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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, Alzeyer Str. 8 (Postfach 252), D 67253 Freinsheim

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), 33-33 149th Street, Flushing, NY 11354 USA

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

SPAIN/ITALY: El Alba/Aurora, L. Cacioppo, Via Ignazio Paterno N2, 92100 Agrigento, Italy

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Paradise

“Verily, I say unto thee this day: With me, shalt thou be in Paradise.”

—Luke 23:43,
*Rotherham’s
Emphasized Bible*

IT IS GENERALLY SUP-

posed by most professed Christians that the words “paradise” and “heaven” are essentially synonymous, and that in the Bible they are both used to describe the

eternal home of the saved. Some, however, make paradise an intermediate state into which the righteous go, there to await the time of the resurrection at the end of the world, when they will be transferred to their permanent home in heaven.

Doubtless many assume that the word paradise appears many times in the Bible, but actually it does not. It is not used in the Old Testament at all, and occurs only three times in the New Testament, one being in Jesus’ promise to the thief on the cross, “Thou shalt be with me in paradise.” It translates the Greek word *paradeisos*, which, according to Professor Strong, is of Oriental origin, the literal meaning of which is “park,” or “garden,” and by implication, “Eden.”

The Bible tells us that God “planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.” (Gen. 2:8) Since there is no suggestion

of a heavenly, or spiritual park, or garden, in the word paradise itself, it seems obvious that its uses in the New Testament are directly or indirectly related to the divine purpose in the creation of man, and to God's provision of the garden home for him "eastward in Eden." Certainly the Garden of Eden was a paradise.

However, because of sin, man was driven out of Eden, out into the unsubdued earth to eke out an existence by the sweat of his face, until he returned to the dust from whence he was taken. (chap. 3:17-19) Paradise was lost, but not forever, for the Bible clearly reveals that God's plan of redemption through Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of the human race, is designed to restore man to life and to his lost paradise.

Although the word paradise simply means a park, or garden, we believe that the larger meaning of the word paradise, as used in the Bible, denotes mankind's future earthly home, and the blessings of everlasting life which all the willing and obedient will ultimately enjoy in that home. The restoration of paradise, then, would involve much more than planting beautiful fruit trees and flowers in the ancient land of Mesopotamia, where it is believed the original Garden of Eden was situated. The Apostle Peter speaks of the period of this restoration as "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:21

The "all things" to be restored are the all things which were lost. When all these things are renewed, paradise will be reinstated. The work of restoring paradise is to be accomplished by the reign of

Christ, when those who, during the Gospel Age, have suffered and died following in his footsteps, will live and reign with him.—Rev. 20:6

THE MESSIAH

The coming of the Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom was the hope of Israel. Promise after promise in the Old Testament gave them the assurance that this was God's plan for Israel and for the whole world of mankind. They believed not only that the Messiah, the great king of promise, would deliver them from bondage to the Gentiles, but also from bondage to sin and death. "In this mountain," or kingdom, God had promised there would be a "feast of fat things," and he would "swallow up death in victory."—Isa. 25:6-9

Jesus came to begin the process by which this long-promised kingdom would, in due time, be established. His disciples had accepted him as the Messiah, and had given up all to follow him. Together with Jesus and the assistance of seventy others selected and appointed by Jesus, the original twelve preached the Gospel of the kingdom throughout Judea for more than three years. It was not a large country, and we may safely assume that essentially the entire nation had learned more or less about Jesus, although only a few had a clear understanding of just who he was.

When Jesus was arrested by his enemies with the intent of having him put to death, one of the charges brought against him was that he claimed to be a king. Ordinarily, if a charge like this were true, it would mean treason to the Roman government to which the Jewish nation was at that time

subject. Jesus did not deny the charge, but acknowledged that it was to this end he was born.

An inscription over the cross on which Jesus was crucified proclaimed him to be “King of the Jews.” Thus, it was general knowledge in Israel that Jesus and his followers expected the establishment of the Messianic kingdom with Jesus as its head.

The two malefactors, or thieves, being crucified with Jesus could not have been unaware of these circumstances. While the prejudice and hatred of the people against Jesus influenced one of the thieves to rail against the Master, the other thief took a more realistic view. Inasmuch as they were dying, and the situation seemed hopeless, it could do no harm, the thief apparently reasoned, to ask a favor of this man who was supposed to be a king. Turning to Jesus, he said, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”—Luke 23:42

NOT A CHRISTIAN

In an effort to find something in the Bible to support the tradition that the righteous go immediately to heaven when they die, this account of the thief on the cross has been seized upon. Actually, however, there is nothing in the record to indicate that this thief was righteous, or that he even repented of his sin. Certainly there is nothing in the narrative to indicate that he accepted Jesus as his Redeemer and Savior.

Stripped of its traditional coloring, all this account shows is that the dying thief, knowing that in some way Jesus was supposed to be a king, asked to be remembered when he came into his kingdom. As one dying man to another, the thief was sympathetic

toward Jesus, and hoped that in return this unusual “criminal” would do something for him, if and when he could. What else could he ask than to be remembered when Jesus came into his kingdom?

While the thief was “grasping at a straw” in a situation in which there apparently was no basis for hope, it was different with Jesus. He knew that his death on the cross would not destroy God’s kingdom plan, but was a necessary part of it. Unlike the rulership of other kings, God’s plan for Jesus was that he would reign, not over dying subjects, but over subjects redeemed from death, endowed with an opportunity of proving their worthiness of everlasting life. Jesus knew that he was even then dying for his subjects—dying that they might live.

Jesus also knew that, in God’s plan of salvation, provision had not only been made for redemption through the shedding of his own blood, but also for the eventual full restoration of those redeemed. He knew, therefore, that the restoration of the redeemed world would be the work of his coming kingdom. Further, he knew that when the work of his kingdom was complete, man’s lost paradise condition would be restored. Knowing this, and having absolute confidence in the outworking of his Father’s purposes, he gave the reassuring reply to the thief, “Thou shalt be with me in paradise.”

It is doubtful that the thief understood the full significance of the reply to his request to be remembered in Jesus’ kingdom. It was not necessary that he should. To Jesus it was an opportunity to express his confidence in his Heavenly Father’s promises, and to bear testimony once more to the truth, and to do it in an hour of darkness and great trial.

“Verily I say unto thee today,” said Jesus, “shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Only Jesus could have made such a promise on such a day! The misplacement of the comma in the *King James Version* has hidden the true meaning of what Jesus said to the thief, and has caused many to believe that Jesus and the thief both went to paradise that day, which is contrary to the teachings of God’s Word.

DIED FOR SIN

The Bible teaches that Jesus died, that he “poured out his soul unto death.” (Isa. 53:12) From Psalm 16:10, we learn that Jesus’ soul was in *sheol*, the Bible hell, which is the state of death, from the time of his death on the cross until he was raised from the dead on the third day. (See Highlights of Dawn article for May 2013) After his resurrection, Jesus said to Mary, “I am not yet ascended to my Father.” (John 20:17) From these texts of Scripture, we know positively that Jesus did not go anywhere at the time he died except into the sleep of death. The same was true of the thief.

However, on that memorable day, when Jesus’ enemies had seemingly gained a complete victory over him—when he was being put to death, and from the human standpoint it appeared that there was no hope that he would ever have a kingdom—his faith enabled him to say to the thief that he would be remembered in the kingdom—raised from the dead to have an opportunity to be restored to paradise. This not only meant that the Messianic kingdom would be established in God’s due time, but that it would be completely victorious over all the enemies of God and of righteousness, and that

through its administration man's lost earthly paradise would be restored.

We make no apology for changing the position of the comma as it appears in the *King James Version*, for the punctuation of the Bible is not inspired. It did not come into use until several centuries after the Bible was written. Dr. Rotherham, an eminent Bible scholar, recognized the intent of Jesus' reply to the thief, and in his translation, as is noted at the head of this article, punctuates the sentence as it should be punctuated.

In using this mannerism of speech, Jesus was simply following a much-used pattern in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 4:39 reads, "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else." How wrong it would be to punctuate this text to mean that the LORD is God of heaven and earth this day. It could imply that he was not God on other days. Similarly, Deuteronomy 6:6 reads, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." Simply by changing the position of the second comma, this text would read, "These words, which I command thee, this day shall be in thine heart," leaving a possible implication that on future days these words need not be in their hearts. This would be an incorrect thought.

In the case of Jesus' statement to the thief on the cross, human translators who were looking for every possible opportunity to bolster traditional theology that the dead are not really dead, did not hesitate to place the comma to give this thought. As we have seen, however, both reason and the

Scriptures dictate that the text should be punctuated as Dr. Rotherham has done, thus placing the emphasis on the day in which the Master, in demonstration of his faith, made this remarkable promise to the thief regarding the coming Messianic kingdom and the blessings to be dispensed to the world at that time.

CAUGHT UP TO PARADISE

The second use of the word paradise in the Bible is in II Corinthians 12:2-4, where the Apostle Paul wrote, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful for a man to utter."

Without doubt the "man" here referred to was Paul himself. His statement that he could not tell whether he was in the body or out of the body is simply his way of emphasizing the great reality of this vision, and the vivid manner in which it portrayed truths to him concerning "the third heaven" and "paradise." Paul's account of this vision has been used by many in an effort to prove that heaven and paradise are one and the same place. A casual reading of the passage could give this impression.

If we were to use the passage for this purpose, we would have to conclude that paradise and the third heaven are the same, which, of course, presents the necessity of explaining the difference between the third heaven, and the regular heaven. Indeed,

in order to understand the meaning of this vision with any degree of clarity it is essential to determine, if possible, just what Paul means by the third heaven.

The word heaven is used in the Bible with a number of different connotations. In some instances it simply denotes the atmosphere above the earth which we call the sky. In other instances, the word heaven describes a plane of life higher than the human—the place and condition in which spirit beings abide. Thus we speak of the angels of heaven.

The highest form of life in heaven is the divine nature, possessed originally by God alone. Jesus was exalted to the divine nature when he was raised from the dead. His footstep followers are promised the same exaltation. So we properly say that the Christian has a heavenly hope. (II Pet. 1:4) Indeed, the Bible speaks of this as a “heavenly calling,” extended to the followers of Jesus in this age.—Heb. 3:1

God said, through the prophet, “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.” (Isa. 66:1) This suggests that heaven is not only the abode of the Creator, and of those whom he has created on the spirit plane of life, but also that it is the divine seat of government over the affairs of the earth and, without doubt, the entire universe. Thus, here and in other similar scriptures, God used the term heaven to symbolize spiritual ruling power over the earth and mankind.

It is in this sense that Paul uses the expression, the third heaven. The Apostle Peter identifies all three of these heavens. First, he speaks of a heavens that existed before the Flood. Next he mentions

the heavens which now are. Then he explains that we, according to God's promise, "look for new heavens, . . . wherein dwelleth righteousness."—II Pet. 3:5-7,10,13

The first two of these symbolic heavens are not righteous, for they embrace the period of human history when Satan and his fallen angels are the dominant unseen powers which rule in the affairs of men. However, righteousness will dwell in the third heaven, the "new heavens," as Peter explains. The exalted Jesus, and with him those who have proved worthy to live and reign with him, will be the spiritual, invisible rulers in the third or new heavens, while Satan will be bound and ultimately destroyed.—Rev. 20:2,10

So Paul was given a wonderful vision in which he was carried down the stream of time to the period when Christ's kingdom would be ruling the world. Instead of speaking of the detailed conditions which would exist in the Messianic kingdom, he simply used the scriptural symbolisms for the spiritual and material aspects of the kingdom, heaven and paradise, the latter being but a synonym for what Peter described as the "new earth."

The kingdom of Christ will have its spiritual and earthly phases right from the beginning. We believe, however, that it will be some time before the earthly phase of the kingdom reaches the point where conditions throughout the earth could fully be symbolized by the thought of paradise. (Ezek. 36:35) Probably what Paul saw in his vision, which he says—according to the marginal translation—was not "possible" for him to utter, were conditions in the earth toward the end of Christ's

thousand-year reign, when man will fully be restored to a paradise condition.

THE PARADISE OF GOD

There is only one more use of the word paradise in the Bible, and that is in Revelation 2:7, where we read, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” This is a promise to the faithful footstep followers of Jesus—that class called out from the world—who are promised a heavenly reward with their Master.

A casual reading of the text suggests that these overcomers will enjoy the blessings of the restored paradise, as symbolized by the original Garden of Eden. A more careful study, however, reveals a deeper meaning to this promise—a meaning that is harmonious with the general testimony of the Scriptures. The Bible assures that that these will not have life in an earthly paradise, but in a heavenly home—indeed, in a special place which Jesus went away to prepare.—John 14:2,3

Practically all the important lessons in the Book of Revelation are taught by symbols. The symbols used in Revelation, and in fact throughout the entire Bible, are things and circumstances concerning which we, as humans, have at least some knowledge, otherwise the symbolic language of the Bible would have no meaning to us. There are facts we know about the sun, the moon, the stars; and about sheep and goats, wheat and tares, rivers and trees, storms and earthquakes. When the Bible uses these as symbols, certain lessons are conveyed to us.

In the second and third chapters of Revelation, seven wonderful promises are made to the faithful footstep followers of Jesus—the overcomers of the Gospel Age. All of these promises are illustrated by things with which we have at least some acquaintance. For example, verse ten of the second chapter reads, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” No one in reading this supposes that he will be wearing a literal crown in heaven. A crown suggests rulership, and the overcomers will be exalted to the highest form of life—the divine—to be associated with Jesus in his kingdom.

In verse seventeen of this chapter, the promise is given, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” The expression “hidden manna” takes our minds back to the Tabernacle in the wilderness. In the Most Holy of this Tabernacle, representing heaven, was the Ark of the Covenant. (Heb. 9:4) In it was placed a golden bowl of manna. While the manna collected daily by the Israelites corrupted, that which they placed in this gold bowl did not. This, then, conveys the thought of incorruptibility.

No one supposes that when the overcomers reach heaven they will eat literal manna from a golden bowl. However, all true followers of the Master do rejoice in the hope of immortality—incorruption—which the hidden manna symbolized.—I Cor. 15:54

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.” (Rev. 3:12) No overcomer will be transformed literally into a pillar to be placed in an actual temple in heaven. This is a symbol of the

sure, supportive, fixed position to be enjoyed by those who prove faithful. Now we are being tried and tested. There is a possibility of failing. In the finished picture, however, the testing will have been completed, and those who have overcome will be as pillars, fixed and secure, in that spiritual temple which will be the meeting place between God and men.

Thus, we should view the promise relating to paradise in the same manner. (Rev. 2:7) We know the story of the original paradise, and its tree of life in the midst of the Garden. We know that because of disobedience our first parents were driven out of Eden to die. Flaming swords were put up to prevent their return to the garden and partaking of the tree of life, and living forever.

Knowing these circumstances, God uses symbolic language to assure the overcomers who follow Jesus faithfully into death, that it will not be thus with them. Continuous access to the tree of life in the original paradise would have meant everlasting life for our first parents, so God used this fact to assure us that if we are overcomers we will be rewarded with eternal life.

This does not mean that the overcomers of the present age will live in an earthly paradise, any more than the other promises mean that they will wear literal crowns, eat manna from a golden bowl, or become marble pillars in a literal temple. While this promise assures the overcomers of eternal life, which in reality will be immortality, the promise in the tenth verse reveals that with this life will also be given ruling authority, as symbolized by the crown. By the use of all the various symbols in

these promises to the overcomers, we get a comprehensive understanding of the great “prize of the high calling” for which every follower of the Master is striving.—Phil. 3:14

Paradise, then, properly and scripturally speaking, is the home on earth, and the blessings of the earthly plane of life which will be enjoyed by the restored human race—a small sample of which was prepared for our first parents eastward in Eden. While, as we have seen, the word means a garden, or park, the original Garden of Eden, which itself was glorious and a marvelous provision for man, also foreshadowed all the blessings God has designed for his earthly creation, man, including everlasting life and his dominion over earth.

All this will be restored during the “restitution of all things” spoken by Peter. Truly this will be paradise restored. With that restoration will come the full answer to our Lord’s prayer, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”—Matt. 6:10 ■

*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 fulness of his mercy,
Gladness will come to stay.*

—*Hymns of Dawn*

Holy, Holy, Holy

Key Verse: “*One cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*”
—Isaiah 6:3

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 6:1-8

THE VISION OF ISAIAH

recorded in the verses of our lesson is highly symbolic. Verse 1 clearly indicates that the vision centered on God himself. It is he who Isaiah, in vision, saw “sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up,” in the temple—his symbolic dwelling place. Isaiah further saw “seraphims,” each one with six wings—two wings covering their faces, two covering their feet, and two with which to fly.

At the crying of the seraphim, the temple in which Isaiah saw the Lord in vision seems to come alive. “The posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.” (vs. 4) The moving of the posts of the temple door and the house being filled with smoke seem to represent the fact that the nation of Israel, because of unfaithfulness, was soon to be moved out of its place of favor with God, and that their view of him was clouded, as if with smoke.

We cannot be certain as to what the seraphim actually were that Isaiah saw, but the word itself has the thought of something fiery or burning. In Isaiah’s vision, seeing a fiery, burning object or being of some kind, was a detail he would likely remember and focus his attention on. Such is the case here, for in our Key Verse, Isaiah notices the seraphim crying aloud to each other, proclaiming the

holiness of God—he being the subject of the vision. In symbol, the seraphim seem to represent God’s cardinal character attributes of wisdom, justice, love, and power—all of which speak, or cry out, concerning his holiness.

As Isaiah’s vision continues, he realizes, by contrast, his own unrighteous condition compared to the superlative holiness of God. He says, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”—vs. 5

In vision, one of the seraphim then comes to Isaiah with a “live coal in his hand,” taken from the temple altar. He lays it upon Isaiah’s mouth, and says, “This hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” (vss. 6,7) We believe that this symbolically represents how God’s attribute of justice—one of the symbolic seraphim of the vision—cleanses his people from sin by faith in the shed blood of Jesus. Paul said, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Rom. 5:1

As Isaiah’s vision concludes—he now having been purged of sin—the voice of God comes to him, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Isaiah responds, “Here am I; send me.” (Isa. 6:8) Here we see that in order to be “sent” in the service of God, one must first be cleansed, or justified—made right in his sight. For those thus made righteous in God’s sight, it is his desire to send them to further service in his name and for his cause.

For the consecrated footstep followers of Jesus during this present Gospel Age, we have been invited to present our “bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” (Rom. 12:1) By the processes of first recognizing our undone condition, being made holy by the cleansing blood of Jesus, and our complete heart-consecration to God, we are able to join Isaiah in answering God’s call, and say with him, “Here am I; send me.” ■

Give Thanks

Key Verse: *“In that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.”*
—Isaiah 12:4

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 12

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

of the Book of Isaiah, containing only six verses, is in reality a continuation of the prophecy of the previous chapter. There the Prophet Isaiah provides a beautiful description of Christ's coming kingdom, in which nothing shall “hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9

In Isaiah 12:1, the prophet continues to describe the conditions of the kingdom, stating that “in that day,” mankind will praise God. “Thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.” This praise will come as a result of the fact that God's anger will be turned away from man, based on the salvation that he has provided through the gift of his only begotten Son, Christ Jesus, as man's redeemer. Mankind will then realize that God is the author of this arrangement, and will say, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.”—vs. 2

Verse 3 states, “Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” This is the water of truth.

Mankind, in Christ's kingdom, will be given ample supply of this "living water" with which to quench his thirst for the knowledge of the Lord. In the New Testament, the Apostle John also speaks of this water as the "water of life." In his vision, John saw "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." He also heard the invitation, "Let him that is athirst come. . . . let him take the water of life freely."—Rev. 22:1,17

In our Key Verse, the prophet Isaiah speaks again of mankind offering praise to God "in that day." Not only will they do this, but man will also "declare" and "make mention" to one another all the goodness and marvelous doings of the Heavenly Father. As mankind speaks of these things to one another, it will serve to reinforce to them all the principles of righteousness which they will be learning during that kingdom day, as they are filled with the "knowledge of the LORD."

In Isaiah 12:5, the prophet states, "Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth." As this verse states, it is God's intent that his wonderful plans and purposes for man be known and understood "in all the earth." Everyone, with no exception, will have an equal and ample opportunity to attain perfect, human life upon the earth and to live forever in peace and happiness.

With such a plan having been laid out by our loving Heavenly Father, it should be no surprise that man's response, once enlightened with the knowledge of the LORD, will be as the words of the last verse of our lesson, which reads, "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." (vs. 6) Although this verse speaks of the restoration of natural Israel to God's favor, this opportunity will also be extended to all mankind. As God promised long ago to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."—Gen. 22:18 ■

Meaningless Worship

Key Verse:
***“Wherefore the
Lord said,
Forasmuch as this
people draw near
me with their
mouth, and with
their lips do
honour me, but
have removed their
heart far from me,
and their fear
toward me is
taught by the
precept of men.”***
—Isaiah 29:13

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 29:9-16

ALTHOUGH THE LESSONS

contained in our selected verses were directed at natural Israel during the days of Isaiah, the principles contained therein equally apply to mankind in general. Our opening verse says that Israel was “drunken” and “staggered,” yet it was not the result of wine or strong drink. (Isa. 29:9) They had become drunken with the false teachings of the heathen nations around them, and had forgotten the principles of righteousness contained in their Law, delivered by God through the hands of Moses. Because of this “drunken” condition, God gave them “the spirit

of deep sleep,” closing their eyes, mercifully “sealing” his word from any further understanding.—vss. 10,11

Mankind in general has also forgotten God’s laws of righteousness, instead substituting in their place the laws of selfishness, greed, pride, and other principles which have their origin in Satan, the “god of this world.” Here too, God has turned away his face from fallen man during this present period of sin and iniquity on the earth, counting them in ignorance. The Apostle Paul said, concerning Israel and by extension the world of

mankind, “God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”—Rom. 11:32

Thus, the “vision” of God’s truth became to Israel “as the words of a book that is sealed.” John the Revelator also spoke of this in similar language, as he looked out upon the results of sin upon man. In vision, he heard an angel ask the question, “Who is worthy to open the book [of life], and to loose the seals thereof? And no man . . . was able to open the book. . . . And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.”—Rev. 5:2-4

The words of our Key Verse point out that at the heart of Israel’s unfaithfulness was the condition of their heart. They had an outward show of obedience to God, but had removed their heart “far from” him. Even their fear of God was taught by the fallen “precept of men.” It was a slavish fear of bondage to outward ceremonies and manmade traditions, rather than a reverential fear based on full faith and trust in the great God who had provided for their every need.

Despite the unfaithfulness of natural Israel, as well as man’s general lack of faith and obedience toward God, he has made a wonderful provision through the salvation provided by his only begotten Son, Jesus. Continuing the vision of John, he hears these words, “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” (Rev. 5:5) This “Lion,” the “Root of David,” was Jesus. By dying as man’s perfect Redeemer, he was found worthy to open the book of life which had been sealed for centuries, since our first parents fell from perfection in the Garden of Eden. As a result, all of Israel and mankind will have the opportunity of coming back into “heart” harmony with God in Christ’s coming kingdom. How we echo Isaiah’s words, “Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, . . . a marvellous work and a wonder.”—Isa. 29:14 ■

The Glorious New Heavens and New Earth

Key Verse: *“Behold,
I create new
heavens and a new
earth: and the
former shall not be
remembered, nor
come into mind.
But be ye glad and
rejoice for ever in
that which I
create: for, behold,
I create Jerusalem
a rejoicing, and
her people a joy.”
—Isaiah 65:17,18*

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 65:17-21,23-25

IN OUR LAST LESSON, WE

spoke of the time of Christ’s coming kingdom, in which mankind will have the opportunity to return to God’s favor through heart-obedience to his righteous laws. Today we will focus on some of the conditions of that kingdom as described by Isaiah and other writers of the Scriptures. In our Key Verse, the prophet likens Christ’s kingdom to a “new heavens and a new earth.” He further states that the former kingdom of this “present evil world” (Gal. 1:4) will no more be remembered.

God’s creation of a new heavens and earth is not a reference to literal heaven or earth, but rather to a new arrangement, or order of things. Indeed, the Bible tells us concerning the literal earth that “the earth abideth forever.” (Eccles. 1:4) That which will be “new” are the governing forces of the kingdom, which will be centered in Christ and his faithful associates of the

present Gospel Age. Together, they will be the heavenly rulers of the kingdom, rather than Satan, who God has allowed for a time to be ruler over mankind. This “old” rulership of earth by the great Adversary will be replaced by the “new” heavens of the Christ—head and body.

Conditions in the earth itself will also be “new” during the kingdom, compared to man’s experience in his present fallen condition. Note these prophetic words from our lesson: “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days. . . . They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat. . . . They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD. . . . Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.”—Isa. 65:20-25

These wonderful conditions described by Isaiah are certainly a time all should look forward to with great anticipation. Lest we think that Isaiah alone spoke of a new heavens and new earth, his prophetic words are confirmed for us in the New Testament by both the Apostle Peter and John the Revelator. Peter says, “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (II Pet. 3:13) John adds, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.”—Rev. 21:1

In his vision, John saw, as Isaiah did, some of the details of the new heavens and earth. “I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them . . . and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—vss. 3,4 ■

Joyful Worship Restored

Key Verse: *“They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required.”*
—Ezra 3:4

Selected Scripture:
Ezra 3:1-7

were willing to do so should return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple.—Ezra 1:1-4

As a result of Cyrus’ proclamation, about fifty thousand of the congregation of Israel, including servants and maids, returned to Jerusalem. (chap. 2:64,65) They took with them many of the gold and silver vessels of the Temple, numbering more than five thousand, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought out of Jerusalem. In addition, many freewill offerings were given to those who returned.—chap. 1:6-11

Upon their return to Jerusalem, the first thing the Israelites did, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, was to rebuild the “altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt

CYRUS, KING OF PERSIA,

had been informed through the words of Israel’s prophets, Jeremiah and Daniel, that the foretold seventy years of Israel’s captivity to Babylon had come to an end. (see Jer. 25:10,11; 29:10; Dan. 9:2) Indeed, the kingdom of Babylon had fallen to the Medes and Persians. Cyrus was evidently very respectful to the Israelites, their prophets, and their God. He proclaimed that all those of the Israelites who

offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses, . . . and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, . . . morning and evening.” (chap. 3:2,3) Shortly thereafter was the time of Israel’s Feast of Tabernacles. As our Key Verse indicates, they temporarily ceased from the rebuilding work and obediently kept the feast, doing so according to the requirements of the Law. Subsequent to the Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites began keeping many of the other required feasts and offerings provided for in the Law. The account states: “Afterward [they] offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD.”—vs. 5

The Israelites had now reestablished many of the various ceremonial features of the Law, but “the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.” (vs. 6) With the encouragement of Zerubbabel and Jeshua the high priest, the work again began. A little more than two years after their arrival back in Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the foundation of the Temple was completed. (vss. 8-11) Several years later, the rebuilt Temple was completed, according to the proclamation given by Cyrus.—chap. 6:14-16

Although numerous lessons can be learned from this experience of Israel, the general import lies in their being a fitting representation of the world of mankind in general. Like Israel was in bondage to heathen Babylon, mankind has been in bondage to sin and death, under the power of Satan, since the fall of our first parents in Eden. As with Israel, however, God has provided the means by which mankind will receive salvation—through his son, pictured by Cyrus—and be released from this bondage. God has also been building a spiritual temple—Christ and his faithful associates—through which all the families of the earth will be blessed, taught, and come to obey God’s righteous laws. Those who do so will receive the promised blessings of perfect human life. ■

The Renewed Mind

“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

—Romans 12:2

THE RENEWING OF THE

mind is a necessity for every dedicated follower of the Master who wishes to know and do the perfect will of God. Thus, it is also a necessity to do so if we are to have the “mind of Christ.” The mind of the fallen flesh, developed in the environment of the world, views essentially every aspect of life from the standpoint of self-interest, whereas the will of God for his people is that they be motivated by love, setting aside interests of self that others might be blessed, and that he might be glorified.

In verse 3, immediately following our opening text, Paul mentions the first logical and necessary change of viewpoint on the part of one who has consecrated himself to do the Heavenly Father’s will. He says, “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to

think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

The viewpoint of the world is that anyone who expects to be a success in life must have a high estimation of his or her own self and ability. Nor do most people of the world hesitate to advertise their qualifications. While this may not be wrong according to the standards of the world, a disciple of Christ should learn soon after entering the narrow way of sacrifice that his accomplishments in the service of God, and his growth in Christlike character, will not be due to his own qualifications and ability. Rather, they will be due to the power of the Holy Spirit, through the grace of God.

This does not mean that we are to think of ourselves as having no ability. Paul’s admonition is to “think soberly.” Here, the Greek word translated “soberly” has the meaning of being sound. It is the same word that is translated “sound mind” in II Timothy 1:7, which reads, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

Paul explains that we are to “think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” He then reminds us of our membership in the body of Christ, and of the various services which are to be rendered by those of his body members. (Rom. 12:4-8) The lesson is that those who think logically, and in keeping with their faith in the divine promises, will recognize the type of service they can render, and will not be undertaking to serve along lines for which they are not qualified.

The fleshly, worldly mind might well conclude that it would be illogical not to do everything possible to

improve one's standing among the brethren, and thus to attain as much honor from them as possible, but the renewed mind, the "sound mind" of a dedicated follower of Christ, should not take such a view. In the process of renewing his mind, a Christian should learn that if there is to be any advancement, it can come properly only from the Heavenly Father, and not because he sought or promoted it.

A SOUND MIND

In renewing his mind, the follower of Christ considers as "sound" only those viewpoints which he knows emanate from God. He accepts God's invitation to reason with him, and rejects as unreasonable every thought which does not square with the written Word. His renewed mind approves only those things known to be in harmony with the "good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

This results in far-reaching and sweeping changes of viewpoint. One of these is reflected in Paul's reference to the spirit of a "sound mind," quoted earlier. Human reasoning might well conclude that the spirit of a sound mind means great carefulness and caution lest we overexert ourselves in attending meetings, or in other efforts in the service of the Lord. Taking the context into consideration, however, it would seem that Paul was admonishing Timothy quite differently.

In this epistle, Paul explained to Timothy that many of the brethren had forsaken him in his hour of great need. (II Tim. 1:15) Paul sensed his need of comfort and encouragement and urged Timothy to visit him in his prison home, where he was awaiting execution. By responding to this invitation,

Timothy would, of necessity, show himself to be a friend of Paul and a believer in the Gospel of Christ, for which the apostle's life was soon to be taken. Such a visit could well have been very costly to Timothy.

Paul endeavored to strengthen his "beloved son" Timothy for this hazardous undertaking. In II Timothy 1:8, he continues, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."

Here was a definite invitation to Timothy to knowingly place himself in a position in which he would be a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel." He would thus experience the spirit "of power" which the Lord promised to him, not necessarily for his protection, but for grace to help in his time of need. Should Timothy be fearful of such an undertaking, he was to remember that his fear would not come from the Lord, for he does not give the spirit of fear, but only of "power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

The Scriptures are silent as to whether or not Timothy actually made this much-urged trip to Rome to visit his beloved and aged Paul. However, we can be virtually certain that he made every possible effort to do so, even though he must certainly have known what the possible result could have been. The point we are making here is that from the standpoint of human reason, to accept Paul's invitation would have seemed very illogical, and in no sense a reflection of sound judgment to thus risk his young life, when there were so many other opportunities of service before him.

GOD'S VIEWPOINT

God's will for his consecrated people is in many respects different from what the fallen human mind might conceive to be right. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."—Matt. 5:38-41

Human reasoning dictates that we stand up for our rights, and demand just treatment from our fellows. However, Jesus indicates otherwise. Instead, he says, accept abuse and injustice. Do not resist. Let them smite the other cheek if they wish. Give them more than they unjustly demand. Since these are the instructions of our Master, we must conclude that to obey them would be exercising the spirit of a sound mind, and bringing ourselves into line with that "good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Continuing along this same line, Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."—vss. 43-45

How unsound such a viewpoint seems to the worldly-minded. Prior to knowing God and

consecrating ourselves to serve him, we all had more or less of this mind. Now, however, our minds are being renewed. The old viewpoints are being supplanted by God's thoughts. Thus, from his standpoint, our minds are becoming more and more in harmony with the divine standard. The spirit of a sound mind is one which prompts us to love our enemies, and to do good to those who persecute us. This is not an easy thing to do, yet it is the course which is dictated by the spirit of a sound mind—a renewed mind.

Jesus reasons this point out for us. He says, "If ye love them [only] which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—vss. 46-48

How reasonable this is in the light of Jesus' explanation. God has begotten us as his children, and we are growing up into Christ in preparation to be born of the Spirit on the divine plane of life to live and reign with Christ. Our Heavenly Father therefore expects us to be like him, not like the publicans or others. God showers his blessings of rain and sunshine upon the just and the unjust, and sent his Son to redeem the whole world which was alienated from him because of sin. Therefore, he wants us to have the same largeness of mind and heart, to be "perfect" in this respect even as he is perfect. To make every effort to do so is to exercise the spirit of a sound and renewed mind, because it is the mind of our Heavenly Father and his Son.

THE FATHER KNOWS

The worldly mind likes to be appreciated and praised. Jesus mentions this viewpoint in his reference to those who “do . . . alms before men, to be seen of them,” and those who “sound a trumpet” to call attention to their benefactions, “that they may have glory of men.” (Matt. 6:1,2) This principle is operative all around us every day. The larger the gifts, the more fanfare there is to glorify the giver. This is not considered wrong by the world. Indeed, it is a common practice of the world’s “best people.”

This, however, is not pleasing to the Lord and, from his standpoint, such a course is not exercising a renewed mind, because it is not his mind. In learning what is “that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God,” we are to take heed to Jesus’ instructions, “When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”—vss. 3,4

“IF, WHEN YE DO WELL”

The Apostle Peter was greatly used by God to reveal his will to his people. He wrote, “This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”—I Pet. 2:19-21

“This is acceptable with God,” wrote Peter. We are endeavoring to have our minds renewed that we may know and prove what is the acceptable will of God, and here Peter explains a very important aspect of the divine will for all dedicated followers of the Master. It is simply that we endure suffering patiently, when it is inflicted upon us because we did well.

How unsound this appears from the human standpoint. In this passage, Peter reminds us of the possibility of being punished for our faults, or for doing those things which we and others know are wrong. Human reasoning would say that this would be all right—just what we should expect. Yet, as Peter explains, there is no glory in this—no cause for feeling that simply because we have gracefully accepted just punishment for our faults, we are especially pleasing to God.

It is only when we “do well” and suffer for it, that we truly demonstrate our love for God and his ways. For, as Peter explains, this is the example set before us by our Lord. Jesus, who simply went about doing good, was arrested and crucified, and he voluntarily surrendered to this ignominy and suffering because he exercised the spirit of a sound mind.

Herein is a basic principle of the life of one striving to develop the mind of Christ. Prior to Pentecost, Peter could not understand it himself. He said to Jesus, “Be it far from thee, Lord.” (Matt. 16:22) However, Jesus explained to Peter, “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (vs. 25) How utterly illogical this is from the standpoint of the

worldly mind. Actually, though, from the standpoint of our Heavenly Father's will, Jesus reflected the spirit of a sound mind in surrendering himself to be killed.

Later, through the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, Peter understood this, and was able to encourage the brethren along this line. "It is better," Peter wrote, "if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing." (I Pet. 3:17) The reason for this is that we are following in Jesus' footsteps, and he suffered, "the just for the unjust."—vs. 18

To the human mind how illogical is the idea that it is better to suffer for well doing than for evil doing. Yet, this is the will of God as we renew our minds. The mind of the flesh rebels against this "unsound" viewpoint, and we need to examine ourselves very carefully, and very sincerely, to make sure that we do not yield to the fleshly reasoning, which exalts self above the will of God as expressed through Christ Jesus. As Paul admonishes, we are to bring "into captivity every thought" to the divine will.—II Cor. 10:5

OUR "REASONABLE SERVICE"

The exercise of the spirit of a sound or renewed mind enables one to reason and reach logical conclusions. However, the conclusions reached depend upon the information used by the mind as a basis for reasoning. While in the world, we reasoned on the viewpoints of the world. All the information available indicated that self should be given first consideration under practically all circumstances, therefore we came to selfish conclusions.

Now it is different. We have, as indicated in Romans 12:1, presented our bodies a “living sacrifice,” and have reached the conclusion that this is our “reasonable,” or logical, service. Having entered upon this course of sacrificing all in the service of the Heavenly Father, it would be illogical to sidestep the opportunities that present themselves from day to day to carry out the terms of our consecration.

Thus, it is not enough that we have formally dedicated ourselves to sacrifice. It is not enough that we hear, read, and study the subject of sacrifice. The transformation of our minds must be so complete that we will be impelled to action, and thus demonstrate that we have actually accepted the baptism into Christ’s death as our new way of life. The true spirit of a sound and renewed mind will not permit any other course.

“ON THESE THINGS”

The renewing of our minds should affect every facet of our thinking. While it is the merit of Christ which makes our imperfect sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, it is incumbent upon us to bring every thought and deed as nearly into line with divine righteousness as possible.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”—Phil. 4:8,9

What a wonderful formula for holy thinking. The mind that is daily being renewed will delight to dwell upon the things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praiseworthy. Such holy thinking will surely leave no room, or have no time for the selfish, sordid things of the fallen flesh, and of the selfish, sinful world. Let us pray with David that such holy thoughts will indeed be the meditations of our heart.—Ps. 19:14

However, meditation alone is not sufficient, nor did Paul indicate that to “think on these things” was all that was necessary. He added that “those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do.” Indeed, we are to “do” as well as “think.” We are to do the things which, through the Scriptures, we have seen in Paul, or, as he mentions, we are to follow him as he followed Christ.—Phil. 3:17; I Cor. 11:1

Here again, to the worldly-minded, it would seem very illogical to do the things in the service of the Lord that Paul did. No inconvenience to himself, no hardship, no danger, nothing that would adversely affect his well-being as a man, motivated his decisions as to how and where and when he would serve. To those who endeavored to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem, thus to expose himself to his enemies who were waiting there for him, Paul said, “I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”—Acts 21:13

Referring to the trouble which awaited him at Jerusalem, Paul said, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so

that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:24) As here stated, the secret of Paul’s unfaltering course of sacrificial service was that he had learned to think properly with a renewed mind. He was guided by the spirit of a sound mind, and therefore did not consider his life to be dear unto himself.

CHRIST’S MIND

Paul wrote to the brethren at Philippi, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2:5) Certainly Jesus possessed a sound mind from his Heavenly Father’s standpoint, and it was a mind which led him in the way of humble and submissive sacrifice. In addition to leaving the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, Jesus “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”—vss. 7,8

How unwise it would seem to the worldly mind for one to make himself of no reputation. However, the mind of Christ, guided by heavenly wisdom, led him to do just this, and further, to actually give his life on the cross for the sins of the world. “Let this mind be in you,” Paul admonished. This mind will be in us, and will dominate our decisions and our whole course in life if, day by day, we are being “transformed by the renewing” of our minds. To put it another way, this mind will be in us if we

take up our cross and faithfully follow Jesus into death.—Matt. 16:24

APPROVED SACRIFICE

Sacrifice in itself is also not enough. Paul wrote that even if we give our bodies to be burned, and have not love, it will profit us nothing. (I Cor. 13:3) Here Paul reminds us that our motive for sacrifice must be right. It must be God's motive, which is unselfish love. It was this love that prompted our Heavenly Father to give his Son to die for the sin-cursed and dying race. It was the same love that impelled Jesus to suffer and to die in carrying out the divine will. It was unselfish love also that prompted Paul to lay down his life in the service of the Lord and the brethren.

Thus, as our minds are renewed day by day, our motives should become purified. Love should replace every semblance of selfishness. Otherwise, all our giving, our labor, our sacrifice, will be in vain so far as the will of God is concerned. With love ruling in our hearts and minds, and motivating our actions, what a wonderful transformation it will mean. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth."—I Cor. 13:4-8

The thoughts which engender these gracious and godlike qualities of character are dominant in the renewed mind of the faithful follower of the

Master. They are the pure thoughts which reflect the spirit of a sound mind given to us by the Holy Spirit of truth. Finally, it is these motivating thoughts of love which will urge us on to faithfulness as day by day we continue to present our bodies a living sacrifice, rejoicing to realize that this is our “reasonable service.” ■

“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. . . . Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. . . . May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands.”
—Psalm 90:12,14,17
New International Version

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JUNE 6—“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.”—Luke 21:34 (Z. ’95-201 Hymn 192)

JUNE 13—“I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”—Psalm 17:15 (Z. ’95-251 Hymn 105)

JUNE 20—“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”—I John 2:15 (Z. ’96-67 Hymn 312)

JUNE 27—“Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us.”—II Corinthians 1:21,22 (Z. ’96-212 Hymn 109)

Paul's Devotion to the Church

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”
—*Philippians 3:17*

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S devotion to the brethren both in his day and by extension throughout the Gospel Age has been abundantly manifested by the things which he said and did as recorded in the Scriptures. His consecrated life provides an extraordinary example of care and deep concern for the spiritual well-being of God's people. One factor which was so influential in his development of such passion and watch-care in promoting the interests of the church was his humility and appreciation of the Lord's grace in selecting him as an instrument for use. This was despite the fact that in ignorance, as Saul of Tarsus, he had persecuted the followers of Jesus, sometimes leading to their martyrdom, as in the case of Stephen. He knew he had been forgiven and that God had accepted him, but in various portions of his writing, Paul alludes to his former condition and how its effects were impressed upon his mind.

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” (I Tim. 1:12,13) Paul was so grateful for his new standing in Christ that he was burning with zeal to do all that he could to encourage the brethren as he fulfilled his mission. Paul’s views on certain matters and his actions under various circumstances illustrated his devotion to God and furnish many lessons which should prove helpful to us in our Christian course. His doctrinal teachings provided evidence of his devotion to the brethren because he gave warnings that false teachers and grievous wolves would arise and not spare the flock. It was because of Paul’s love and faithful ministry that he wanted us to be steadfast in the faith and protected from snares of the Adversary. “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27) Additionally, several other areas of focus in Paul’s life commend themselves for emulation on our part.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

The record of the glorified Lord Jesus’ encounter with Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus reveals that Ananias was hesitant to go to Saul because of his history of persecuting the church. “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”—Acts 9:15,16

Subsequently, as the Apostle Paul, he embarked upon a course of personal study to determine how best he should carry out his mission. "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days."—Gal. 1:17,18

Shortly after his Spirit begetting, and having preached Christ in the synagogue at Damascus (Acts 9:20-26), Paul went to Arabia for about three years before continuing with his active ministry. During this period, he probably was studying the features of the divine program and also may have received many revelations. Paul realized the importance of personal study in being able to articulate the Truth to those with a hearing ear. The word of God as contained in the Bible is the source from which true believers derive their strength. It commends itself by providing direction, hope, peace, and understanding to all who are spiritually enlightened and apply its precepts in their lives. The Apostle Paul, describing the power of the Bible, asserts, "All scripture divinely inspired, is profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for that discipline which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work."—II Tim. 3:16,17, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

The foregoing furnishes a lesson which we can apply in our own lives. Those who are teachers in the ecclesia would be well advised to utilize helps such as *Studies in the Scriptures* and other aids advertised in this publication to better understand

truths contained in the Bible. Also, the matter of personal study is not limited to teachers in the ecclesia, but each member of the ecclesia should prepare in advance for class meetings so as to contribute to the mutual edification of all the brethren. “Every joint supplieth” (Eph. 4:16), and each of us should desire to fulfill our responsibility in that connection.

WITNESSING

During Paul’s first missionary tour, after he and Barnabas left Antioch in Pisidia, they traveled to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, where they told the people about Jesus Christ and worked miracles. They had a mixed reception in that some of the hearers accepted the Gospel message, whereas others opposed, persecuted, and even stoned the Apostle Paul. (Acts 14:1-20) This pattern followed Paul throughout his ministry, but he was undaunted and never gave up. “When they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch. Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”—vss. 21,22

Despite the opposition Paul had received in these cities previously, he returned to the brethren to strengthen and establish them by providing further instruction from God’s Word. Additionally, he exhorted the believers to continue in the faith even in the midst of widespread persecution. He reminded them concerning the cost of discipleship, and that it is through much tribulation they would enter

into the kingdom of God, as suffering in the name of Christ would reap a grand reward.

A related lesson for us today is to appreciate the necessity of follow-up work. If any of our witness efforts have uncovered an interest in Bible study, we should seek to nurture that desire by making subsequent contacts, meeting with such individuals one on one if necessary, and supplying any helps that may aid in their understanding and appreciation of the plan of God. We should not become discouraged if they do not progress as quickly as we think they should. Rather, as long as they give evidence of an active interest in the Bible, we should be willing to expend our energies to help them. On another level, too, there are brethren who may be isolated and have limited fellowship because there are no other brethren nearby. We should maintain contact with them via written correspondence, telephone, or visits whenever possible in order that they may be strengthened. Here is an admonition which should ever be kept at the forefront of our mind—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."—I John 3:16

CHRISTIAN UNITY

The unity of the body of Christ is an important theme which the Apostle Paul emphasizes repeatedly as part of his devotion to the people of God. He indicates there is diversity in the body of Christ and that such is in accordance with the Heavenly Father's will, because it is God who sets the members into the body as it pleases him. Paul continues

by indicating that each body member has a certain function and that we should not view any one member as less or more important than another. However, where the mind of Christ is sought and found in each of us, there should be mutual care and concern for each other, and, above all, there is to be no schism in the body.—I Cor. 12:12-27

Paul also addresses the problem of divisions in the ecclesia arrangement. He lovingly exhorts the brethren to be of the same mind and of one accord in Christ Jesus. The brethren at Corinth were exalting the names of men, which was leading to divisions. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”—chap. 1:10-13

This text provides a lesson for us to consider today. The concept of divisions among the people of God should be of concern, especially if there are pressures exerted by any to hinder opportunities for fellowship with other brethren. Loyalty to, and support of one’s local ecclesia should be expected. However, efforts to prevent the exercise of liberty to attend a larger gathering of brethren apart from one’s immediate fellowship, when convenient, would be improper. There are, of course, very

legitimate reasons why a physical separation among the Lord's people may sometimes be necessary. Nevertheless, to the extent that we recognize one another as brethren in the body of Christ, there should be no manifestation of a party spirit. There should be ample room for all who can appreciate the differences between essential and non-essential doctrines to dialogue for mutual edification of one another, even when we do not see identically on minor points. If we create man-made barriers which are not scripturally authorized because of minor differences, that would reflect a party spirit, which is contrary to the doctrine of the unity of the body.

CONSECRATION AND SELF-DENIAL

Paul was an example of devotion and deep consecration. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:1,2) Paul had gone through the process of transformation himself, and would not be conformed to the world and its activities. Rather, he sought to do the will of God. Thus, it required an emptying of self, personal ambition, and gratifying the old creature, while at the same time walking in newness of life.

Paul's experiences and privileges before he became a follower of Christ were no longer of importance to him. "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh

that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” (Phil. 3:4-7) Paul expands further, citing the excellence of the knowledge that he obtained in Christ, for whom he had suffered such loss and counted it as dung, that he might “win Christ.”—vs. 8

What is the lesson provided for us here? Like the Apostle Paul, all of us need to be transformed. This begins when our consecration has been accepted by God. (Rom. 6:3,4) When we surrender our wills to do the will of God, and Christ’s bidding, it will dictate how we spend our time, our talents, what we will say, where we will go, what we will do, and govern our entire being. Carrying out our baptism into Christ’s death represents our renouncing of earthly aims, hopes and ambitions. If we are faithful in this endeavor, not only will we now walk in newness of life, but we will have reason to entertain the following magnificent hope—“As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (I Cor. 15:49,53) What a glorious prospect is ours!

ENDURANCE AND COMFORT

One of the most pointed references to Paul’s devotion to the church is mentioned where he

describes how much he endured for the sake of the brethren. (II Cor. 11:23-28) Paul willingly endured all of these experiences because of his faithful service to, and deep love for, Christ and his body members. The fact that it is recorded in this epistle is evidence that he desired the Lord's followers to know they were not alone in being persecuted and experiencing hardship. These expressions were, in fact, exhortations to faithful endurance. Paul was concerned about the brethren, and wanted them to make their calling and election sure. On another occasion, while in Athens, Paul was desirous of knowing how the believers in Thessalonica were bearing up under persecution. He sent Timothy to establish, comfort, and encourage them in the faith. He reminded them in his letter that he had predicted their afflictions. When Timothy returned to Paul and declared their faith and love were strong, Paul rejoiced and was comforted.—I Thess. 3:1-8

This also is a lesson which we can apply in our own lives. We might inquire as to how desirous are we that our brethren who are experiencing affliction remain steadfast. Sometimes it has been suggested in non-third world countries the brethren do not suffer very much. To some degree that may be true as respects organized opposition to the Truth. However, brethren may experience trials because of their stand for righteousness on the job or even from family members who are not supportive of the Truth. Many times we learn of brethren who are undergoing serious physical ailments, and yet they express a sense of acquiescence and thankfulness that they have been able to learn something from the experience while still striving to serve

God. In other instances, we may hear of brethren who have different special needs throughout the world, and we need to determine whether or not we are doing anything in the way of trying to comfort and assist them. We should be encouraged when we hear of the brethren's determination to be steadfast in the Lord despite adversity. We should communicate in helpful ways to our brethren that will encourage them towards making their calling and election sure, as Paul did, instead of being too busy with other matters. Our diligence in doing these things gives evidence that the spirit of Christ dwells within us.

DISCERNING AND DOING GOD'S WILL

Paul's steadfastness in putting his personal preferences aside and seeking divine approval enabled him to be a blessing to the brethren in the Early Church and provides a model of submission to the will of God. "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."—Acts 16:6-10

From the foregoing narrative, we learn that although Paul had planned to go into Asia, he was

providentially hindered from traveling in that direction, and subsequently in a dream he was led to travel to Macedonia. As a result of doing so, Lydia and her household accepted the Gospel message and the church at Phillipi was established. We also remember the subsequent experience of Paul and Silas being beaten, put in prison, and the earthquake which released everyone's bonds—but because the prisoners did not flee, the jailer and his household also accepted Christ.—vss. 22-34

On another occasion, Paul received an indication that it was the Lord's will for him to go to Jerusalem as he expressed to the elders at Ephesus. Subsequently, while in Caesarea, a prophet named Agabus indicated that the Jews in Jerusalem would bind Paul and turn him over to the Gentiles. This concern expressed for his safety did not deter Paul from carrying out his conviction that it was God's will for him to travel wherever he perceived he should go in the service of the Lord.

As an apostle, God sometimes may have used special providences, or the Holy Spirit, to convey his will to Paul. His going to Macedonia, as mentioned earlier, as well as his going to Jerusalem on this occasion were not done simply based upon his personal preferences. Rather, the Lord impressed upon Paul's consciousness the direction he should take. He then acted accordingly despite any seeming difficulties on the surface connected with following such a course. Earlier in his ministry, Paul prayed three times to have his thorn in the flesh removed. However, it was the Father's will for him to endure it so that he might learn the sufficiency of heavenly grace to provide for his

needs, even though he may have believed he would be better able to serve God without his thorn.—II Cor. 12:7-10

Here we can take a lesson for ourselves concerning how to determine God's will. We are not to expect visions or special revelations if we come to a fork in the road. In such experiences we should pause and pray about the matter, examine the Bible to see if any scriptural principles are involved, consider providential circumstances, and perhaps even consult with other brethren who might be able to furnish wise counsel. After completing such a process, we may still be faced with making a decision one way or other, but should use our consecrated judgment at that point, relying upon the promise that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—Rom. 8:28

SERVICE UNDER RESTRAINT

Paul was taken into protective custody in Jerusalem after the city was cast into tumult resulting from the false charge that he had brought a Gentile (Trophimus) into the Temple. After hearings before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, he began a journey which ultimately brought him to Rome, based upon his desire to appeal his case before Caesar. (Acts 28:16-31) He was placed under house arrest for two years. Although the Scriptures do not so directly state, it is widely believed that after this interval his case came before Nero and he was acquitted, released, and at some future time was brought to Rome a second time, imprisoned and ultimately beheaded. His two years of house arrest were most

productive in that he had many visitors, and he expounded the Word of God to all who came. It is believed that he also wrote the epistles to Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon during this two-year period of house arrest. Paul also wrote his second epistle to Timothy from Rome, probably shortly before his death. The contents of these letters contain invaluable instruction to assist us in walking the narrow way.

An important lesson from Paul's experiences in Rome is that a change in our circumstances does not necessarily mean that we should become inactive, even though we may have to find different ways of serving the Lord's cause. For those who are physically able but isolated, personal study, corresponding with other brethren, and witness activities through advertisements, tracts, or other means are all profitable forms of service in addition to speaking the Truth to others as opportunity may be presented. For those who are aging or physically unable to do much, perhaps they might only be able to listen to convention recordings, receive visitors, or be an example of steadfastness, enduring cheerfully under adversity, and above all, remembering the brethren in prayer. As long as we have our faculties, we can always pray for one another. Judging from the response of those who have in the past requested an interest in prayers on their behalf, they have received grace and strength. We are responsible only for doing what we can, and if there are limited opportunities for rendering extensive service, the Lord will reward us for our faithful efforts, no matter how seemingly insignificant they may appear to us.

Paul's ministry exemplified a life of faithfulness to the Heavenly Father. He showed loving devotion to the brethren in the areas of personal study, witnessing, encouraging unity of the Spirit, consecration and self-denial, endurance and comfort in affliction, discerning and doing God's will, plus service under restraint. Through his example there are many illustrations and lessons which we might apply in our own lives as well. May his recorded legacy serve to inspire each one of us towards faithfulness even until the very end, and thus receive the promised crown of righteousness.—II Tim. 4:7,8 ■

“Whom having not seen, ye love; . . . yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable.”—I Peter 1:8

Quite a good many who bear the name of Christ have a hope toward God as respects the future, but very little of the joys of his salvation in the present time. Such are not living up to their privileges. They have not properly grown up into Christ, their living Head. They need to increase their faith by adding to it fortitude, knowledge, patience, godliness, love of the brethren, and love in general. As they thus comply with the terms of the school of Christ, they will more and more be able to say not only that the Lord has lifted their feet from the horrible pit of sin and death and placed them upon the Rock Jesus Christ but also to add, “He hath put a new song in my mouth, even the lovingkindness of our God.”

—Songs in the Night, June 4

Australia Trip Report

IT WAS A BLESSING and privilege for Brother Kent Humphreys to travel to Australia in January and February of this year and attend the Anglesea Convention, as well as to visit with the brethren in various parts of the country. We are pleased to have him provide this report to readers of *The Dawn*.

My journey began at the Los Angeles International Airport with Air Pacific Air. The flight was fifteen hours—a long flight. I arrived in Australia at the International Airport in Sydney, and from there flew to Melbourne. I was welcomed at the Melbourne Airport by Bro. Ray and Sr. Sue Charlton. Seeing their faces was a welcome sight after such a long journey. I was also very glad to know that Bro. David Rice was also to serve at the Anglesea Convention. We then drove to the home of the senior Bro. and Sr. Kopczyk, their son Bro. Adam and grandson James.

After a night of rest, Bro. Ray and Sr. Sue, Bro. Adam, Bro. David Rice and I began our drive to the convention site. On the way, Bro. Adam wanted to stop at a preserve, and show us some of Australia's

indigenous animals. It was wonderful to see where many kangaroos and birds live—animals we are not accustomed to seeing in America. From there we continued our journey to the convention site at Anglesea. The Lord provided absolutely beautiful weather the entire trip, for which everyone rejoiced. Brethren arrived from many parts of Australia. Some even flew their own planes from the western side of Australia to Anglesea. It was a wonderful blessing to meet with brethren from so far away, who hold to the same hope as we.

THE ANGLESEA CONVENTION

Everyone pitched in and began setup for the convention. The attendance at the convention was just under 100. The program began with an opening address by Bro. Adam Kopczyk. The talks that followed were very edifying. On the second day of convention, one particular talk which was very interesting was given by Bro. David Rice on the Book of Daniel. In the afternoon, there was a group Bible study with questions on Psalm 105, verses 1-5, followed by a second group study on Psalm 105, verses 6-15. These studies were very helpful, and most of the brethren in attendance participated.

On the next day of the convention, Sunday, the talks were equally wonderful. Two seemed to be especially instructive. Bro. Emanuel Svoboda, a renowned eye specialist from Australia, gave a talk titled “Double Vision,” and Bro. Regis Liberda, from France, spoke on the subject, “Cyrus, the Lord’s Anointed.” Sunday ended with a discourse by Bro. Graeme Smith of Australia. The time spent at the Anglesea Convention was one of wonderful

fellowship and spiritual uplift from all the messages given.

BRETHREN IN MELBOURNE

The following day we traveled back to the Melbourne area, as lodging arrangements had been made for me to stay with Bro. Joe and Sr. Eva Czapla. I had wonderful fellowship with them and their three sons, and was even able to go shopping with Sr. Eva at a Polish market, as she was making ready for the barbeque scheduled by the Polish class for the weekend. That weekend, the class met in a lovely park, and everyone brought food for all. We had several studies at the park, staying there until after it was dark. Then everyone departed to their various homes to make ready for the meeting the following day.

On Sunday, February 3rd, the Polish class had scheduled a mini-convention so the visiting speakers could give discourses. This was a lovely day, and I was able to meet brethren who did not have the privilege to go to Anglesea. In a similar fashion as the International Convention, they provided headphones and translators for those who did not speak English. At this gathering I especially enjoyed a discourse by Bro. Regis Liberda from France. This being a Polish convention, there were many desserts provided during all the breaks between meetings. All were very delicious. The meetings lasted into the afternoon, after which everyone began to depart for their various homes.

After the mini-convention, Bro. David Walczak and his wife invited a small group to their home for supper. When Bro. Ray and I arrived there, the

small group had turned into 30-35, with a full meal and more delicious desserts. Wonderful studies were then led by the convention speakers. A special surprise was the fact that Bro. Adam Kopczyk lives next door to Bro. David, so I went to visit Bro. Adam's wife, Margaret. She is not able to get out much, and I had a wonderful visit with her.

ISOLATED BRETHREN VISITED

That evening I returned to Bro. and Sr. Czapla's house for rest and to be ready for the coming week. The next morning I left for the east coast of Australia with Bro. Charlton to do some sightseeing and to visit isolated brethren. I began to realize how big Australia is, as we drove and drove into many remote and isolated areas, in order to find the brethren.

Our first stop was at the Wiltshire farm to visit with Sr. Anna and Noel Wiltshire. They are lovely brethren who live on about eighty acres with horses and various other animals. Sr. Anna's maiden name was Grudzien. Noel is a very knowledgeable horseman as he has traveled to several countries in a rodeo circuit. We had a wonderful visit with them, as we discussed the Scriptures and gave them encouragement.

The next day we traveled to another area of the countryside to visit with some more isolated brethren. We visited with Bro. Richard and Sr. Lynn Tazzyman, who left the Jehovah's Witnesses several years ago, and have since been shunned by friends and family. We had a wonderful visit and Scripture study with them. They seldom get out, so they were happy to have the company of like-minded

brethren in the truth. Both Bro. Ray and I encouraged them to contact more of the brethren as circumstances permit. The time arrived when we had to leave. They wanted us to remain with them for more time, but sadly our travel plans would not permit us to stay longer. We said our goodbyes and continued on our journey.

Our next destination, down the coast, was Canberra, home of Bro. Graeme and Sr. Dawn Smith. Canberra is the capital city of Australia. We arrived at their home to welcome arms, and a hot cup of coffee. Bro. Graeme and Bro. Ray are responsible for the publication of the "People's Paper," a truth publication that has been in print from the days just after Bro. Russell's death. Several days were spent with the Smiths. In our first evening there, we engaged in a Bible study on the Book of Hebrews, which went on for several hours. The following day we went on a tour of the city of Canberra, including a stop at Australia's Parliament building, which has a grass roof where sheep can graze. While there we were allowed to sit in the balcony and watch the Parliament proceedings for a short time.

SYDNEY—OUR FINAL STOP

The next day I was to leave for Sydney. It was difficult leaving Bro. and Sr. Smith, as they are such dear brethren. We had our parting prayer and then headed for Sydney. The class in Sydney is very small, with about six brethren, but they make up for size with tremendous zeal. I had a wonderful time with them, and gave a discourse, discussing the Genesis account from various perspectives. Bro. Ray's daughter and son-in-law attended, and

they asked many wonderful questions concerning the flood and the resulting change of dispensations.

Parting is always sad, but the time had come to leave for the Sidney International Airport for my return back to the States and my home in Arizona. The time spent in Australia with our very dear brethren and in their beautiful country will forever remain in my memory as one of extreme fondness. As the plane lifted off I strained to view, one last time, the country “down under.” ■

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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 Martha Dvorak, Waterbury, CT—April 22.
Age, 93

Sister Aleine McCasland, Waterbury, CT—April
29. Age, 74

Sister Barbara Millin, Los Angeles, CA—May 10.
Age, 82

Brother Jérôme Gruhn, Mulhouse, France—May
13. Age, 84

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

FREE BOOKLETS

DawnBible: I got a copy of your book called *Hope*, and was surprised to know that I could get free copies for distribution to grieving individuals.

Thank you for such a great ministry.—NY

GREAT WORK

DawnBible: Thanks for the great work you're doing for our returned Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I got a copy of *The Dawn* from a brother and it really edified me. I therefore request you, if possible, to connect me to brethren over there who can help me with more literature concerning the truth of God's Word.

Thank you very much in advance. May the Almighty Jehovah bless the work of your hands.—Uganda

MAKING SENSE

DawnBible: I found Volume 4 (*Studies in the Scriptures*) in a thrift store and began to read it. It makes total sense to me and I could not put it down.

I showed some points in it to a friend and he was amazed, so I ordered two sets, one for myself and one for my friend. I can't wait to read the others!—PA

STUDY ON HEBREWS

DawnBible: I was looking for a study lesson on the Book of Hebrews, and your website came up. It's truly a blessing. I never knew there was so much information on the book, and that you can really understand it.

May God truly bless you and your ministry.—NC

GREAT TREASURE

DawnBible: I have read several articles from this site and found them as a 'great treasure' of knowledge.

Those had given me more details and help to understand God's plan and his Word to my little knowledge.—FL

THE GOOD NEWS

DawnBible: I tell you that, based on what I've read

online, the Dawn Bible Students Association's teachings are good and I will make sure that I do my best to enable the good news to reach as many people as I can.—Cameroon

“WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?”

DawnBible: I do give God all the praise for this opportunity to find the Bible Students.

The article “What is in Your Hand?” (*The Dawn*, February 2013 issue) is a real lesson if not a challenge today for most people to discover. May you be blessed.—Uganda

GOD’S PLAN IN ISRAEL

Dear Dawn: The booklet, *Israel in History and Prophecy*, has been a blessing. Now I know so much more about God’s chosen people and his plan through Israel. Thanks and God bless.—unknown

RECORDED LECTURES

DawnBible: I wanted to thank you for your website. My wife and I are only able to meet with a class two times monthly.

On the Sundays we are not able to go, we get up early, discuss the Manna text and then listen to one of the recorded lectures from your website. Thanks!—FL

SPANISH DAWN

DawnBible: I am writing to say how much I love the *El Alba* magazine in Spanish. I get it in my home a year now and it gets more interesting all the time.

Thank you brethren who are translating and doing all that work.—Spain

PRAYING FOR TRUTH

DawnBible: I’m now studying with Jehovah’s Witness, but not satisfied, and confused with what they taught. So I tried to find out the truth of God’s will. I prayed God. Today by accident I found this website and am very interested.—Thailand

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

DawnBible: Today is the first time I see *The Dawn* magazine. I want to read the daily devotionals. I think it is a blessing in my life. May God bless your ministry.—India ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

K. Fernets

Toronto, ON June 23
Prince Albert, SK 29-July 1

J. Freer

Kensworth, England June 1
Evesham 2
Lydney 3
Kempsey 4
Chesham 7,8
West Wickham 9
Lamorlaye, France 14

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

E. Blicharz

St. Petersburg, FL June 9

R. Charlton

Prince Albert, SK June 29-July 1

D. Christiansen

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

O. B. Elbert

Prince Albert, SK June 29-July 1

B. Keith

Portland, OR June 28-30

T. Krupa

Vancouver, BC June 8,9
Prince Albert, SK 29-July 1

E. Kuenzli

Detroit, MI June 9

B. Montague

Portland, OR June 28-30

H. Montague

Portland, OR June 28-30

P. Mora

Prince Albert, SK June 29-July 1

J. Parkinson

Portland, OR June 28-30

D. Rice

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

B. Siwak

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

T. Thomassen

Portland, OR June 28-30

*"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*

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.

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 2—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA 19047. Contact R. Eldridge. Phone: (215) 949-0652

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 8,9—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Center, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada V4W 3B8. Contact B. A. Smith. Phone: (604) 576-6070 or E-mail: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 28-30—Ramada Inn, 6221 NE 82nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97220. Contact D. Grudzien, 11970 SE Zion Hill Drive, Damascus, OR 97089. Phone: (503) 658-4757 or E-mail: dariusg@acm.org

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, June 29-July 1—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR 1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK, Canada S6V 5P8. Phone: (306) 764-7692 or E-mail: ahsiwak@inet2000.com

EAST SASKATCHEWAN CONVENTION, July 5-7—Sturgis Community Hall, Highway #9, Sturgis, SK, Canada. Contact N. Paley, Box 1522, Canora, SK, Canada S0A 0L0. Phone: (306) 563-5441

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 20-25—University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

NIGERIA MISSION GENERAL CONVENTION, August 24,25—Emmanuel College, Owerri Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. Egbu, #2 Darlington Street Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Phone: 2348033339949 or 2348082146621. E-mail: egbucaje@gmail.com

JACKSON CONVENTION, August 31-September 1—(New Location) Holiday Inn Jackson NW, 2696 Bob McClain Drive, Jackson, MI 49202. Contact V. Lumley, 2531 Ashton Road, Jackson, MI 49203. Phone: (517) 782-7252 or E-mail: lumley@aol.com

NEW YORK CONVENTION, August 31-September 1—Doubletree Hotel Mahwah, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ. Phone: (201) 529-5880. Contact A. Williams. Phone: (718) 261-3053 or E-mail: austin@osnetinc.com

SEATTLE CONVENTION, August 31-September 2—Seabeck Conference Center, 13395 Lagoon Drive NW, Seabeck, WA 98380. Contact L. Flinn, 33020 10 Avenue SW, #S-203, Federal Way, WA 98023. Phone: (253) 838-3822 or E-mail: laurie@flinn.us

COLORADO CONVENTION, September 27-29—Quality Inn Central Denver, 200 W 48th Avenue, Denver, CO 80216. Contact L. Turner. Phone: (303) 809-1957 or E-mail: twink94@comcast.net

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, September 28,29—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Farchione. Phone: (262) 895-4583 or E-mail: debfarchione@aol.com

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, September 29—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91605. Contact: J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 438-1085 or E-mail: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

PITTSBURGH AREA CONVENTION, October 5,6—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact G. Balko. Phone: (724) 771-0139

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 26,27—South Seminole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 831-2098 or E-mail: jkuenzli@cfl.rr.com