause, and that our persecutions as his followers are meaningless. (vs. 17) The members of the Early Church risked their lives in being followers of Christ, but why

thus “stand . . . in jeopardy every hour” if Jesus is still dead, and there is no resurrection hope for any of the dead? Why are we then “baptized for the dead,” Paul asks, if the world, for whose eventual benefit we are now laying down our lives, are not to be helped thereby? (vss. 29,30) Consecrated followers of Jesus are baptized into the likeness of Jesus’ death in the hope of sharing in the likeness of his resurrection, but there could be no likeness to a resurrection that has never occurred.

Those who are fallen asleep in Christ have “perished” if there is no resurrection of the dead, Paul insists. (vs. 18) This would mean that God’s purpose in giving his Son to be man’s Redeemer had clearly failed, for do we not read that “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) How unmistakably Paul discerned, and how plainly every follower of Christ should discern, that their hope, as well as that of the world, depends upon the exercise of divine power in raising the dead. The apostle says that our assurance of God’s ability to do this is in the fact that Jesus became “the firstfruits of them that slept.”—I Cor. 15:20

SIMILARITY OF OUR TIME

When Jesus was taken from his disciples and crucified, they were bewildered and discouraged because they did not understand the divine program that was being worked out through him. Today, much of the world is bewildered by the development of events which threaten to destroy, or at a minimum greatly weaken, what has been viewed

as long-standing Christian institutions. The difficulty now, as then, is the general failure to understand what constitutes the present purpose of God in the earth.

Jesus was the Messiah, and the disciples believed this. Furthermore, they believed that he would establish a worldwide kingdom, and that they would share with him in the glory of that kingdom. They did not understand that he must first suffer and die as man's Redeemer. This they later learned, and then they rejoiced in the cross of Christ, and what his shed blood meant to them, and what it would later mean to all mankind.

Shortly after the apostles fell asleep in death, the church gradually developed the idea that the Messianic kingdom should be established here and now, without waiting for the return of Christ Jesus as the rightful king. This erroneous theory failed to take into account a very important phase of God's plan, namely, the suffering and death of the body members of the Christ—the little flock—which had to be completed before the glorious kingdom reign of Christ could begin.

Most of professed Christianity stumbled over the same truth concerning the followers of the Master, as the early disciples stumbled over with respect to the Master himself. To the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, Jesus explained that it was necessary first of all that Christ should suffer, and then enter into his glory. (Luke 24:13-32) They grasped the thought and rejoiced in its implications. They learned later that the sufferings of Christ were not completed at Calvary, because they also included those of his "body" members. Hence, the

glory of the kingdom must still wait until the “body of Christ” is complete. (I Cor. 12:12,27) Not long after the time of the apostles, this vital truth began to be lost sight of, and there followed, as a result, the abortive efforts of certain ambitious members of the church to establish the glory of the kingdom ahead of time.

Viewed from today’s vantage point, it is evident that these efforts have not accomplished the purposes laid out in the Bible pertaining to Christ’s kingdom. The traditional Christian denominations have lost much of their power and influence, and the nations they once built up and sustained have been fragmented and weakened severely. Because of this, many now wonder if Christianity has failed. Certainly, the faith of sincere church-goers in the ability of Christianity to save the world out of its present difficulties and perplexities is failing. Just as it was the wrong expectations of the disciples concerning Jesus that failed when he was crucified, so it is the false expectations of many Christians today that are failing. Just as the hopes of the disciples were wrong because they did not take into consideration the necessity of the suffering and death of Jesus, the hopes of many today are incorrect because they fail to discern the necessity of the suffering and death of the body members of “the Christ.”

Today the world is filled with darkness and foreboding, but God is still able to perform miracles. The resurrection of Jesus was but the beginning of a program of miracles which, when complete, will have brought peace, health, happiness and everlasting life to all mankind, including those who are now

dead. This is the heart-cheering assurance which, because of the reality of Jesus' resurrection, should permeate the heart of each of his footstep followers, despite the troubles which are increasing everywhere throughout the world. Jesus was, indeed, raised from the dead, and became "the firstfruits of them that slept."—I Cor. 15:20; John 5:28; Acts 17:31

DEATH IN ADAM, LIFE IN CHRIST

Jesus died as the redeemer of Adam and his race. That is why the apostle explains that as "in Adam all die, even so [all] in Christ shall . . . be made alive." (I Cor. 15:22) The weak in faith may claim that this is a very fine theory, but that it has not worked out as described by Paul in this verse. If God could use his power to raise Jesus from the dead nearly twenty centuries ago, why has there been no demonstration of that power on behalf of those for whom Christ died? If all in Christ are to be made alive, why does death continue unabated in the earth?

These are reasonable questions, and Paul answers them. After telling us that life for the Adamic race is provided through Christ, he then adds: "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." (vs. 23) When Paul tells us that Jesus, in his resurrection, became the "firstfruits" of them that slept, he evidently refers to Jesus alone. However, when he explains the order of the resurrection and uses the expression "Christ the firstfruits," he is referring not only to Jesus, but to his "body" members also, his faithful consecrated footstep followers.

A careful study of I Corinthians, chapter 12, and Galatians 3:27-29, reveals that “the Christ” is not one member, but many, and that Jesus is the Head over these “many members” which constitute his “body.” All of these participate in the “first resurrection.” (Rev. 20:6) In James 1:18 they are referred to as a kind of “firstfruits of his creatures.” In Romans 6:5 they are promised that if they are planted together in the likeness of Jesus’ death, they shall also be in the “likeness of his resurrection.” Therefore, the resurrection of “Christ the firstfruits” is not complete until all the “body” members of Christ are raised from the dead and united with him.

FIRSTFRUITS, AN OFFERING TO GOD

The “firstfruits” terminology is based upon God’s dealing with Israel during Old Testament times. It was a requirement of his Law that the “firstfruits” of the harvest should be used as an offering to the Lord. (see Lev. 23:9-21) In this arrangement, there were not only the firstfruits in general, (vs. 17) but also what was called a “sheaf [first handful] of the firstfruits.” (vss. 10,11) In harmony with this we might think of Jesus as the “sheaf” or “first” of the firstfruits, and of his body members as the remaining firstfruits of the resurrection.

As the firstfruits in Israel’s harvest were presented to the Lord as an offering, so Jesus, the firstfruit of the resurrection, as well as his body members, who are also of the firstfruits, offer themselves in sacrifice to God. Jesus faithfully offered himself to God and was accepted as the Redeemer of the world. His followers are invited to suffer and die with him

sacrificially, with the promise that if faithful they will live and reign with him.

The offering to God in sacrifice of the body members of Christ has continued throughout all the centuries from the Day of Pentecost—fifty days after Jesus' resurrection—until now. Not until that work is complete, and all the firstfruits are raised from the dead and united with Jesus, can the resurrection of the remainder of mankind begin.

“AFTERWARD”

“Afterward they that are Christ's at his coming”—that is, after the resurrection of “Christ the firstfruits” is complete, then follows the resurrection of mankind in general. (I Cor. 15:23) The clarity of this thought is somewhat obscured by the use of the word “coming” to translate the Greek word *parousia*. This word should always be translated “presence,” and here the reference is not to the moment of Christ's arrival at his Second Advent, but to the entire time of his Second Presence, including the period of his kingdom reign.

That this is the proper thought is clearly shown in subsequent verses, which read, “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (vss. 25,26) Those “that are Christ's” at, or during, his presence are not the same as those already mentioned as the firstfruits. Rather, they are those who will, after the firstfruits are complete, upon the basis of accepting Jesus as their Redeemer and becoming obedient to the Messianic kingdom laws, receive everlasting life through him. All such “in Christ shall . . . be made alive.”—vs. 22

The distinction between the body members of Christ, the “firstfruits,” and those who are given life by him during his kingdom reign, is further emphasized by the apostle’s explanation of the manner in which the dead are raised. “Some man will say,” continues Paul, “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” (vs. 35) It is in answer to this question that we are given definitely to understand that in the resurrection some—the “firstfruits”—will receive spiritual, or heavenly, bodies, and others—the remainder of mankind—will receive human, or earthly, bodies.

TWO GLORIES AND TWO ADAMS

In the resurrection, Paul explains, “There are . . . celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial.” Then he proceeds to tell us something about the variety of glory which exists in this arrangement, saying that the “glory of the celestial [heavenly] is one, and the glory of the terrestrial [earthly] is another. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead.” (vss. 40,42) The “glory of the terrestrial” is referred to by David in the Psalms, where he tells about the original creation of man and explains that God “crowned him with glory and honour.”—Ps. 8:5

The “glory of the celestial,” which is the hope of the footstep followers of Christ, is referred to by Paul in other places as the “hope of the glory of God” and as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Rom. 5:2; Col. 1:27) He also tells us that it is a glory which was foreshadowed by the brightness of Moses’ countenance as he came down from the mountain to administer the Law given at Mt. Sinai. In the last verse of this chapter, Paul explains that

we are being prepared for and transformed into this glory by the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, mirrored or reflected to us through the Word of God.—I Cor. 3:7-18

The matter of the two glories is further clarified by Paul's reference to the two Adams—namely, the “first man” and the “Lord from heaven.” The first Adam was earthly, the apostle explains, but the last Adam is a spiritual being, having been exalted to celestial glory at the time of his resurrection from the dead as the first of the firstfruits. The remainder of the firstfruits are to be made like him. Paul explains that as we have “borne the image of the earthy”—that is, by nature those who will constitute the body of Christ were human beings—“we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. . . . Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”—I Cor. 15:45-50

GLORY OF THE CELESTIAL

As human beings we cannot comprehend the glory of the celestial. The Apostle John says, “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) Paul caught a glimpse of the glorified Jesus at the time he was converted on the Damascus road, seeing him as “one born out of due time.” (I Cor. 15:8) The entire body of Christ, however, when “born” to celestial glory will see Jesus “as he is,” and “shall be like him.”

Paul sums up the lesson of Christ's body members' exaltation to heavenly glory in the first resurrection, describing it as “this corruptible” putting on

“incorruption,” and “this mortal” putting on “immortality.” It will not be until this resurrection and glorification of the firstfruits class is complete at the end of the present age of sacrifice, that mankind in general will have fulfilled to them the wondrous promises of restitution to their lost earthly glory. Assuring us of this, however, the apostle continues, “Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” —I Cor. 15:54,55

VICTORY OVER DEATH PROMISED

The promise Paul cited, “Death is swallowed up in victory,” is recorded in Isaiah 25:8. Verses 6-9 of this chapter are wonderfully descriptive of the Messianic kingdom blessings which will come to the world. Christ’s kingdom is here symbolized as a “mountain” in which God makes unto “all people a feast of fat things.” It is the same kingdom mentioned by Paul in which he says that Christ “must reign, until he hath put all enemies under his feet.”

In his prophecy, Isaiah tells us about the destruction of these enemies, saying that the Lord will “wipe away tears from off all faces,” “swallow up death in victory,” and take away the “rebuke of his people . . . from off all the earth.” This latter statement clearly locates the fulfillment of the promise as taking place upon the earth, and indicates beyond question that the promised swallowing up of death in victory is a reference to the destruction of death that takes place during the reign of Christ, as pointed out by Paul in I Corinthians 15:25,26.

Paul's further statement, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" is taken from Hosea 13:14. This, too, is a divine promise of life to mankind in general, made available through the redemptive work of Christ. It has not been fulfilled yet. Like the many other kingdom promises of the Old and New Testaments, its fulfillment must wait for the completion of the firstfruits class. Then, when all the "church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven," are changed from earthly to heavenly glory, from mortality to immortality, there will follow the Messianic kingdom work of destroying death and the grave.—Heb. 12:23

GOD PROVIDES THE VICTORY

No wonder the apostle closes this chapter on the triumphant note, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (I Cor. 15:57,58) Since Jesus returned to heaven, and the apostles fell asleep in death, it has often looked as though there would be no genuine victory in the earth for the cause of Christ. It has often seemed as though the Christian's labor in the Lord was in vain. This is not so, Paul says.

There is to be a glorious victory. First, it will be the victory of Christ's body members over death—the greatest victory of all, because they will be exalted to immortality with him. However, this will not be the end of the victory. "Afterward," during the period of Christ's kingdom, "all that are in the

graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth," and the "last enemy"—death—"shall be destroyed." —John 5:28,29; I Cor. 15:26

That there is to be a universal awakening of the dead is clearly indicated by many of the promises and prophecies. The Sodomites were destroyed because of their wickedness, but the prophet assures us that they will be restored to their "former estate." (Ezek. 16:55) Jesus, in fact, tells us that it will be "more tolerable" for Sodom in the day of judgment than for the Jews who rejected him at the time of his First Advent. (Matt. 11:24) However, it will be "tolerable" for the Jews also, for after the work of this age is complete, then "all Israel shall be saved." This salvation is promised even to those unbelieving Jews who were cast off from divine favor because of their rejection of Christ.—Rom. 11:26

NOT UNIVERSAL SALVATION

It is important to note that there is nothing in the foregoing promises to indicate that every person will be everlastingly saved from death. What the promises mean is simply that all are to have a full opportunity for salvation—one which but a few have had in this life. Jesus said that the Sodomites would not have been destroyed had they had the same opportunity that was given to the Jews. This means that the Sodomites did not have a full opportunity. He also said that the people of Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago had he performed similar works there to those which he did in Chorazin and Bethsaida. Peter and Paul both inform us that it was in ignorance that the Jews rejected

Jesus, which shows that while they had a better opportunity than the Sodomites and those of Tyre and Sidon, yet even they did not have a full opportunity.—Matt. 11:21-24; Acts 3:17; I Cor. 2:8

In I Timothy 2:4 we are told that it is God's will that all shall be saved and come to an accurate "knowledge of the truth." This is a salvation that precedes knowledge, and evidently is a reference to mankind's awakening from the sleep of death in order that they might be enlightened. The eternal salvation of all those thus delivered from Adamic death will depend upon their acceptance of Jesus as their Redeemer, and heart obedience to the laws of his kingdom. Concerning this, Peter declares that "every soul, which will not hear [give attention to] that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."—Acts 3:20-23

It is to this that Jesus refers when, in John 5:29, he tells us that those who have done evil, such as the Sodomites, Jews, and, to a greater or lesser extent, all of fallen mankind, shall come forth to a "resurrection of judgment." (*New American Standard Bible* and numerous other translations) The Greek word here used by Jesus, and mistranslated "damnation" in the *King James Version*, is *krisis*, which has the same meaning as our English word crisis—namely, a test or trial period. For example, when a patient afflicted by some disease passes the crisis it means that he has passed the crucial period of the illness, and will get well. If, during the all-critical crisis period, there is a turn for the worse, the patient usually dies.

In the Messianic kingdom, the dead will be awakened from the sleep of death in order to be

tested, and upon the basis of how they respond in that “crisis” it will be determined whether or not they will live forever or be cut off in the “second death.” (Rev. 21:8) It is for this reason that the kingdom period of Christ’s reign is also spoken of as the Day of Judgment, or as Paul states the matter, the “day” during which God “will judge the world in righteousness.” (Acts 17:31) It will be during that time that all mankind will be on trial, the basis of which will be the knowledge of the Truth which will then be made so plain that no one will need to err.—Isa. 11:9; 35:8; Hab. 2:14

There is no such clear knowledge available for the people today. The fact that a Christian may attempt to explain the Truth to another does not mean that such a one has been given a fair opportunity for salvation. God alone knows what may stand in the way of one’s acceptance of the Truth. During the centuries of the present age, the greatest of obstacles has been the improper methods used to tell forth the Gospel message, and the severe persecutions inflicted upon those who did not accept it. The influence of deceptive errors and false doctrines has also hindered man’s appreciation of the Scriptures. Moreover, heredity, surroundings, and environment have often stood in the way.

All these hindrances and many others exist even in lands where the name of Christ is preached. Furthermore, the great majority of the human family have never heard about Jesus, even in a distorted and vague manner. It is God’s will that all these shall be awakened from the sleep of death and come to a clear knowledge of the Truth. This full, perfect knowledge will be given to the people

at a time when Satan, the great Deceiver, will be bound—when no counter influences of any kind will be permitted to stand in the way of acceptance.

Under such favorable kingdom influences, the pure knowledge of the Lord will be so universal in the earth that it will not be necessary for anyone to say to his neighbor, “Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD.” (Jer. 31:34) Only then will mankind have the knowledge and ability to make a fully informed choice as to who they will serve and obey. If, after full knowledge and opportunity has been provided, any still choose to serve evil, they will be “cut off” in the second death. Thankfully, we believe, very few will be of this group. Rather, the vast majority will pass this “crisis” period successfully, having fully learned to appreciate and serve God and his righteous laws with their whole heart. Of these, the Scriptures testify: “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”—Rev. 21:3 ■

*Some glowing morn when heaven bends caressing,
Earth's darkest vale to cheer;
Waking to know and love our Father's blessing,
life will be grandly dear.
Gladness will come, hallelujah it is coming,
gladness is on the way;
God will unveil the fullness of his mercy,
gladness will come to stay.
—Hymns of Dawn*

2015 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after 6:00 P.M. on Thursday, April 2, 2015.

A complete Memorial Service is available for isolated brethren, or for any who wish to have it.

The audio cassette tape, CD, or DVD can be purchased for \$6.00. All are also available free on loan, from:

Dawn Recorded Lecture Service
199 Railroad Avenue
East Rutherford, NJ 07073

Please place your order by March 25, if possible.

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

FEBRUARY 5—“This is the will of God [concerning you], even your sanctification.”—I Thessalonians 4:3 (Z. '99-4 Hymn 198)

FEBRUARY 12—“Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”—James 1:4 (Z. '93-295 Hymn 95)

FEBRUARY 19—“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unfaithful nothing is pure; but both their mind and conscience are defiled: they profess to have known God, but by their works they renounce him, being abominable and disobedient, and as to every good work worthless.”—Titus 1:15,16 (*Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) (Z. '99-214 Hymn 130)

FEBRUARY 26—“Rejoice in the LORD alway: and again I say, Rejoice.”—Philippians 4:4 (Z. '03-7 Hymn 235)

Feasting and Fasting

Key Verses: “*But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*”
—*Matthew 6:17,18*

Selected Scriptures:
Daniel 1:5,8-17;
Matthew 6:16-18

THERE IS CONSISTENCY reflected in godly admonitions and examples recorded in both the Old and New Testaments. One such illustration deals with the appropriateness of fasting as a means of drawing nearer to God.

Daniel and three youthful, godly companions were deported to Babylon approximately eleven years prior to the subsequent overthrow of Judah by King Nebuchadnezzar. They did not wish to defile themselves by partaking of the king's rich food, when offered such fare as part of special training in preparing them for major roles in the Babylonian government. Acting as the spokesman for the four Hebrews who revered Jehovah, Daniel requested an exemption from eating food not approved by Israel's law from the prince of the eunuchs. He proposed, instead, a test for ten days whereby they would only partake of vegetables and water.

This petition was granted, and while the Hebrews did not engage in a total fast, they refrained from consuming the delicacies served to others. At the end of the ten days, the appearance of their skin was superior to that

of the non-Jewish captives who partook of the king's meat and wine. As a result of their fidelity to righteous principles, including abstaining from that which might defile them, God blessed Daniel and his Hebrew brethren with great knowledge, wisdom and skill, which they used effectively while achieving prominence as leaders in a foreign land.—Dan. 1:3-20

As the greatest servant of God, Jesus addressed areas including charitable giving and prayer. Both of these privileges, when acted upon in sincerity, will be valued by God. Nevertheless, the Lord also warned against hypocrisy associated with performing charitable deeds for the purpose of receiving acclaim from others for being generous, or even offering prayer as vain repetitions to impress those hearing such petitions. Regarding this last illustration, our Lord then sets forth a prayer which might serve as a guide for his disciples to follow in approaching the Heavenly Father.—Matt. 6:1-15

In our Key Verses, Jesus gives a rebuke with regard to fasting. He reproves those who would attempt by disfigurement of their faces to create a sad countenance in order to make their abstinence from food evident to onlookers as an evidence of their devotion to God.

As followers of Christ, we should desire to commune with God in the spirit of holiness. The Master after his baptism was so consumed with understanding and doing his Father's will that he withdrew to the wilderness, fasting for forty days and nights. It also might be appropriate for us, especially if we are undergoing special trials, to occasionally partake of a very plain diet, or even abstain from eating for a season. Such may provide us with greater self-control by temporarily depriving the body, while seeking to obtain divine counsel as we strive to draw nearer to our Creator. If this is to benefit us, however, let us do it privately and not in the spirit of the Pharisee as described in one of our Lord's parables.—Luke 18:9-14 ■

Serving Neighbors, Serving God

Key Verses: *“Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”*
—Luke 10:36,37

Selected Scripture:
Luke 10:25-37

inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”—Luke 10:25-27

Our Lord then affirmed the lawyer’s reply was accurate and added that if he kept the Law he would obtain life. This response placed his questioner in a difficult position, because even though outward claims were

TOWARDS THE END OF

Christ’s earthly ministry, he received increased opposition from prominent leaders of Israel. These sought, in any way possible, to discredit him because of his popularity among the common people.

On one such occasion, a lawyer who was an expert in the teachings of the Mosaic Law sought to entrap the Master by engaging him in dialogue. “Behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to

made by the scribes and Pharisees that they kept the Law, as fallen human beings it was impossible for them to do so perfectly. Nevertheless, in an attempt to justify himself, the lawyer questioned Jesus as to who would constitute his neighbor.—vss. 28,29

Jesus responded to this inquiry by relating a parable. It concerned a man who traveled to Jericho, and on the way was attacked by thieves who also left him half dead. A Jewish priest and Levite passed by the victim without offering to render any assistance. Then a Samaritan came along and, filled with compassion, gave first aid to the injured man. He took him to an inn and made provision for his care until he would be well enough to return to his home.—vss. 30-35

In our Key Verses, Jesus inquired as to which of the individuals in the parable proved to be the neighbor to the man who was attacked by thieves. When the lawyer responded, that it was the one who showed mercy towards the victim, Christ told him he should do likewise.

This lesson illustrates the principle that love is the fulfilling of the Law, as opposed to harboring an attitude of professed superiority over others. (Rom. 13:10) The Samaritan in the foregoing parable was an outsider as far as the Jews were concerned, but it was he who demonstrated the quality of mercy required in all who would prove acceptable to God.

As believers strive to manifest holy conduct, we should recognize that acts of kindness and service, especially to the members of Christ's body, are expressions of the Heavenly Father's mercy towards us. (Gal. 6:10) As we demonstrate acts of kindness on behalf of others, we are imitating the Heavenly Father. It is his abundant mercy that provided for our redemption and the invitation to become members of his divine family. "O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever."—Psalm 136:1 ■

Serving the Least

Key Verse: *“The King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”*
—*Matthew 25:40*

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 25:31-46

in blessing all the families of the earth during his kingdom.

Today’s lesson involves a future judgment of the human family. This process will require a thousand years for its completion. At the end of that time, a decision will be rendered for each individual member of mankind as to their ultimate destiny.—Rev. 20:4,6

At the commencement of Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats, we note those who have been faithful footstep followers of Christ in this life will have already received a heavenly reward. These will be associated with their Lord in the glorious kingdom of righteousness. “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels [faithful followers] with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his

DURING HIS EARTHLY ministry, our Lord Jesus humbled himself to the death of the cross. As a result, an opportunity has been provided for all mankind to be resurrected from the death sentence which came upon humanity because of Adam’s original sin. (Phil. 2:8) Furthermore, it was God’s desire that there be a “little flock” of faithful followers which would be associated with Christ Jesus

glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”—Matt. 25:31,32

Jesus indicated the sheep would inherit the kingdom, whereas the goats would be destroyed. (vss. 34,41) The reason for these decisions lay in the fact that the sheep ministered to the Lord’s needs and received his approval, whereas the goats failed to render any assistance. Therefore, they merited being rejected because of their selfish attitude.—vss. 37-39,44

Since neither the sheep nor the goats had an opportunity to walk with Christ during his earthly sojourn, both groups were puzzled as to how they aided or failed to assist him in his time of need. The conclusion of the matter rests in the fact that during the kingdom, there will be opportunities to help bless or ignore fellow members of the human family when they are awakened from the sleep of death.

Our Key Verse indicates the sheep will merit everlasting life because the Lord will credit their works in assisting fellow travelers up the highway of holiness as though they had done it for him personally.

Although the setting of this parable is during the kingdom when mankind will be judged worthy or unworthy of everlasting life on earth, it also contains a lesson for those who are striving to be footstep followers of Christ during this Gospel Age. When we note the weaknesses, trials, and temptations of fellow believers, let us remember that we, too, are subject to the same attacks by the world, the flesh, and the Adversary. Our sympathetic desire to help others would demonstrate our appreciation for the privilege of rendering service. Let us recognize the importance of aiding our brethren through our actions, prayers, and general spirit of encouragement. ■

Clothed and Ready

Key Verse: *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*
—*Ephesians 6:11*

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 6:10-20

by the Lord in order to be successful in combating the enemy. “My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”—Eph. 6:10

Our Key Verse indicates the necessity of putting on the divinely provided armor in order to withstand the devices of the wicked one. We can be fully protected only by utilizing each element of the protection that is supplied for us.—vss. 11-13

Paul then enumerates the various necessary pieces of our armor, commencing with the girdle of truth: “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” Through the power of the Holy Spirit, and imbibing the principles of consecrated living fortified by a concerted effort to be directed by God’s will, we will be strengthened against the wiles of the devil. We are also directed to put on the “breastplate of righteousness.” This relates to our justification, which results from faith in the efficacy of Christ’s shed blood, and our acceptance as sons of God based upon

EVERYONE WHO DEVOTES himself to righteousness soon learns that the Christian life is a warfare. The more determined a believer is in pursuing holiness, the greater will be Satan’s efforts to destroy him. (I Pet. 5:8,9) It is for this reason that Paul admonishes us to utilize the resources provided

the imputation of his merit to cover our imperfections.—vss. 14

Next we are to be shod with the sandals of peace. (vs. 15) It is through the power of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of God's purposes and plans for us that we may have this sense of inner tranquility, despite the opposition we receive from the world, the flesh, and the Adversary. The natural disposition is to retaliate against those who oppose us. This can only be overcome when we realize that our focus must always be upon understanding that it is through much tribulation that we may enter the kingdom. Our study and imbibing of God's precious promises will enable us to experience this state of mind.

The "shield of faith" is also a needed component of the armor to protect us in this evil world—"Taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." (vs. 16) Throughout history, all who have received blessings from God, demonstrated faith that he would reward them for their fidelity even though they lacked full knowledge as to how he would accomplish his designs. The spirit-begotten believer should be filled with faith and never lose confidence as to the glorious outcome following this night of sin.

The "helmet of salvation" relates to the intellectual understanding of God's plan of salvation. Our knowledge is strengthened by the study of the Scriptures, through which we may appreciate the wisdom, justice, love and power of our Creator to accomplish what will be "the desire of all nations." (Hag. 2:7) The "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," is the only offensive part of our armament in that it may be used to counteract errors. However, it is to be employed in a loving manner, so that we are not harsh in criticizing others who may not have been enlightened by God's Word.—Eph. 6:17 ■

The Wheat and the Tares

*“Then shall the
righteous shine
forth as the sun in
the kingdom their
Father.”*

—*Matthew 13:43*

THE PARABLE OF THE

wheat and the tares is recorded in Matthew 13:24-30,36-54. In it, even as in the parable of the sower, which we considered in last month’s issue of *The Dawn*, there is a sowing of seed. However, in the parable of the sower the seed is explained to be “the word of the kingdom,” whereas in the parable of the wheat and the tares the seed are said to be “the children of the kingdom.” (vss. 19,38) These “children of the kingdom” come into being through the power of the Word of God sown in their hearts, but in this parable they are themselves the seed. This is an important distinction to keep in mind as we examine the various details of our lesson.

In the wheat and tares parable there are two sowings. The wheat, or “good seed,” is first sown. Then, “while men slept,” an enemy sows tares, or imitation wheat, in the same field. The result of this is, as we would expect, that the tares threaten

to choke out the wheat. The servants of the householder who sowed the good seed suggest that the tares be uprooted and destroyed, but the householder does not permit this, explaining that this might also destroy the wheat. He orders that both the wheat and the tares be permitted to grow together until the harvest, and that then the tares should be gathered into bundles to be burned, while the wheat is to be gathered into his barn.—vss. 24-30

Jesus' explanation of this parable begins with verses 37 and 38, in which he explains that "the field is the world," and that the one who sows the good seed is "the Son of Man." Thus, the application of the parable is worldwide, and embraces the entire age, with a sowing by Jesus at the beginning of the age, and a harvest at the end of the age. It does not represent the work of the Lord's people as sowers of seed throughout the age, as does the parable of the sower.

The sowing of the good seed by the Son of man evidently depicts the work of Jesus in the selection of his apostles and other faithful disciples who constituted the nucleus of the Early Church. These were the first of the "children of the kingdom," as Jesus describes them in verse 38. How appropriate is this title, because these were attracted to Jesus by the "gospel of the kingdom" which he preached. (Matt. 4:23; 9:35) It was by the Spirit of this kingdom message that they were begotten, and devoted their lives to the service of the Master.

Their successors in each generation throughout the age were likewise those attracted by, and imbued with, the gospel—good news—of the kingdom.

They are more than merely morally righteous people, but are those who are dedicated to the promotion of the good news of the coming kingdom of the Messiah. This is why Jesus calls them “the children of the kingdom.”

THE ENEMY

Jesus further explained that “the tares are the children of the wicked one,” and that “the enemy that sowed them is the devil.” (Matt. 13:38,39) This is plain language, but a true prophecy of what has actually occurred. It is stated in the parable that it was while “men slept” that the enemy sowed tares. (vs. 25) The “men” here referred to would seem to be the apostles, who watched over the interests of the Early Church so faithfully, but then “slept” in death until the time of the “first resurrection.” (Rev. 20:6) Concerning this time, Paul alerted the elders at Ephesus: “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” (Acts 20:29) Peter similarly forewarned: “There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”—II Pet. 2:1,2

Not only did Jesus and the apostles warn the Early Church of the false teachers that would come among them, but history reveals that this is what actually occurred. Teachers of error are seldom limited to one falsehood, and this is true of those who began to instruct the church soon after the

apostles fell asleep in death. Through the introduction of such doctrines as the trinity and the immortality of the soul, they, in effect, denied “the Lord that bought them.” Additionally, the loving God of the Bible was soon transformed into a torture demon by the blasphemous hell-fire doctrine.

The parable of the wheat and the tares highlights still another false doctrine set forth by the “tares,” sown by the great Adversary. This is the claim that Christ’s kingdom on earth was established by them through the uniting of church and state. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, the devil offered to give him all the kingdoms of this world on the condition of being subservient to him. Jesus rejected this offer. (Matt. 4:9,10) Later, however, the “children of the wicked one,” who were guided by Satan’s various God-dishonoring doctrines, were quite willing to accept this proposition. The result of this was the development of a counterfeit kingdom of Christ in the hands of the “tares.”

History corroborates this change of viewpoint. Beginning in the second century the hope of a coming kingdom on earth, to be established by the returned Christ, began gradually to be thrust into the background. Philosophical and theological speculation started to spread through the church, and as larger numbers came under the influence of this type of thinking, the hope of a future Messianic kingdom on the earth lost its significance and appeal. Thus the way was prepared for the establishment of a counterfeit kingdom in its place.

Although these changes came about gradually, by the end of the fourth century, the teaching of a future Messianic kingdom was banished from the

“official” theology of the church. Of particular significance during this period was the growing idea of the political and civil—not just the religious—importance of the church’s role. This led finally to the teaching that the church itself was the kingdom of Christ. Therefore, it was an accomplished fact, rather than something to be looked for, as Jesus and the apostles had taught, at the time of his Second Advent.—Matt. 25:31-34; John 18:36; II Tim. 4:1

How clearly these events of history outlined the developments foretold by Jesus in the parable. By the fourth century the “tares,” or imitation wheat, had indeed just about completely taken over in the “field.” From that time forward, the true “children of the kingdom” held to their hopes and proclaimed them with increasing difficulty. However, as the parable foretold, the wheat was not to be completely uprooted and destroyed. Rather, it was to remain and “grow together” with the tares until the end of the age, when there would be a harvest.

Once again, the pages of history bear this out. In an article from a noted encyclopedia, we find these words written: “It [the Messianic kingdom hope] still lived on, however, in the lower strata of Christian society; and in certain undercurrents of tradition it was transmitted from century to century. At various periods in the history of the middle ages we encounter sudden outbreaks of millenarianism, sometimes as the tenet of a small sect, sometimes as a far-reaching movement. And, since it had been suppressed . . . by the political church of the hierarchy, we find that wherever chiliasm [hope of a future kingdom] appears in the middle

ages it makes common cause with all enemies of the secularized Church. . . . These were legitimate inferences from the ancient traditions . . . of the Church.” These “ancient traditions” were none other than the teachings of our Lord and the apostles, later regarded as heresy by the great “tare” system.

The same article explains that while the Protestant reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gave for a time some consideration to the teaching of a future Messianic kingdom, they soon “took up the same ground” which the state church had occupied since the time of the fourth century. Essentially, all these early reformers did, in fact, join hands with civil governments, and applied to their organizations the misnomer of “Christendom.”

THEY GREW TOGETHER

Returning to the parable, the householder instructed his servants to let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest. (Matt. 13:30) What a true picture of this has been given to us by the pages of history. Those who held to the hope of Christ’s return and the establishment of his thousand-year kingdom were not crowded out of the “field” entirely, even though the “tares” held the dominating position. However, when the church was pronounced as Christ’s kingdom on earth, and later joined hands with the state, the wheat—“children of the kingdom”—became a highly persecuted minority, and were forced to carry on their activities largely “underground.” They were still there in the “field,” and kept the light of kingdom truth from becoming completely snuffed out. Thus, the wheat and tares continued to grow together until

the end of the age, when it was time for the “harvest” to begin.

The tares as a group continued their disinterest in, and oftentimes opposition to, the hope of the coming Messianic kingdom on earth. Although there was, at times, rebellion on the part of many against certain of the evils of the church-state system of government, the idea of a man-made kingdom continued. Even today, various theologians hold to the opinion that the only thing God will ever do for the human race will be accomplished, not by the establishment of a powerful government in the hands of Christ, but by the moralistic teachings of denominational churches, and by the extent that they can influence governments to enact and enforce righteous laws. However, amidst all the cross currents of confusion brought about by conflicting reform movements and by the infiltration of higher criticism, evolution, and various theological factions, some “wheat” has survived. In every generation there were some “children of the kingdom,” who held to the basic doctrines as originally taught by Jesus and the apostles.

THE “ANGELS” AND THE “HARVEST”

In the parable, the householder said, “In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” (vs. 30) Jesus’ explanation of this is, “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them

into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”—vss. 41,42

The Greek word in this passage which is translated “angels” more literally means “messengers.” The messengers of the Lord could be of numerous kinds. As devoted living servants of God, they could be the holy angels of heaven, or God’s consecrated people here on earth, or both. Certainly, when we note all the various things accomplished by these angels, or messengers, it would appear that a very wide variety of agencies must be used.

Looking back, we see that there was a harvest at the end of the Jewish Age, and Jesus at his First Advent sent forth disciples to be his messengers, or angels, in that work. He also asked them to pray to “the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” (Matt. 9:38) These devoted followers of Jesus were to do their part in that harvest by preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, even as it was preached by Jesus.

In that harvest there was a burning of the “chaff.” John the Baptist foretold this, saying, “He [Jesus] will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matt. 3:11,12; Luke 3:16,17) We believe that this is a prophecy of the desolation pronounced upon the Jewish nation by Jesus just prior to his death, followed by the literal destruction which came upon them in A.D. 70-73. (Matt. 23:37-39; 24:1,2) The “messengers” largely responsible for this “fire” of destruction were the soldiers of Titus’ army.

This seems to be a revealing illustration of the two aspects of the “harvest” work at the close of

the Gospel Age. Here, also, there is a harvesting of the "wheat." In this latter harvest, we have "tares" which are gathered and burned, instead of "chaff." The messengers used by the Lord for this purpose are evidently not his consecrated saints, but whatever agencies and influences he may choose to use to rid the "field" of "all things that offend, and them which do iniquity."

The "wheat" are gathered into the Lord's barn. Jesus' explanation of this, as previously cited in our opening text, is: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." This explanation involves the exaltation of the "wheat" in the first resurrection to live and reign with Christ. These shine at the present time only as "candles." (Matt. 5:14-16) However, until the kingdom is established in "power and great glory," these "children of the kingdom" in the flesh constitute the only true light in this "present evil world." (Matt. 24:30; Gal. 1:4) When they are brought forth in the first resurrection to reign with Christ, they will "shine forth as the sun." Indeed, they will be a part of that "Sun of righteousness" foretold by Malachi.—Mal. 4:2

Clearly, to bring forth "the children of the kingdom" to the divine nature in the first resurrection requires the exercise of power through agencies beyond our ability to comprehend, and this work is included in the total accomplishments of messengers sent forth in this Gospel Age harvest. However, it is also true that an important part of this harvest work is accomplished by "the children of the kingdom" themselves through their proclamation, as messengers, of the gospel of

the kingdom, even as it was in the Jewish Age harvest.

THE HARVEST MESSAGE

In his discourse relating to the time of his Second Presence and the end of the age, Jesus said that he would “send his angels [messengers] with a great sound of a trumpet,” and that they would “gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matt. 24:31) Here the messengers are clearly “the children of the kingdom,” as also are the “elect” who are gathered. This gathering is accomplished by the “sound of a trumpet,” which is symbolic of the proclamation of a message.

This is the kingdom message of present truth—the harvest message. John the revelator records that it is the “everlasting gospel” which was to be proclaimed to those “that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” at this end of the age. Some of the details of the message are also given by John: “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Rev. 14:6,7) It is, in fact, the same “gospel of the kingdom” and “present truth” message spoken by Jesus and reiterated by the apostles.—Matt. 24:14; II Pet. 1:12

THE CHIEF REAPER

Jesus said that he would send forth his messengers to gather his elect. This implies that he would then be present in the “field” to assume the role of Chief Reaper. This is further pointed out in

Revelation 14:14,15. We read: "I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Later in this chapter we are told of "another angel" or messenger, who had "power over fire." (vs. 18) This messenger is assigned the work of reaping the "clusters of the vine of the earth" and of casting it into the "great winepress of the wrath of God." (vs. 19) While the metaphor here changes from "fire" to the "winepress of the wrath of God," the symbolic reference to casting "clusters" of grapes into God's winepress is remarkably similar to the gathering of "bundles" of tares "to burn them." Thus we have a confirmation of the truths set forth in the parable of the wheat and the tares.

In Revelation 18:1, we read, "I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory." This seems clearly to be a reference to the return of our Lord, and the light of his glory which will eventually fill the earth. Concerning one of the first features of his work, we read: "He cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the

earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”—vss. 2-4

These Scriptures indicate that part of the message at the time of the return of our Lord and the period of his presence is the invitation to the “wheat,” who were to grow together with the “tares” until the harvest, now to separate themselves—“Come out of her, my people.” “Her” is a reference to Babylon, the great counterfeit “tare” system which held such great power over the nations for much of the Gospel Age. This, too, harmonizes with the testimony of Jesus in his parable, and in his great prophecy relative to the end of the age.

It should be noted that the revelator says Babylon is “fallen” at the time of our Lord’s Second Advent, and his call to come “out of her.” This does not imply Babylon’s immediate destruction, but rather a falling from her former position of church-state power held for so many centuries. The final destruction of Babylon is not spoken of until verse 21, where John records: “A mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”

NOW IN THE HARVEST

Certain prophecies of the Bible—which we do not have space here to discuss—and the fulfillment, by way of documented events, of various “signs”

contained therein, provide ample evidence that the Gospel Age harvest was due to begin in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, or about one hundred forty years ago. Are there any evidences to indicate that these prophecies have been correctly understood? We believe so. Remembering that the “harvest” has to do with both the “wheat” and the “tares,” we think the evidence is clear that there has been, and continues to be, a harvesting of the “wheat,” and a bundling of the “tares,” in preparation for their eventual burning.

Let us first consider the symbolic harvesting of the “wheat” of the parable—“the children of the kingdom.” There is evidence to show that around the time of the early 1870s, a little group of earnest students of the Bible began to understand clearly the glorious promises of the Bible pertaining to the time and manner of our Lord’s return. They also came to understand the purpose of his return—that he was first of all to be Lord of the harvest, and then, through the establishment of his kingdom, accomplish the “restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”—Acts 3:20-23

One of that number, whom many earnest followers of Christ have come to believe was “a faithful and wise servant,” was blessed by the Lord with certain abilities and means, and most importantly had the sacrificing zeal to publicize these truths far and wide. They were sent in printed form to ministers and Sunday School teachers throughout the entire United States. “The children of the kingdom” were no longer restrained as in past centuries. God had given them the message,

and a way to proclaim it, and it began to sound forth.

This was not a work that was done in a corner, for in a few short years it became well-known throughout much of the Christian world. These relatively small groups of consecrated followers of Christ, a people separated from the traditional denominations of the past, worked “together” to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom with increasing volume and clarity.

These were, indeed, “the children of the kingdom,” for they not only believed in the promises of the Bible relative to Christ’s coming kingdom, but its glorious prospect filled them with a self-sacrificing zeal that allowed nothing to prevent them from proclaiming, on every suitable occasion, the glorious harvest and kingdom message. They broadcast to all with a hearing ear the good news pertaining to the thousand-year kingdom of Christ, and the blessings of peace, health, and everlasting life that will reach the people through the administration of its laws of righteousness. To this day, in 2015, the witness given by the “gospel of the kingdom” message has not ceased. Indeed, Satan has endeavored to discourage, separate, and disrupt “the children of the kingdom” through his wily ways. However, they have always been able to regroup and continue trumpeting forth the harvest and kingdom message through the many means made available by God’s grace.

THE TARES

The tares of the parable, Jesus explained, are “the children of the wicked one.” This does not

mean that they are immoral people and professed servants of the devil. It simply means that their viewpoints and lives are governed by teachings pertaining to the kingdom of God which have been corrupted through the deceit of Satan. Many of them are among the world's finest people, and hold sincerely to the concepts of the kingdom which are so prominent in the society of which they are a part.

The bundling and burning of the tares is explained by Jesus to mean their removal from the kingdom of which they profess to be a part. The "field" in which the wheat seed was originally sown was designed to be only a wheat field. The tare seeds were sown by an enemy, and did not belong with the wheat, so they are removed. The parable says they are "cast . . . into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."—Matt. 13:42

We understand that the destroying of the tares should not be considered as having to do with individuals, but only as a symbolic class. This is indicated by the statement that even when the tares are cast into the "furnace of fire" there is "wailing and gnashing of teeth." This is an expression used by Jesus to denote great disappointment and chagrin. How disconcerting and disappointing it will be to many when they learn that their long-taught conception of the kingdom of heaven is not in harmony with, nor part of, the Lord's sowing. As a class, therefore, the tares are removed from the field.

The parable states, "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them."

(vs. 30) It is not necessary to conclude from this that the bundling and burning of the tares is all completed before the harvesting of the wheat begins. In reality, we see that both the bundling of the tares as well as the gathering of the wheat have been taking place during the period of the harvest. Jesus simply refers to the gathering of the tares as “first” to separate that work from the other work going on—the gathering of the wheat.

It is reasonable to conclude that the “furnace of fire” in which the “tares” are burned will be the climax of the great “time of trouble” in which the “present evil world” is destroyed. (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; Gal. 1:4) This will include all the various tare organizations, or “bundles.” When these things occur, the wheat will have all been gathered into the barn. In his explanation, Jesus says, “Then [at that time when the tares are destroyed] shall the righteous [gathered wheat] shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”—Matt. 13:43

Following quickly, the real kingdom of Christ will begin to function for the blessing of the people. The wheat class—“children of the kingdom”—brought forth in the first resurrection, will shine “as the sun” for the enlightenment and healing of all nations. The rulership of Christ’s kingdom will destroy all the enemies of God and of righteousness, even death itself. (I Cor. 15:26) Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” This work accomplished, the prayer, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,” will be fully answered.—Phil. 2:10,11; Matt. 6:10 ■

The High Calling

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.”

—*Ephesians 1:18,19*

this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—*Phil. 3:13,14*

SO GRAND IS THE CALLING

of the Gospel Age followers of Christ, that it has been termed a “high calling.” Concerning this, the encouraging words of the Apostle Paul should inspire us to an even greater appreciation of the privilege of being recipients of such an invitation. With humility and zealous determination, he says, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but

A MYSTERY

The High Calling, from a number of aspects, is termed a “mystery” by the Apostle Paul. He says, “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. . . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear

heard, . . . the things that God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” (I Cor. 2:7,9,10) In another place, Paul writes, “This is a great mystery: . . . I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:32) To understand these and other “mysteries” related to the High Calling, Paul intimates that something more than human ability is required, because it is “hidden wisdom.” To receive such wisdom requires that we have faith in God and in the shed blood of our Lord Jesus. It also necessitates an enlightened mind through the influence of God’s Holy Spirit.

The High Calling of God is the glorious invitation extended to those whom he desires to have a share in the heavenly inheritance to which Christ Jesus has already entered. Following the words of our opening text, in which he speaks of the “hope of [our] calling,” Paul says that this calling was “according to the working of [God’s] mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, . . . and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph. 1:19,20,22,23) Thus we see that the Heavenly Father, his son Christ Jesus, and Christ’s bride and joint-heir—recipients of the High Calling—all have important responsibilities with regard to its accomplishment.

REQUIREMENTS

To be partakers of this High Calling, Paul says we must “be Christ’s”—that is, we must belong to him. “Then,” he continues, “are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:29) To

belong to Christ requires that we first accept the merits of his ransom sacrifice on our behalf, but this is not all. It also means that we make a full consecration to God to do his will, and as part of that will, be immersed into Christ's sacrificial death, and receive the begetting of God's Holy Spirit.—Rom. 12:1; 6:3,4; I Thess. 4:8

In harmony with these requirements, we are to additionally develop in our character the spirit, or disposition, of the Master, striving to be more and more conformed to his character likeness. This will necessitate severe testing and trial, just as Jesus endured. If we are of those “called according to his purpose,” God states, through the apostle, that we must “be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. . . . Them [Jesus' brethren] he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”—Rom. 8:28-30

Much is essential to our development in order to reach this ultimate condition of being “glorified”—God's promise to us if we are faithful “brethren” of his Son. How important it is that we echo in our life the sentiments of the Apostle Paul when he wrote, concerning himself, “This one thing I do, . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Then he encourages us along the same line, saying, “Let us therefore, . . . be thus minded.” (Phil. 3:13-15) For Paul, and for us, pressing “toward the mark for the prize” includes the development of love—supreme love of God and his Son, love of righteousness, love of our fellow brethren, and sympathetic love for the world, even our enemies. Although we cannot

exercise these aspects of love perfectly in word and action, we must develop perfection of intention and a heart-likeness to God and his Son that are immovable and fully loyal. Such a crystallization of character, acquired by continually fighting “the good fight of faith” and “by patient continuance in well doing,” will enable us to attain “glory and honour and immortality.”—I Tim. 6:12; Rom. 2:7

SPECIAL CLASS FORETOLD

The Abrahamic Covenant, or promise, first recorded in Genesis 12:3 and repeated in Genesis 22:18, declares God’s purpose that through the “seed” of Abraham, blessings will eventually flow to all families of the earth. Although promised and foretold many centuries ago, we have not yet seen these blessings go forth to mankind. This is because part of the “seed” through which these blessings will flow is the “high calling” class, which is still being developed. Indeed, Paul says that this “seed” class was “chosen . . . in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we [those developed under this arrangement] should be holy and without blame before him in love.” (Eph. 1:4) Here again we have pointed out to us the strict qualifications necessary to be part of this special class—“be holy,” “without blame,” “in love.”

The Scriptures use a number of other terms to identify the “seed” or “high calling” class. Paul calls this group the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,” and also tells us that Christ Jesus is “the head over all things to the church, which is his body.” (Heb. 12:23; Eph. 1:22,23) In still another reference, he calls them Jesus’ “brethren,” the

“children which God” has given him. (Heb. 2:11,13) The Apostle Peter speaks of them as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.” (I Pet. 2:9) Under Christ as their High Priest they are being developed now to be part of the greater “royal” priesthood which will dispense the blessings promised to “all the families of the earth.”

John the revelator records: “They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:6) The millennial reign and priesthood of Messiah and his faithful “body” members will be a time for uplifting and blessing mankind, just as God promised to Abraham so many centuries ago. During this same millennial period of the world’s regeneration and restitution of all that was lost because of Adam’s transgression, man’s great Adversary, Satan, will be bound. (vss. 1,2) In addition, it will be a time when the knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole earth, and in which the earth itself will no longer be cursed, but restored to a paradise condition.—Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14; Rev. 22:3

PREPARATION AS PRIESTS AND KINGS

The present mission of those running for the mark of the prize of the High Calling is their development and training for the future work of service as priests and kings in the next age. If we would be prepared to teach the world lessons such as meekness, patience, brotherly kindness, longsuffering, and love, we must first develop these qualities of character in ourselves. (Gal. 5:22,23; II Pet. 1:5-7) The development of these fruits and graces of the

spirit is vital to our being made ready for the glorious work before us.

Because the vast majority of mankind has been blinded by the “god of this world,” they are not recipients of God’s High Calling, and are not presently being judged as to their service to the living God. (II Cor. 4:4) As consecrated footstep followers of Christ, we must remember that we walk a “narrow” way, and “few there be that find it.” (Matt. 7:14) We are striving to be of a “little flock,” to whom it is the “Father’s good pleasure to give . . . the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

“Ye see your calling, brethren,” Paul says, “that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” (I Cor. 1:26,27) The reason for this is given in verse 29: “That no flesh should glory in his presence.” As we “see [our] calling” in this light, Paul’s further admonition should find a lodging place in our heart: “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” (vs. 31) James also comments on the special nature of this High Calling, saying, “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”—James 2:5

We recall that under typical Israel’s Law Covenant the priestly office was distinct and separate from the position of king. In Messiah’s kingdom, however, the two offices will be combined, as illustrated by Melchisedec. We read in Genesis 14:18,

and Paul confirms in Hebrews 7:1, that he was “king of Salem” and “priest of the most high God.” The glorified Jesus is spoken of in the Scriptures as “King of kings.” (Rev. 17:14; 19:16) In addition, Paul identifies him as a “high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 6:20) In this same verse he says Jesus is our “forerunner,” which means that we too, if faithful to our calling, will share with him in both the priestly and kingly office. Indeed, we are being “made . . . unto our God kings and priests,” the Revelator says, for the purpose of reigning and judging the world in righteousness with our head, Christ Jesus.—Rev. 5:10

Even now, we are engaged in a priestly work—not as kingly priests, but as sacrificing priests, pictured by Aaron and his sons. If we are faithful as sacrificing priests, after the order of Aaron, we will be given the privilege of being priests of the Melchisedec order, having the title of King added, and ruling with our Head over the nations for the purpose of blessing them and bringing them back into harmony with their Creator. The apostle declares, “The anointing [to this special office] which ye have received of him abideth in you.” (I John 2:27) The anointing John speaks of was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost which, along with its individual significance, also denoted God’s dedication of the entire body of Christ as the future Melchisedec priesthood. The one anointing to this office has continued to flow down through the entire Gospel Age. When the elect number coming under this anointing have all been “called, and chosen, and faithful,” and glorified with their head, Christ Jesus, the Gospel Age High Calling will end.—Rev. 17:14

NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK

In God's arrangement of the High Calling, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's"—that is, if you belong to Christ, regardless of nationality, gender, or other distinctions according to the flesh—"then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:28,29) In agreement with this, we also read, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." (Rom. 10:12) We may wonder why Paul felt the need to write such words as these. At that time there was much in the way of misunderstanding among the Jews who had accepted Christ. Many felt that they still had favor above the Greeks—Gentiles who had also come into Christ—and attempted to bind certain burdens of the Mosaic Law upon them.

The Jews were a people to whom "were committed the oracles of God." (Rom. 3:1,2) One of these "oracles" which became a major point of contention, and which many Jewish Christians tried to force upon their Gentile counterparts, was the law of circumcision. In Galatians chapter 5, Paul points out to them that their imposition of fleshly circumcision, in effect, made Christ of no profit. He concludes his comments a few verses later, saying, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." (vss. 2-6) The essence of Paul's argument was that there was nothing inherently wrong with literal circumcision or uncircumcision.

These were merely fleshly, outward things. Faith, working with love, he says, was of much greater importance as far as God was concerned. His law was no longer written “with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” (II Cor. 3:3) This was a hard lesson for many to learn, but it represented an important part of the higher law given to those who would accept God’s High Calling.

In Christ, there is also neither “bond nor free, . . . male nor female.” God accepts all those who come to him through Christ without distinction as to such fleshly differences. These, as well as other differences among mankind, have been used by many in the world to gain advantage over others. However, if we have come into Christ, we are all one from God’s standpoint. He treats us all as his children, and has blessings for each in accordance with his will. Our loving Heavenly Father is able to help us be “more than conquerors through him that loved us” whether we are a master or a servant, rich or poor, young or old, man or woman. (Rom. 8:37) If we have called upon the name of the Lord with heart sincerity and a desire to do his will above all else, and in faith have accepted the merit of Christ’s blood, we are in a proper condition to be partakers of the High Calling.

FREE TO ALL

Another important aspect of our lesson is that the grace which has enabled the gospel message to enter into our hearts at the present time is a “free gift” from God. (Rom. 5:15) The Scriptures inform us that it will continue to be so in the future. The

revelator, speaking of the conditions afforded to all mankind in Christ's kingdom, says of that time: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17) God's "gift" of grace and "water" of truth are freely given, whether now to those who accept the High Calling, or in the future to the world as they are brought back into harmony with God in the kingdom. The only "cost" is heart obedience to the will of God.

For those being developed under the "high calling" arrangement at the present time, a special, important, privilege is pointed out to us by these words of the Master: "Freely ye have received, freely give." (Matt. 10:8) As we have freely received much from the Heavenly Father, we should freely give to others by spreading forth the message of the Gospel. In a prophecy of the commission to be fulfilled by Jesus and his footstep followers, the prophet Isaiah says, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach the good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." (Isa. 61:1) This scripture speaks of giving a message, not of doom and gloom, but of hope, encouragement, and good news soon to come to pass in the earth. Such is the gospel witness that we, as Jesus did, are to "freely give" to all with a hearing ear.

The message we "freely give" to others will for the most part serve as one of hope and encouragement as we tell the good news of the kingdom. There is still the possibility, however, even in this latter part of the Harvest, that we might reach one

here and one there who are stirred to the extent that they, too, desire to become part of the “household of faith,” and run toward the “mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” The Scriptures indicate that only the “meek and lowly in heart” will be in the proper condition of mind and heart to receive and understand the Truth as revealed through the Holy Spirit of understanding. (Matt. 11:29) As the psalmist writes, “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.”—Ps. 25:9

A YOKE

Still another point to consider with regard to the privilege of sharing in the High Calling relates to the symbol of a yoke. The Bible speaks of this as emblematic of labor or service in one form or another. Scripturally speaking, there are generally two classes of laborers. First, there are those more or less “yoked” to the world and its pursuits, laboring for things of the present fleshly life. Second, and these have always been the great minority, there are those whose primary desire in life is to labor for, and serve, the Heavenly Father, being “yoked” to him and his cause. Jesus spoke of these as ones who “labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.”—John 6:27

A yoke can also symbolize bondage, if that for which one is laboring is not in harmony with God’s present arrangements and purposes. There were those in our Lord’s day, and even today, who continued to labor under the yoke of the Law Covenant, putting themselves in a “yoke of bondage” to it,

rather than being made “free” in Christ. (Gal. 4:9,22-26; 5:1) Another yoke that all mankind, Jew and Gentile, has been under since Adam’s fall and under which they have labored to a greater or lesser degree, is the bondage to sin and death brought about by the working of Satan. We rejoice, however, that this yoke will soon be loosed by Jesus, who will “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who . . . were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”—Heb. 2:14,15

If we are of those who have responded to God’s “high calling” during the present Gospel Age, we have had the privilege of being “justified by faith,” resulting in our obtaining “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5:1) This is a special blessing indeed, for it has enabled us to put off the yoke of bondage to sin, and put on the yoke of Christ, becoming a co-laborer with him in the Father’s service. In his service we may, on many occasions, find relatively little peace and rest according to the flesh, but we will rejoice in that joy and calmness we find “by his Spirit in the inner man.”—Eph. 3:16

Our present rest of faith is founded in a knowledge of God’s plan and character. It claims with full assurance that Jesus has indeed “paid it all” for both the Jew and the Gentile. This present rest will one day be superseded by the actual rest of the kingdom. It will not be a rest of inactivity, but rather a full rest from any and all the cares we have had in this life which have been yokes of bondage to us in many ways and to various degrees. Then, we will be at rest from all these things, fully

prepared and fitted for “greater works” that God will give us. (John 14:12) For the present time, however, we must be engaged in binding together our time, influence, means, talents, and opportunities, directing them as much as possible in the Lord’s service.

Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31,32) It is the Truth which makes us free—free from the errors of the past; free from superstition; free to love God willingly, not through fear; free to believe his Word in its complete harmony; free to have trust and faith in our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus, who have authored these glorious truths and brought them to light. Thus imbibed with God’s Word of truth, we can affirmatively respond to the invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matt. 11:28-30

JOINT-HEIRS

As previously noted, we have been given the opportunity to be “heirs according to the promise” given to Abraham. (Gal. 3:29) Paul expounds upon this further with these words: “We are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” (Rom. 8:16,17) There is an important qualification, however, attached to Paul’s statement in verse 17 that we are “joint-heirs with Christ”—“if so be that we suffer with him.”

To be inheritors with Christ of the high honor of being counted as part of the seed of Abraham, we must be like our Lord, not only in character likeness, but also as a partaker of his suffering.

“Ye are not your own, For ye are bought with a price,” Paul reminds us. (I Cor. 6:19,20) Since we have been “bought” with the price of Jesus’ blood, and have accepted it as the basis of our standing with God under his High Calling, our will now must be subservient to his in all matters. This includes the matter of suffering. God does not take pleasure in seeing any of his creatures suffer. Yet, he realizes that these kinds of experiences serve to shape and prepare us for our great future work as part of the Melchisedec priesthood. It is thus part of our training as those who have accepted God’s call to be tried and tested fully—including sacrifice and suffering. Peter and Paul speak of the far-reaching worth of these experiences, saying, “The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”—I Peter 1:7; II Cor. 4:17

What is it that we will inherit as joint-heirs with Christ if we prove faithful to our calling? The Scriptures help us to answer this question. God, speaking prophetically through the psalmist concerning his faithful Son and his associates, says, “I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” (Ps. 2:8) Jesus made this additional statement:

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matt. 5:5) These verses speak of two things which the Christ, head and body, will inherit—the heathen and the earth. The “earth” refers to the literal planet Earth upon which man dwells. In Christ’s kingdom, the earth will have its present “curse” removed, and be restored to a paradise condition as man’s eternal home. (Gen. 3:17; Rev. 22:3) It will be our privilege, if faithful, to inherit the earth and make it once again suitable for man’s abode.

Christ and his faithful bride will also inherit the “heathen,” which simply means “nations” or “peoples.” All who are in their graves will “come forth”—Jews and Gentiles alike—to be taught under the direction of the spiritual seed of Abraham. The faithful “ancient worthies,” who lived prior to our Lord’s First Advent and thus could not be granted the privilege of coming under the terms of the High Calling, will serve as Christ’s earthly representatives in this great education process of mankind. Natural Israel will also play a role in this, as they will be the first among mankind to recognize the Messiah’s hand in the affairs of earth. They will be blessed as a result and become the beginning nucleus of those who will walk in the “way of holiness.” (Isa. 35:8) Ultimately, all nations and peoples, seeing God’s blessings flow to Israel, will desire to join with them and receive a share in the wonderful provisions of the kingdom. If we are faithful “joint-heirs” with Christ, we will inherit the great privilege of being used to bring these things to pass, and to bless “all families of the earth.”—Gen. 12:3

GEMS OF GOD

In this lesson, we have considered many aspects of the High Calling and the necessary steps of development we must take to be faithful to this grand invitation. One of the beautiful symbols used in the Scriptures to describe those being selected for this honored position is that of the Lord's jewels. The Prophet Malachi uses this symbolism; however, prior to doing so, he reminds us that even as we are being developed as gems of God, the general wickedness of the world continues all about us. "Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." (Mal. 3:15) It should not surprise, nor discourage us, to witness such conditions as we seek to go "against the current" by the development of humility, righteousness, and meek submission to God's holy will.

The prophet then gives the needed encouragement to those striving to be pleasing to God. He says, "Then they that feared [reverenced] the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name." (vs. 16) We note three activities which are mentioned as being engaged in by those spoken of in this verse—they reverence the Lord above all, they speak often to each other in fellowship as a means of mutual support and encouragement, and they think upon God's name and his wonderful plan. It is only through habitually making such activities part of our daily walk that we can successfully

combat the evil conditions in the world in which we live.

Finally, the prophet records these wonderful words, which are in reality not his words at all, but the words of the Heavenly Father himself. He says concerning those who reverence him, speak often one to another, and think upon his name, “They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” (vs. 17) The first of these was our Lord Jesus. Additional jewels of various sizes and shapes constitute his “body” members. These are being cut, polished, and prepared during the Gospel Age. If we have responded to God’s invitation by making a full consecration to do his will, then we are counted as one of these gemstones.

It is God who has called us as these potential jewels, rough at first, but able to be shaped and chiseled by him and his Son—master workmen, and capable of carrying out this wonderful work. It is our responsibility to be humbly submissive to the work being done in us to make us gemstones of high quality and beauty. Then, by being patterned after the perfect example of our Master, and by walking in his footsteps even unto death, we will be mounted as jewels. How we long for this time, and the complete fulfillment of the words, “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” (Ps. 50:5) Let us each strive to the best of our ability, with the help of the Heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus, and one another, to attain unto “the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” ■

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Mary Mali, Groton, CT—December 5. Age, 88

Brother Hal Fries, Mahomet, IL—December 30.

Age, 90

Sister Elva Lanowick, Paradise, CA—January 11.

Age, 98

Brother Joseph Suraci, New Haven, CT—January

13. Age, 92

“This is the will of God [concerning you], even your sanctification.”—I Thessalonians 4:3

Coming to the Scriptures to ascertain God’s will, we find that the great work which God asks of us is not work for others, but work in ourselves, subduing, conquering, ruling self. Everything else, therefore—our service for the household of faith, and our doing good unto all men, by home and foreign missions, etc.—is subservient to this most important work within. For, as the apostle by inspiration declares, though we should preach the gospel eloquently to others, and though we should give all our goods to feed the poor, or become martyrs for a good cause, without love, the Spirit of Christ and the Father, developed in us as the ruling principle of life, we would be nothing, from the divine standpoint.

—*Daily Heavenly Manna*, February 5

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

G. Balko

Sacramento, CA
February 13-15

M. Balko

Sacramento, CA
February 13-15

C. Chandler

Sacramento, CA
February 13-15

O. B. Elbert

Sacramento, CA
February 13-15

K. Fernets

Sacramento, CA
February 13-15

R. Goodman

Jacksonville, FL February 15

B. Keith

Sacramento, CA
February 13-15

E. Kuenzli

India January 23-February 17

P. Mora

Sacramento, CA
February 13-15

B. Siwak

Sacramento, CA
February 13-15

T. Thomassen

Sacramento, CA
February 13-15

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
—Colossians 3:16*

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CONVENTIONS

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

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 13-15—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact J. Freer, 8012 Vintage Way, Fair Oaks, CA 95628. Phone: (916) 879-4655 or Email: shootingln@aol.com

NIGERIA SERVANTS SEMINAR, February 20-22—Uzi Obudi Agwa Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. Egbu. Phone: 234-803-333-9949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION, March 7,8—Holiday Inn Gulfport Airport, 9515 Hwy 49, Gulfport, MS 39503. Contact M. Costelli. Phone: (228) 861-2822 or Email: mrcostelli@gmail.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 7-9—Howard Johnson Hotel, 230 West State Road 436, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714. For room reservations, contact the hotel. Phone: (407) 862-4455. Specify “Florida Bible Students” for special rates, which expire on February 25, 2015. Other information, contact J. Wesol. Phone: (407) 921-9248 or Email: JerryWesol@hotmail.com

GREATER NEW LONDON PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 22—VFW, 30 Connecticut Avenue, Norwich, CT 06360. Contact V. Grillo. Phone (860) 823-7099 or Email: millennialview@sbcglobal.net

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 28,29—Quality Inn-Troy, 2537 Rochester Court, Troy, MI 48083. For hotel reservations, phone (248) 689-7500. Specify “Detroit Bible Students” for special rate. Contact P. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588 or Email: nemeshfp@aol.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 3-5—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. For reservations, contact S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

AGWA, NIGERIA MEMORIAL SEASON CONVENTION, April 5—At their place of fellowship. Contact B. Obiukwu. Phone: 234-812-225-3748 or Email: abiblestudecc@yahoo.com

NEW YORK CONVENTION, April 12—DoubleTree Hotel Mahwah, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ. Contact A. Williams. Phone: (718) 261-3053 or Email: austin@osnetinc.com

AGAWAM CONVENTION, May 17—Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA. For accommodations, contact M. Wardak. Phone: (413) 789-6198 or Email: mtwardack@verizon.net. For other information, contact A. Gonczewski. Email: aga49@yahoo.com

CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 23-25—Prisco Community Center, 150 W. Illinois Avenue, Aurora, IL 60506. Contact A. Schneider. Phone: (847) 533-1874 or Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 24,25—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91605. Contact J. Wojcik. Phone:(818) 438-1086 or Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 7—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Contact R. Eldridge. Phone: (215) 949-0652 or Email: rugeo@comcast.net

DETROIT JOINT CONVENTION, June 14—Pleasant Ridge Community Center, 4 Ridge Road, Pleasant Ridge, MI. Contact G. Zandler. Phone: (248) 399-8843 or Email: ngzandler@wowway.com