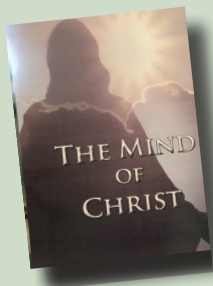




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The DAWN

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

FRANCE: L'Aurore, 39A rue des Bois, 68540 Feldkirch

GERMANY: Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung e. V., Postfach 3, 64396 Modautal

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167 USA

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

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God's Hand in the Affairs of Men

“Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”
—Revelation 15:3,4

IN A WORLD ENGULFED BY trouble and uncertainty many inquire as to whether or not God is really interested in the affairs of men and in their ultimate future. To many it seems that the forces of evil have been too successful, and that the future holds only trouble and disaster. The faith of many has been shaken, both in the Bible and in God, its author.

However, a close examination of the Bible discloses that God has a definite plan for the human race, and that much of it is revealed to those who have committed their ways to the Lord. In Ephesians 1:9-11 we read: “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of

times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

God’s plan, or purpose, is unchangeable, for we read: “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” (Isa. 14:24) Again, God says through the prophet: “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”—Isa. 55:11

What, then, has God been doing since his great creative acts recorded in the book of Genesis? Some would have us believe that he has been trying to convert the world, and that this is the chief mission of Christianity. Let us remember, however, that God never “tries” to do things. Everything is subject to his will, and nothing can interfere with the accomplishment of his plans.

The Bible informs us that for a period of time, which we speak of as the age of the Patriarchs, God placed his favor upon certain individuals and dealt with them in his own peculiar manner. Among these were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God dealt with them by means of a covenant—that through the “seed,” or offspring, of Abraham, all the families of the earth were to be blessed.—Gen. 12:3; 22:16-18

Various nations have employed covenants of law and order to bless their subjects. There was the Magna Carta of England, issued in A.D. 1215, under

King John. In the United States, in 1776, there came the Declaration of Independence, followed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights—the first ten amendments to the Constitution. These have generally been a blessing in that they have served to maintain, at least in some measure, law and order as well as preserve the privileges of liberty and freedom.

In 1945 a good part of the world subscribed to the Charter of the United Nations. At the time, this was referred to by some as “the world’s last hope for peace.” Now, after nearly eight decades of faltering efforts, many doubt if the United Nations has much influence in bringing peace to the earth—that genuine and lasting peace which people so eagerly and sincerely desire.

Across from the United Nations building in New York City, there is inscribed on a stone wall that wonderful prophecy of Micah, “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (Mic. 4:3) This is what nearly all nations desire, but it cannot become a reality by the efforts of fallen human beings. It can be brought about only by the one who has been given the title, “The Prince of Peace.”—Isa. 9:6

The Prince of Peace will establish true and lasting peace in fulfillment of that outstanding declaration made to Abraham by God, when he said to him, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy

name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”—Gen. 12:1-3

After Abraham proved his faith by his willingness to follow God’s instructions and offer his only son Isaac in sacrifice, Jehovah spoke to him again, saying, “Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”—Gen. 22:2,16-18

Abraham died without this promise being fulfilled. However, it was confirmed to his “seed”—his son Isaac—to whom God said: “Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice.”—Gen. 26:3-5

Isaac also died, and still the promise was unfulfilled. However, God again confirmed the promise to his son, Jacob, saying, “Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”—Gen. 28:14

The promise was likewise not fulfilled in Jacob's day. Following his death, God began to deal with his twelve sons, who became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, Jacob's name having been changed to Israel. (Gen. 32:28) Now the Lord's hand was shown in his dealings with a nation—the nation of Israel. Jehovah said to Israel as a nation, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth."—Amos 3:2

God's special favor over Israel lasted more than eighteen centuries. Through Moses he gave them his Law and established his covenant. He sent his prophets to this people to counsel them, and to reprimand them when they were unfaithful to their covenant. When faithful to him, God blessed the Israelites in basket and in store, and gave them victory over their enemies. (Deut. 28:1-9) Under the terms of the Law Covenant the people of Israel were also blessed with an opportunity to gain life. However, this called for full obedience to the Law, which, as members of a sin-cursed and dying race, was beyond their ability.

GOD SENT HIS SON

Near the close of Israel's special period of favor, God's hand was manifest in the greatest event known to man. He sent his beloved Son to redeem mankind from the curse of sin and death. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (Isa. 9:2) Jesus was that "true Light" which eventually will enlighten "every man that cometh into the world."—John 1:9

Jesus confined his message to the nation of Israel. Thus the Israelites were the first to receive the invitation to become his disciples. Jesus said to his apostles, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—Matt. 10:5-7

Only a small minority of the Israelites accepted Jesus, and after his resurrection he instructed his disciples to be his witnesses throughout all the earth. (Acts 1:8) The purpose of this world-wide witness, however, has not been to convert everyone to be followers in Jesus’ footsteps, but, as stated by James, God desired to take out from the world “a people for his name” to be associated with Jesus in his future work of blessing mankind.—Acts 15:14

The “way” in which these are invited to walk is not an easy one. Jesus said that those who would be his disciples would have to deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow him. (Matt. 16:24) This means suffering and dying with Jesus. Not many in the ensuing two thousand years since Jesus’ earthly ministry have been willing to pursue this course of self-denial and suffering. Hence, Jesus refers to these as a “little flock” to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom.—Luke 12:32

A HIGH REWARD

To the rich young ruler Jesus said that if he would give up all and follow him he would have “treasure in heaven.” (Matt. 19:21; Luke 18:18,22) One of these treasures will be the divine nature.

(II Pet. 1:4) Those who are faithful will receive “glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) They are also to reign with Christ—Rev. 20:4

The Apostle Paul informs us that Jesus and his true followers of the present age, Christ’s “body” members, are in reality the “seed” God promised to Abraham, the seed that was to bless all the families of the earth. (Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) The purpose of the thousand-year reign of Christ is to bestow God’s promised blessings of life upon the people of all nations who then accept the provision of life made for them through the sacrificial death of Jesus, and who obey the laws of his kingdom.

God’s hand in human affairs throughout the present age has been operating in the selection of this true church of Christ. This work has gone on unknown to the world in general, but gloriously blessed by the Lord. With this work completed, God’s hand will be manifested to the whole world through the agencies of Christ’s kingdom.

The word church—*ekklesia* in the Greek language—means a called out assembly. After this class has been called out from the world, all others will be given an opportunity to hear and obey. James said that then the “residue of men,” and “all the Gentiles” will have an opportunity to “seek after the Lord.” He also explains that “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”—Acts 15:14-18

A NEW DAY

We believe that God’s work of selecting from the world this people to be associate rulers in Christ’s kingdom is nearly complete, which means that the

time for the world's enlightenment and deliverance is near. We are today living in the most important period of the world's history. Little do the people realize as yet that God's hand is being manifested in present world events, even as foretold in the prophecies of the Bible. Darkness still covers the earth, but soon the people will see the dawn of a new day—a day that will be born, as it were, in clouds of trouble.

This new day dawns as a result of the Second Advent of Jesus. The clear testimony of the Bible is that Jesus returns as a glorious divine being, invisible to human eyes, but with all power to direct the affairs of men in keeping with the divine arrangement. Jesus said to his disciples, "Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live."—John 14:19, *English Standard Version*

Jesus' true and faithful followers will be able to see him, because, in the resurrection, they are exalted to the same divine nature which he possesses. John wrote, "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," not as he was, "in the days of his flesh."—I John 3:1-3; Heb. 5:7

During Jesus' earthly ministry nearly twenty centuries ago, his disciples asked him what the signs of his second coming, or presence [Greek: *parousia*], would be. He said that there would then be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall

they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”—Luke 21:25-27

Much of this is symbolic language. The world will “see” Jesus in a “cloud.” A similar thought is expressed in Revelation 1:7. A literal cloud conceals. Here, however, clouds are used to symbolize the trouble and distress described by Jesus. This “tribulation” will eventually help the unbelieving world to “see,” or discern, the hand of God in the affairs of men through the crumbling of their own sinful social order, or world.—Matt. 24:21,22

This is the world over which Satan is “god” and “prince.” (II Cor. 4:4; John 16:11) It is an “evil world.” (Gal. 1:4) It is the destruction of this world that is foretold in the Bible, not the burning up of the literal planet Earth. (I John 2:15-17; Eccles. 1:4) We can rejoice that this present evil world is coming to an end.

Jesus said that the tribulation which was to come upon Satan’s world at the end of the age would be so great that unless the period of distress was shortened all flesh would be destroyed. However, he assured us that this great “time of trouble” would be shortened by Jesus and his true followers, the “elect,” exercising their divine power to intervene in human affairs through the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.—Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:22

Another manifestation of God’s hand in the affairs of men is foretold by the Prophet Daniel. In a reference to the rulers of the earth at the ending portion of the present Christian age, Daniel’s prophecy states, “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall

never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”—Dan. 2:44

Zephaniah 3:8,9, reads, “Wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth [symbolic] shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.”

This is powerful language. It plainly indicates God’s hand in the affairs of men, bringing an end to the world’s current social order, and establishing a new order in which all people will serve the Lord “with one consent.” We rejoice that the complete fulfillment of the prophecy is so near; that soon, through Christ and his resurrected true church, God will turn a pure message of truth to the people, causing the knowledge of his glory to fill the earth, “as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14

Centuries before Jesus came to Earth at his First Advent, the Prophet Isaiah foretold: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth

even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

This prophecy began to be fulfilled with the birth of Jesus, but its preview of the Messianic kingdom in the hands of Jesus has not yet been realized. However, we are now living in “the day of his preparation” for the coming glorious age of peace and righteousness. (Nah. 2:3,4) We know that when the new world government is firmly established on the “shoulder” of The Prince of Peace, all the present perplexing problems of mankind will be solved. Then, after so many long centuries, the nations will not learn war any more.

The distressing problem of sickness and death will then be solved also, for Jesus will be the world’s “everlasting Father”—that is, the one who will give everlasting life. Paul wrote that Christ will reign until all enemies are put under his feet, and that the last enemy to be destroyed is death. (I Cor. 15:25,26) It is difficult to imagine a world in which there will be no sickness, no pain, no tears, no death. However, Jesus’ death as the Redeemer of mankind from sin and death, provided for just such blessings, and they will be available to the people through the agencies of his kingdom.—Isa. 25:6-9; 33:24; Rev. 21:2-5

The Apostle Peter explained that during the Messianic kingdom there will be “times of restitution of all things,” and added that this glorious time of blessing had been foretold by the mouth of all God’s holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:20,21) Restitution means restoration, and among the things to be restored to mankind are health and life.

This will include all those who have previously died and “sleep” in their graves. (John 11:11-14; I Thess. 4:13,14) The Bible uses the phrase “a ransom for all” to describe Jesus’ work of redemption, and Isaiah wrote that “the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” —I Tim. 2:3-6; Isa. 35:10

Then all will know the true God, “from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD.” —Jer. 31:34 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MARCH 2—“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, ... think on these things.”—Philippians 4:8 (Z. ’03-9 Hymn 130)

MARCH 9—“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”—Hebrews 6:10 (Z. ’03-59 Hymn 261)

MARCH 16—“We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren ... and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”—I John 3:14,16 (Z. ’99-88 Hymn 154)

MARCH 23—“Ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.”—Hebrews 10:32,33 (Z. ’03-40 Hymn 13)

MARCH 30—“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.”—II Peter 3:11 (Z. ’96-33 Hymn 143A)

The Prodigal Son

Key Verse: *“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”*

—**Luke 15:24**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 15:11-32

THIS PARABLE SPEAKS

mainly about the younger of two sons, but it is evident that the elder brother’s reaction to the father’s decision plays an important role at the conclusion of this narrative. In relating this scenario, Jesus indicated a certain man of means

gave an inheritance to the younger sibling who went his own way and engaged in riotous living, wasting all he had been given.—**Luke 15:11-16**

In his miserable condition, the prodigal finally began to realize his rebellious attitude and lack of gratitude for the abundant provision that he had previously enjoyed at home. He then resolved to repent, seek mercy by returning to his father, and petitioning that he might serve as a hired hand.—**vss. 17-19**

Although he was still far from home, his father seeing him in the distance, ran to greet and receive him with a loving embrace. Furthermore, his servants were directed to outfit the prodigal with the finest of robes, put a ring on his finger, place sandals on his feet and celebrate his return with a feast. (**vss. 20-23**) Our Key Verse illustrates the great joy the father experienced in having his wayward son reconciled to him.

The elder son, hearing the festivities, became wroth since he had not gone astray, yet was never honored as

was his brother who had sowed his wild oats before returning home. His father acknowledged that fact, but also said it was appropriate to receive his lost son back into the fold. This did little, however, to assuage the anger of the older brother.—vss. 25-32

In this parable, the father is a fitting picture of Jehovah, our exalted Creator, just as the elder son might depict the scribes and Pharisees who outwardly appeared to keep the Mosaic Law. The younger son could represent the common people during Jesus' ministry who were not so religiously strict as to their ideals. As members of the nation of Israel, they had perhaps wasted their opportunities for godly service because of self-gratification and were now desiring to seek Jehovah. It was to just such characters that Christ gave encouragement by saying "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. 11:28

Some among this latter group returned to God and were abundantly pardoned and granted special manifestations of divine favor through the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. However, the Jewish religious leaders as a whole failed to embrace the hope of the high calling thus losing the privilege, as prospective members of the body of Christ, of being instrumental in helping to bless all the families of mankind.—Luke 12:32; 13:28

How grandly the father's welcome describes the love of God! The best robe and the other attentions given to the repentant one well illustrate the provision the Heavenly Father has made through Christ for all who return from the ways of sin. The robe and all the blessings are provided as a covering for the imperfections of the fallen nature. The fatted calf represents the bountiful feast which God has provided for the penitent class. In his kingdom "shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things ... full of marrow."—Isa. 25:6-8; 55:1,2

■

The Greatest in the Kingdom

Key Verse:
*“Whosoever
therefore shall
humble himself as
this little child, the
same is greatest in
the kingdom of
heaven.”*
—Matthew 18:4

Selected Scriptures:
Matthew 18:1-6;
Mark 10:13-16

THE DISCIPLES ASKED

Jesus who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. On more than one occasion he observed them discussing this question in quite a heated manner. Two of them, in fact, had made a special request of him to have the privilege of being especially honored by sitting on the right and left hand of his throne. It was quite difficult for the disciples to understand that

they needed to eliminate this ambitious desire. However, as a result of the Holy Spirit's influence following Pentecost, they at last began to understand their need for humility.—Matt. 18:1-3; Mark 10:35-37

Our Key Verse affirms the necessity for humility as an essential character attribute for all who will be exalted to a position in the heavenly kingdom. Christian humility, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, implies having a sober evaluation of one's abilities, not thinking too highly or too lowly of ourselves. (Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:3-5) Pride, on the other hand, is the opposite of humility and was originally manifested by Lucifer, causing his fall.—Isa. 14:12-14; Prov. 16:18

Humility, in light of both Old and New Testament scriptures, is a necessity of the believer's faith. The best example of humility is Jesus, who described himself as "meek and lowly in heart," and who "made himself of no reputation."—Matt. 11:29; Phil. 2:7,8

Christ set the standard of humble service when he washed the feet of his disciples, declaring "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." (John 13:14,15) Thus, putting on humility implies a readiness to serve. If, like Jesus, we humble ourselves before God, we will be exalted in the future with a crown of glory that will last forever.

The principle of humility must be manifested by all who would be fit to serve in God's kingdom. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."—I Cor. 1:26-29

Those who perform good deeds from a proper motive will be remembered by the Lord during the resurrection and receive earthly blessings proportionally as they make progress on the highway of holiness. (Matt. 25:34-40; Isa. 35:8-10) Devoted followers of Christ in this life, however, go beyond doing good. They engage in self-denial, sacrifice, and service faithfully unto death, that they may attain the hope of receiving a heavenly resurrection to divine life. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. ... Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."—I Pet. 5:4-6 ■

Jesus Talks with a Samaritan

Key Verse: *“Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.”*
—John 4:39

Selected Scripture:
John 4:1-30, 39-42

DURING HIS EARTHLY ministry, Jesus had informed his followers not to carry the Gospel message to the Gentiles nor to any city of the Samaritans. They were not of pure Israelitish stock and therefore not fully conformed to all the laws and customs of the Jews.—Matt. 10:5,6

On one occasion, while traveling from Judea through Samaria, the Master was in need of refreshment. He encountered a woman in the city of Sychar and asked her for water while his disciples journeyed onward to purchase food. Since our Lord was a Jew, the woman was perplexed as to why he had requested a drink from a Samaritan. Christ then informed her that he had water which, if partaken of, would lead to everlasting life.—John 4:6-15

As their conversation continued the Samaritan woman perceived that Jesus was a prophet. This was because he informed her that she had cohabited with several men and that the one she was presently living with was not her husband. Additionally, their discussion evolved into a consideration as to the meaning of

worshipping the Heavenly Father “in spirit and in truth.” This implies deep reverence for holiness which would be pleasing to him, as opposed to merely perfunctory acts of prayer, praise and thanksgiving. True worship of God should consume us as a lifestyle.—vss. 16-24

Our Key Verse demonstrates that a number of the Samaritans recognized that they were not satisfied in their hearts with what they knew about God as well as their relationship with him. This was evidenced by the woman’s compelling testimony and desire to learn more about Jesus.

All of the events described in this lesson occurred prior to our Lord having paid the ransom for all. Thus, the door of opportunity was not yet open for his consecrated followers to have the hope of reigning with him during the Messianic kingdom, when the human family will come to worship God in spirit and in truth.

The Heavenly Father is not dealing directly with mankind at this time, but is seeking a bride for his Son, Jesus Christ. May we faithfully proclaim the good news of God’s kingdom as the antidote for all that is wrong in this world. “And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.”—Isa. 6: 9-11

Let us use every available opportunity to give a word of comfort to all as we have opportunity. “Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”—I Cor. 9:16 ■

Jesus Overpowers an Unclean Spirit

***Key Verse: “He departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.”
—Mark 5:20***

***Selected Scriptures:
Mark 5:1-20; Luke
8:26-39***

AFTER JESUS AND HIS disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee, they entered the land of the Gadarenes. There they encountered a man who was possessed of an unclean spirit. It had such control over him that he had to live among the tombs. Additionally, he had often been bound with fetters and chains, but due to the demon possession no one could overpower him. Seeing the Lord from afar, the unclean spirit,

speaking through this tormented individual’s lips, inquired, “What have I to do with thee, Jesus?”—Mark 5:1-7

Our Lord then directed the unclean spirit named Legion—for there were many—to depart from the afflicted individual thus affording him relief. There was a herd of swine numbering about two thousand nearby. The demons possessing the man requested of Jesus that they might not be sent away, but that they might be allowed to remain in that country. They then asked permission to enter the swine, which the Lord granted. Possessed by the demons, the swine ran violently down a steep embankment into the sea, and drowned.—vss. 8-13

The keepers of the herd and others who observed this

scenario, were fearful because of what they had witnessed, and asked Jesus to depart. It appeared they were more interested in what had happened to the evil spirits and the herd of swine than the fact this poor man, who previously had a useless life, was now in his right mind. Jesus shared the Gospel message with him and encouraged him to tell his experience to his family and friends.—vss. 14-19

Our Key Verse implies that this man who was now healed became active in proclaiming to others the marvelous work that the Master had wrought in him. This evidently has been recorded for us as an admonition to tell the good tidings to all as we have opportunity concerning the blessings that will occur for humanity during God's kingdom.

While it would not be true that all mankind are possessed of devils because of sin, fallen humanity is unsound mentally to a greater or lesser degree. Paul corroborates this thought. He says of those who have accepted Christ and have received of his Spirit, the new mind, that they have "the spirit ... of a sound mind." (II Tim. 1:7) He thus implies that previously they did not have a sound mind, and that the world in general does not presently have a sound mind.

Of Jehovah, the great Physician, the psalmist wrote, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."—Ps. 103:3-5

Through the redeeming love of God, iniquity will be forgiven, and ultimately all will be made whole as a result of our Redeemer's faithfulness in sacrificing his life as a ransom for all. (I Tim. 2:5,6) How thankful we should be for the Heavenly Father's perfect plan that will result in peace, joy, and healing for intelligent beings who honor and reverence him. ■

Cleansing— Inward and Outward

*“Having therefore
these promises,
dearly beloved, let
us cleanse
ourselves from all
filthiness of the
flesh and spirit,
perfecting holiness
in the fear of God.”*
—II Corinthians 7:1

OUR OPENING TEXT IS part of Paul’s second letter to the church at Corinth. During the present age, there is a test of faith for this special class whom the Lord is selecting and whom he designates as his “church.” (Eph. 5:23-32) God purposes to deal with the remainder of mankind in the age to come, when all his requirements will be made plain to everyone, and all people will have the opportunity to walk in the “way of holiness.”—Isa. 11:9; 35:8,9; Jer. 31:34

As Christians, presently walking in the “narrow way” of sacrifice and service, it is not enough that we merely have faith in Christ’s death as the redemptive price for the sins of the world. (Matt. 7:14; John 1:29) In addition, numerous scriptures

indicate that a love for “righteousness” is made a part of our testing.—Matt. 5:6,10,20; 6:33; Rom. 6:13-19; Phil. 1:11

LOVE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The heart that loves righteousness discerns the weaknesses and downward tendencies of its own flesh. Those having such a heart recognize their need for Jesus as their Redeemer. They flee to him, not only to be covered with his merit as respects the sins of the past, but also to have the imputed covering of his righteousness for the unwilling blemishes and imperfections of the present and future—imperfections which are contrary to one’s will and the result of inherited weakness.—I John 1:7-10

Those not in harmony with the sin of the world, nor with their own weaknesses, are those to whom our Lord referred when he said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,”—that is, who recognize their bondage under the yoke of sin —“and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.” (Matt. 11:28,29) These learners, pupils in the school of Christ, are the class to whom the words of our opening verse are addressed.

The standard for acceptance by God is faith and obedience of heart. Those whose hearts, minds, and wills turn away from sin and by faith accept the divine arrangement, the Lord is pleased to receive according to their righteous intentions, and not according to their flesh and its unintentional blemishes. Their unwilling defects according to the flesh are veiled from his sight by Christ’s “robe of righteousness,” covering them, while their new mind,

despising sin, seeks to war a good warfare against it in their flesh. (Isa. 61:10; Rom. 7:18-25) Such is the class addressed by the apostle in our text, saying, "Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

As a mouthpiece of the Lord, the apostle addresses all believers who have fled away from sin and who are striving to be pleasing and acceptable to God, as "dearly beloved." Paul, a noble-minded man himself, appreciated the fact that many of these beloved brethren had weaknesses and imperfections in their flesh. He did not love them on account of these blemishes, but in spite of them. He recognized that at heart they were loyal to the principles of righteousness and striving to overcome sin and its inclinations in their own mortal flesh.

NECESSITY FOR CLEANSING

Why does the apostle suggest that all the prospective members of the church should do a cleansing work in their hearts and flesh, when God has wholly covered these blemishes from his sight? (Rom. 3:20-26) Actually, there are many good reasons.

Those who, at heart, are loyal to the Lord and his righteousness are distressed by the blemishes, sins, and weaknesses they find in their flesh, even though they are aware that God has graciously covered all these and is not imputing guilt to them. (Rom. 4:3-10,13-25) Because they are opposed to sin, the desire of this class is to build and establish their character by faithfulness to principles of righteousness. They wish that their minds may be ruled more and more by faithfulness to the Lord and that, so far as possible, their new mind shall

control their fallen, imperfect flesh and bring it into subjection, in accord with the divine law of love.—I Cor. 9:27

Whoever, after having experienced the Lord's blessing of forgiveness, has no desire to war a warfare against sin, and to bring under the control of their new mind the powers and talents of their mortal body, has not the true spirit of sonship. Such would be giving evidence that they do not genuinely love righteousness and do not truly hate iniquity. Hence, they would be testifying that they are not of the class whom God desires as members of his divine family.

Thus, we see good reasons why all begotten by the same Spirit of holiness should give heed to the apostle's words and make the cleansing of the flesh and spirit the principal work of the remainder of life. If we do not do this, then we will contradict our claims of having love for righteousness and hatred of iniquity.—Heb. 1:9

By such a fight against the weaknesses of our flesh and spirit, the Lord arranges that we are enabled to establish a crystallized character. The Apostle states, "Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." (Col. 1:12, *New King James Version*) If faithful in this fight until death, such will then be qualified for future service in the Messianic kingdom. They will have demonstrated that, at heart, they have the character-likeness of their Lord and Redeemer. Only those who develop into copies of God's dear Son will constitute this special class, through whom the world will shortly receive its blessings.

CLEANSING OURSELVES

The words, "Let us cleanse ourselves," do not have reference to our getting rid of Adamic condemnation. Such cleansing from original sin is impossible on our part, as the Apostle elsewhere explains. (Rom. 5:15-18) After having been reckonedly cleansed by the Lord and brought under the influence of his Holy Spirit and the enlightenment of his Word, we are to "cleanse ourselves" in the sense that we are then invited to show our zeal for righteousness. While Adamic condemnation is counted as having passed from us, we still have the opportunity of showing the Lord what our spirit and intention is by striving against sin in our thoughts, words and actions.

At first, many of us likely did not discern how deeply defiled we are and how nearly all the suggestions of our mind are based upon selfishness, to one degree or another. Perhaps we did not even recognize selfishness as being a sin. However, as the eyes of our understanding opened more widely, we gained a better view of the Lord and his righteousness, as well as of our own fallen condition and our need of his covering robe. As a result, we become more painfully aware of how deep the stain of sin in us is.

Many of the Lord's people, after years of labor in seeking to cleanse themselves from the defilements of sin, see their own blemishes even more keenly than they discerned them at first, though they have likely gotten rid of much in the way of sinful tendencies and habits. Such greater awareness might make the work of cleansing seem discouraging to us, if it were not for the assurance of the

Lord's Word that he regards us, not according to the flesh, but according to our intentions, desires and endeavors.—I Sam. 16:7; Ps. 103:8-14

OUTWARD AND INWARD CLEANSING

The Apostle Paul mentions both the cleansing of the flesh and that of the spirit. After we have accepted the Lord, we take our stand with him as the Captain of our Salvation, who helps us in the fight against sin and all the works of our flesh. Before long, in the case of many, a considerable outward change is manifested. Careless language is avoided, passions are restrained, and selfishness is curbed, at least in its outward manifestations.

This is good, but it is not sufficient that we merely avoid outward wrongdoing. We must also cleanse our mind. We must learn to hate sin and to repel its first advances. We must learn that our minds and bodies are the temples of God and that everything contrary to his laws of righteousness and love must be barred.—I Cor. 3:16,17

Others may witness, to a certain extent, our trials and triumphs of an outward kind. However, our most important battle is the one known only to ourselves and to the Heavenly Father—the battle of our new mind and will against the influences of our old, fallen disposition. The true soldiers of the cross will find this battleground quite sufficient to engage all of their combativeness and keep them fully occupied. Such ones, on the alert to develop their character, will no longer want to spend their consecrated time criticizing neighbors, friends or brethren. They will find enough in themselves requiring vigilance and restraint.

On the contrary, as they progress in this direction, they become more sympathetic toward others who similarly have weaknesses and inclinations contrary to the divine standard. They sympathize especially with their brethren, who likewise have given their all to the Lord and are also battling against the world, the flesh, and the Adversary.

A GRADUAL TRANSFORMATION

Those who have already come into relationship with the Father as children should remember that God's promises are that we shall be more and more received into his fellowship in proportion as we are loyal to his principles. If we have turned away from the world and from sin and find that we have certain contaminations in our flesh, we should seek to put all these away. The more we energize ourselves in this direction, the more we will be pleasing and acceptable in his sight.

The word "spirit" is frequently used in the Scriptures to represent the mind or the will. The Lord's children have this new will, this new treasure, in an "earthen vessel." (II Cor. 4:7) We have a natural, fallen disposition that tends toward sin. Additionally, we have minds that, even though striving to put away the things of sin, have more or less of a recollection of these. Thus, while we draw ourselves away from that which is sinful, we must strive also to purify our minds. (I John 3:2,3) We are to "put off" everything in us that is sympathetic with sin. We are not to think on those things, nor are we to permit ourselves to ponder anything sinful. Instead, we are to set our minds, our "affection," on things above.—Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:2-10

The Apostle admonishes, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.” (Rom. 12:2) Our minds are not only to be turned away from sin, but are to be renewed, or turned in a new direction, and filled with holy thoughts. Thus, we are enabled, as Paul continues, to examine and “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

OUR CLEANSING AND GOD’S CLEANSING

The cleansing of ourselves includes examining to see whether there is anything in us that is impure and putting those things away from our conduct, and still more importantly, putting it away from our minds. As we do this, holiness spreads through all the avenues of life. If, as Christians, such is taking place, it shows that we are properly attending to the matter of our cleansing. Therefore, let us daily give attention to purification in our outward relationship to mankind, and, inwardly, in our relationship toward God.

A scripture which speaks of God as participating in this cleansing work is found in the Psalms. “Cleanse thou me from secret faults.” (Ps. 19:12-14) These words of the Prophet David are the sentiment of all of the Lord’s true people. David showed his recognition of the fact that he was not capable of cleansing himself without God’s help. He saw that he might even have “secret faults” which he did not recognize. He desired God to cleanse him from these, thus indicating his desire to get away from everything that was not in harmony with righteousness.

This is the proper sentiment for all Christians. We should pray that God would show us whatever in

our lives is not fully pleasing and acceptable to him, and that he would help us to see ourselves as he sees us.

PERFECTING HOLINESS

Our opening scripture declares that such a purification of flesh and spirit, body and mind, constitutes a “perfecting” of “holiness.” Holiness cannot be attained in a moment, but rather it must be gradually developed. A right view of this matter will hinder us from falling into dangerous thinking. Holiness is not a charm which we may put in our pockets, nor a garment which may be worn occasionally.

Holiness resembles more the tempering of a piece of metal. It enters into our entire character, changing its general characteristics. It is transforming in its influence. Indeed, there is a “robe of righteousness” which is reckoned to the Lord’s people, granted to us when first we turned from sin, accepted the Redeemer, and consecrated ourselves to God; but this is just the beginning. We must work into our characters that which we have willed. As the Apostle expresses it, we must allow the Lord to work in us his holy will, so that holy conduct is brought to pass as opportunity and conditions are overruled by our Heavenly Father.

“THESE PROMISES”

Examining the context to see what “these promises” are which Paul refers to in our text, we find in the preceding verses this declaration. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye

shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”—II Cor. 6:17,18

What a marvelous promise that we, by nature defiled and imperfect, should not only have the notice of our almighty Creator, but also be invited to become his “sons and daughters.” We are assured of his parental affection for us, “like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear [Hebrew: reverence] him.”—Ps. 103:13

Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul declares that this is not the end of the matter, but merely the beginning. He states, “If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” This is the thought implied in the terms “sons of God” and “children” of God—Rom. 8:14-17

The special blessings and riches of the Father are to be extended through our Lord Jesus, to the “little flock” which is now being selected from amongst mankind to be his “bride” and associates in the kingdom. (Luke 12:32; II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:2,9) The Apostle John writes, “Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” If we are faithful, however, John continues, saying, “We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—I John 3:2

“ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD”

Paul writes, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.” *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) (Rom. 8:28,29) Here we are assured of God's supervision, that not the slightest thing can happen to those who have accepted the heavenly calling now, except what he sees would be for our eternal welfare.

However, we must show our love, devotion, and oneness of spirit with the Father and the Redeemer before we can be counted in as his bride in the full, complete sense, and be granted a share in his glory. It is to demonstrate the possession of these graces that the consecrated ones are developed in the midst of evil and unfavorable surroundings, to prove their love of righteousness, their opposition to iniquity, and their love for God and faithfulness to him. (I Pet. 2:19-23) If they stand these tests faithfully, it will mean that they will have to endure considerable opposition from the world, the flesh and the Adversary, but they will be correspondingly strengthened by these experiences.

To this class Paul writes, "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (II Tim. 2:11,12) We are to suffer as Jesus did, for right doing even when others are blind as to what is the right, proper course. We are to suffer joyfully whatever cup the Father may pour for us, knowing that he is too good to be unkind and too wise to err.

Let us then, dearly beloved, cleanse ourselves from all outward and inward defilements, and continue to strive to perfect, or complete, holiness in the reverence of the Lord. As Peter declares, "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
—II Pet. 1:10,11 ■

Joseph and Fruit Bearing

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel).”
—Genesis 49:22-24

Gen. 2:17; Rev. 22:2,14) We also read of the palm

THE SCRIPTURES FRE-quently refer to things of nature as illustrations of spiritual truths. For our encouragement, let our thoughts for a while be among the trees and boughs, the wells and springs which are so often seen to be the emblems of spiritual life and growth. The psalmist speaks of a righteous man as “a tree planted by the rivers of water.” Jesus said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” Genesis speaks of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” John the Revelator speaks of “the tree of life,” and of those having a right to its fruit. (Ps. 1:3; John 15:5;

tree; the cedars of Lebanon; the olive and fig trees, and many others which are used in the Scriptures as symbols of various characteristics of individuals and nations.

JACOB'S BLESSINGS

Jacob, at the end of his days, called for his sons, that before his death he might confer blessings upon them and give them certain warnings. Through his long experience he had closely observed the peculiar and varying characteristics of his family, which, of course, is quite natural for parents to do. He was probably able to determine measurably the course each would take in life, and consequently the results which would follow the fruitage of their lives.

Jacob's strong faith and hope in the promises of God would encourage him to anticipate their fulfillment in, and upon, his twelve sons. He sought to confer his blessings and counsel upon them as indicated by Jehovah's guidance. Thus he encouraged them to look for the fulfillment of those treasured promises made to him, and to his father and grandfather, Isaac and Abraham, that through their "seed" all the nations of the earth would be blessed.—Gen. 12:2,3; 22:18

Undoubtedly the spirit of prophecy was also with Jacob, enabling him to make such statements of his sons as recorded in Genesis chapter 49, which years afterward were fulfilled in the various tribes of Israel, though the complete fulfillment of the greatest promise to Father Abraham is yet future. Of Joseph, Jacob declared he was a "fruitful bough"—fruitful in the faith, in confidence of his God, and in the divine promises to the fathers. Joseph was

truly a fruitful bough in the family tree and in his services to them as well as in his office as ruler of Egypt under Pharaoh.

PROPERLY RIPENED FRUIT

The glory of a fruit-bearing tree is its seasonable fruit, ripened according to its proper time. Fruit artificially ripened is not long-keeping. Fruit ripened out of season is often less appealing and tasteless. Such is like us if we seek to produce fruitage of character acceptable to God by our own will, power, and control. Fruitage acceptable to God is the outgrowth of submission to his will. It is he who is working in us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” by discipline and through our sincerity. Only thus can we become “filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”—Phil. 2:13; 1:11

Joseph, throughout his life, manifested a pleasing disposition, generally favorable to all. Tactful, uncomplaining under the most trying experiences, he seems to have borne much fruit in his contact and service to, and for, others. Perhaps we also would be strengthened in such privileges if we observed more closely Joseph’s example, as expressed in Paul’s exhortation, “Be instant in season, [and] out of season,” in our zeal and love for the Lord and his kingdom.—II Tim. 4:2

Joseph was fruitful in his character and deportment in the prison life with the baker, butler, and jailer, and he was quickly raised to authority above the other prisoners. (Gen. 39:21-23; 40:1-23) When imprisoned he might have been justifiably sour or indignant, but he retained sweetness and helpfulness

to those about him. Think of Joseph's integrity, honor, and humility when accosted by Potiphar's wife, and his response to her: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9) If we could think of our omissions and commissions as against God rather than against ourselves or others, what a power for overcoming temptation! No one "liveth to himself," and the influence of Joseph's life has been a torch of light and life to others.—Rom. 14:7,8

Jesus said, for our benefit and encouragement, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16) Our Lord also confirmed the need of consistency of character in righteousness. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."—Matt. 7:16-20

ELEMENTS NECESSARY FOR GOOD FRUITS

Three elements play important roles with regard to successful fruit bearing. First, the condition of the tree and its source of life and nutriment; second, the elements, such as sun, rain, wind and temperature; third, sufficient time for fruitage development. All who accept the life of faith find similar necessary steps in their development. First, there is one's heart condition before God, the source of spiritual food to give and sustain faith; second, the varied experiences

and elements of daily life; and third, patient waiting, trusting, confidence and perseverance.

Joseph was a fruitful bough, or branch, “by a well,” our text says. Another reason for the fruitfulness of a tree and its boughs is the position of its roots. The roots symbolize our faith, “grounded in love.” (Eph. 3:17) Where faith is firmly rooted in the Word of God, and in Christ, growth, foliage, and fruit are certain. A living faith in the Word of God, based on love, is a wellspring of life.—John 4:14

The resources and power of mighty seas and oceans feed the wellsprings of the earth. Joseph drew his sustaining power, his encouragement in enduring faith and comfort, from one mightier than oceans. We likewise receive our spiritual sustenance and the life-giving water of Truth from our glorified and all-powerful Lord. How true his statement: “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”—John 6:63

As a fruitful bough, Joseph would appreciate that the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and his father Jacob, were for future fulfillment, and accordingly he would treasure them. He would perceive something of the extent to which these promises would reach to all the families of the earth, outside and beyond the Israelites. Joseph would muse over, and meditate upon, their outworking upon nations and men. They would satisfy his mind and heart and would be to him a glorious hope of life and prosperity, and their fulfillment he would continually seek to visualize. All this is implied in his request that his bones be taken out of Egypt upon his death to the land promised to Abraham and his father Jacob. (Gen. 50:25; Heb. 11:22) Indeed, Joseph is included

in the apostle's remarks: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."—Heb. 11:13

The meditation of Joseph on the promises of God is substantiated by his remarks to his brethren when disclosing to them that he was their brother whom they sold into the hands of the Ishmaelites. He said, "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." (Gen. 45:5) Such an assertion could come only from a heart strongly convinced of God's overruling providence and a faith firmly rooted in, and grasping tenaciously, the divine promises. Thus we are reminded that our faith must be firmly embedded in Christ Jesus and sustained by the Word of God—the water of Truth—and so take the same stand of righteousness by faith as did Joseph. All our experiences should thus be viewed from the divine perspective.

BRANCHES OVER THE WALL

Joseph was a fruitful bough, "whose branches run over the wall," suggesting unlimited growth. Imagine a fruit tree by a well with roots reaching down into its bed. A well gets its water not from the surface only; it does not depend entirely on rain. Its main resources are from underground streams. Only a fruit tree with such a bountiful supply of water can spread its branches over and down a wall, and thus produce fruitage in great abundance.

Symbolically speaking, Joseph lived daily by a wellspring, which to him was life indeed. He could

say, like the psalmist, “All my springs are in thee.” (Ps. 87:7) Joseph’s constant faith, manifested in so many of his experiences, beautifully illustrates for us our spiritual life and growth as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. Only as we abide in him by faith, and in meditation on his Word and life, can we grow spiritually and produce the abundant fruitage our Heavenly Father desires to find in us. Such fruit will honor him, as Jesus disclosed to his disciples, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”—John 15:1-8

INTERNAL GROWTH

A tree’s growth is first internal, then external. Let us ever remember that our life as New Creatures in Christ is first that of the heart, the will, and the intention. The Scriptures say, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” (Rom. 10:10) Justifying faith is more than an outward conviction of truth. James wrote: “The devils also believe, and tremble.” (James 2:19) Rather, justifying faith is an operation of the heart, from which emanates one’s affections and motivations.

That faith which assures one of righteousness; that brings conviction that a covenant has been agreed upon; and that gives a deep sense of peace and rest as well as fellowship with God, is an operation of one’s heart. The Apostle Paul says, “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 14:17) The apostle’s enumeration of the fruits of the Spirit, though encompassing the need for outward action in word and deed, begins internally with the heart development of the qualities of “love,

joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”—Gal. 5:22,23

THE LIFE OF FAITH

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” the apostle says. (Rom. 10:17) Having received God’s Word into “hearing ears,” and the mind assenting to its verity and reasonableness, the heart then imbibes these truths so that they become part of our innermost affections. The life of faith is far more than a mere acceptance of doctrine which we consider scriptural and therefore true. It is the assimilation of that which we have learned and proven, so that its principles become our guideposts, and its promises become our inspiration. By this process, then, we are enabled to “live by faith.”—Heb. 10:38

It is manifest in the Scriptures that fruitage acceptable to God emanates from Christ Jesus, his word and his example. The Apostle John said, “Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”—I John 2:5,6

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Growth in spiritual qualities and traits can only be produced by wholehearted submission and obedience to God. Through the Lord’s grace and by the influence of the Holy Spirit, begotten within, we are transformed and renewed in the spirit of our minds. (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23) It is those righteous virtues, which are the product of the Holy Spirit working within us, that will enable us to manifest the fruitage that God is looking for in us as followers

of his dear Son—fruitful branches of the true vine. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. . . . And above all these things put on charity,” or love.—Col. 3:12-14

Fruitage of character is developed amid the trials and sometimes opposition of daily life, especially so as the roots of faith and hope are well embedded in the wellspring, Christ and his Word. We can discern this being worked out in the various particulars of life. For example, think of Jesus’ statement, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matt. 5:5) Who are the meek? Where is meekness seen? When is there opportunity for manifesting meekness? Such opportunities come chiefly in circumstances of difficulty or perhaps provocation. There is little cause for developing meekness if the will is never challenged, or where there are none of the jars and collisions of daily life. There can be little manifestation of meekness without a greater or lesser degree of opposition in some form.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matt. 5:7) Here we see that mercy is not merely goodness or forgiveness, but it is goodness in the face of our own weaknesses and the need for mercy ourselves. God is longsuffering and of great mercy, “abundant in goodness and truth, . . . forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” (Exod. 34:6,7) “Be ye therefore merciful,” says Jesus, “as your Father also is merciful.”—Luke 6:36

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:3) This implies the emptying of conceit with regard to our own strength,

goodness and wisdom. It is to feel that apart from God's grace we are nothing, and to humbly realize that even with our best resolves we will likely come up short due to the weaknesses of our fallen flesh. The Apostle Paul confessed, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."—Rom. 7:18

This is the grace—"poor in spirit"—that Jesus mentions first in his Sermon on the Mount. It lays at the foundation of all other graces and is matured and confirmed as we meet the difficulties and challenges of our daily life with an overcoming spirit. The apostle says, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."—Rom. 8:36,37

How important it is, then, to continually heed the apostle's exhortation: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."—Eph. 6:10-13

FRUITAGE IN CHRIST

Reminding ourselves again of our opening verses, Joseph was truly an example of faith, and a fruitful bough in all his experiences through life. He was a fruitful bough by a well, whose fruit-bearing branches ran over the wall, radiating light and truth to others. The archers, his enemies, sorely

grieved him, shot at him, and hated him; but his bow and his arms of service were made strong by the hands of the almighty God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.—Gen. 49:22-24

The objective of our quest is fruitage in Christ. It is not merely the blossoms of profession or confession that we are his. It begins with faith in his redeeming sacrifice on our behalf, and sincerity of devotion fostered by an honest heart. It continues with a desire to be like him in all his virtues, character qualities and examples of loving service to those around him.

Jesus was ever seeking to make these matters clear to his disciples; to earnest inquirers such as Nicodemus; to the rich young ruler; even to the scribes and Pharisees—to all within hearing of his words of life. To Nicodemus he said, “Ye must be born again.” (John 3:3-8) To the young man running to him and saying, What must I do? Jesus said that if he was sincere in his inquiry, he should sell his goods, give to the poor, and then “follow me.” (Matt. 19:16-21) To the Pharisees he said, “Render ... unto God the things that are God’s.”—Matt. 22:21

Let us remember that life is more than meat, more than nutriment for the body, and more than raiment. The vessel containing life, the “inner man”—the heart, motives and will—is to be cherished more than outward adornment or show. (Matt. 6:25; Eph. 3:16) Thus may we “labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” (John 6:27) “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”—John 15:8 ■

Remembered by the Lord

“They rose up in the morning early, and worshiped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.”
—*I Samuel 1:19*

AMONG THE PEOPLE WHO went up to worship and sacrifice every year at Shiloh, where the tabernacle was located in the days of Eli, a priest of Israel, there was a family from Ramah. This family consisted of Elkanah, his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah, and the children of the latter.

Only the males were bound to go up to the great feasts. (Exod. 23:17) However, Elkanah took his whole family. This was not as difficult in his case as in some others, for his home was only about fifteen miles distant from Shiloh. Perhaps there were others who lived just as close to Shiloh as Elkanah, but who did not trouble to take their whole families to the house of the Lord. It requires something more than nearness to draw some together for worship, praise, and service. Let none of us be easily satisfied with doing as little as we can.

As consecrated children of God, our present position is represented by the Holy compartment of the Tabernacle. Truly has it been said that there were no rocking chairs in the Holy. The Bible says that we are not to be slothful in the Lord's business, but "fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." (Rom. 12:11) Thus will we be following in the steps of him of whom it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."—Ps. 69:9

HANNAH AND PENINNAH

All the family went up together but, as is always unfortunate, this was not a united family. We know why. Plural marriages were not uncommon at that time. It is evident that Elkanah and Hannah were of one mind in their worship of God, and of one mind in their affection for each other. Concerning Peninnah, we know nothing of her and her children, except as revealed by her conduct, to which we shall refer presently.

One of that family went up to Shiloh with a heavy heart. She had a longing desire which was unsatisfied. Hannah, the first and beloved wife of Elkanah, had no child. (I Sam. 1:2) It has been suggested that this was the reason Elkanah took Peninnah as his second wife. Although Peninnah bore him children, Hannah continued to be his most beloved. This was manifested at the time of making the offerings to God. When Elkanah offered, "he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters; but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah."—I Sam. 1:4,5, *New American Standard Bible*

Apparently this aroused the anger and jealousy of Peninnah. She taunted Hannah with her barrenness. Verses 6 and 7 state that Hannah's "adversary," a reference to Peninnah, "provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she [Peninnah] provoked her [Hannah]." The jealous and cruel taunts of Peninnah show very plainly her character and disposition.

Peninnah's taunts came upon a sore and sorrowful heart. These provocations must have been hard to bear, but we read of no angry retort by Hannah. Appropriately, the name Hannah in Hebrew means "grace." All that is said of her is, "She wept, and did not eat." (vs. 7) That was the effect upon Hannah. If she had shown a different spirit she might have missed a double blessing. She might have missed the loving comfort of her husband, and she might have also missed the precious gift of God which would soon be given to her—the birth of a son.

HANNAH'S CHARACTER

How filled with lessons is the record of Hannah's behavior! Although reviled, she reviled not again. Those who seek to right themselves when injured; those who spend consecrated time in an endeavor to justify themselves; those who revile when reviled—these are not eligible for the blessings which God bestows upon the meek.—I Cor. 4:11-13; 6:9-11; I Pet. 2:21-23

Elkanah spoke words of comfort to Hannah. He could not turn the heart of Peninnah to her, nor

could he give Hannah the blessing for which she longed. He could, and did, however, show his love for her. “Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?” (I Sam. 1:8) Perhaps in our longing desire for blessings which are not ours, we are apt to overlook those we do have. As we read in Psalm 103:2: “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” Even in our lowest state we can always find something for which to thank the Heavenly Father.

Concerning Hannah we read: “And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.” (I Sam. 1:10) Some may have been near Hannah, but she was alone in spirit. There, in her earnest desire, she made a vow to the Lord. “And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.”—vs. 11

From Numbers 8:23-25, we learn that the Levites were bound to serve the Lord in the service of the Tabernacle from the age of twenty-five to fifty. Similarly, in Numbers 6:1-21, those who took a Nazarite vow would normally do so for a limited period called “days of separation.” Hannah, however, vowed that her child would be given to the Lord “all the days of his life.”

ELI'S MISTAKEN REBUKE

Hannah prayed silently, but her lips moved as she framed the words. Apparently she was long in prayer, pleading earnestly again and again. This drew the attention of Eli the priest. He saw her lips move, but heard no voice. As this went on for some time, Eli thought Hannah was intoxicated, and he rebuked her sharply: "And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee."—I Sam. 1:12-14

Some possibly would have keenly resented such a charge. There are those who cannot bear to be reprov'd, even for a fault, much less for no fault. It was not so with Hannah. She doubtless was pained by such an accusation, but she felt no anger. In meekness and humility she replied to Eli from the depths of her heart. "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint [Hebrew: meditation] and grief have I spoken hitherto."—vss. 15,16

Realizing his mistake, Eli answered Hannah very kindly, using the words of verse 17: "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." Did Eli know what that petition was? The record does not tell us. However, it may well be that Hannah explained to Eli her desire for a son, though not specifically

stated in the narrative. As a priest of Israel, Eli spoke as the mouthpiece of God. Hannah seems to have received his words as assurance from God, for we read in verse 18: "Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." Hannah went away filled with a new and joyful hope, no longer refusing to eat, and no longer wearing a sad look.

REMEMBERED BY THE LORD

Now we come to our opening text, verse 19, the closing words of which are: "The LORD remembered her." This precious phrase is one of those many evidences we have of the glorious truth of Isaiah 57:15: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Was not this Hannah's experience? Were not her spirit and heart revived? God will continue to dwell with those whose hearts are wholly given to him; those who have made a vow, a covenant with him by sacrifice; those who are endeavoring to walk in the steps of the Master, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. (Ps. 50:5; Rev. 14:4) Indeed, Jesus said of these, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. 18:10

In this connection we are reminded of another Scripture: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of

her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.” (Isa. 49:15,16) The evidence that the Lord did remember Hannah was that in due time she gave birth to a son. She gave him a name which expressed her gratitude to God, the name Samuel, which means, “in God’s name,” or “heard of God.”—I Sam. 1:19,20

HANNAH’S THANKFULNESS

Hannah was not like some who forget to give thanks when the blessing comes. How sad are those two questions asked by Jesus, concerning the one leper only who returned with thanks. “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?” (Luke 17:17) Hannah asked God for a son. When the request was granted, she expressed her thankfulness in the name Samuel. How we need to continually remind ourselves of those words in I Thesalonians 5:18: “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

God can do much with a thankful heart. He can do nothing, or very little, with an unthankful heart. In II Timothy 3:2, we are told that people would become “unthankful, unholy.” Indeed, a decrease in holiness will follow a lack of thankfulness as surely as night follows day. Contrariwise, if we are thankful, then we will be kept holy, because our hearts are entirely for the Lord.

KEEPING A SOLEMN VOW

Hannah had done something more than ask for a son. In addition, she had, by a solemn vow, dedicated him to the Lord. It would perhaps be relatively easy to do this while she was childless. When the

child was born, and that fond tie had been formed which only a mother's heart can fully know, would she then part with him? Would she regret the vow she had made? Would she be tempted to draw back from it? No, the vow had been made; it would be kept without any reservations or adjustments. It was not a rash vow that Hannah had made. Although she was of a sorrowful spirit and troubled in mind, yet her vow was a solemn declaration.

We are reminded here of Psalm 66:13,14, which seems to fit accurately Hannah's experience: "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows, Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble." The child had been dedicated to God, and hard as the parting might be, the vow would be kept.

What shall we say to these things written for our learning? What lesson is conveyed to us by Hannah, who kept her vow faithfully? The Bible says, "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."—Eccles. 5:4,5

We read in Hebrews 10:38: "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Jesus expressed it thus: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62) Whatever else he is fit for, he is not fit for the heavenly kingdom promised to those who overcome as Jesus overcame. (Rev. 3:21) The psalmist wrote, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the

LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.”—Ps. 116:12-14

SAMUEL’S UPBRINGING

Samuel, from his birth, was given to God. However, an infant can do no acceptable or intelligent service. Hannah therefore kept her son until she had weaned him. Until that time she did not go up to the house of the Lord. Elkanah went and all his house, but not Hannah. (I Sam. 1:21,22) Here again we find Elkanah and Hannah of one mind. Her vow was also his vow. To what Hannah purposed to do, he gave his full consent. Elkanah said to her, “Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word.”—vs. 23

After Samuel was weaned, the time for parting came. One of the great yearly feasts came around, and Hannah went up with Elkanah and took the child with her. The record states, “She took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh.” (vs. 24) There was no holding back in their offering. Seeing that they were giving up their only child, they might have excused themselves from any other offering. On the contrary, they made the presentation of their only child to God the occasion for a thank offering. May we have such an attitude in paying of our vows to the Lord!

CHEERFULLY GIVEN

Truly does the Bible say, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” (II Cor. 9:7) We are reminded here of those words of the hymn concerning Jesus, in whose steps we are privileged to follow: “I’ve found a friend; O! such a friend! He gave his life to save me;

And not alone the gift of life, But his own self he gave me.” For three and a half years Jesus laid down his life, pouring out his soul unto death. He is our perfect example.

“They slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.” (I Sam. 1:25) Some time had passed since Hannah was there, and Eli did not seem to recognize her. So Hannah introduced herself: “Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD.” (vs. 26) Perhaps when Hannah thus spoke, Eli remembered—remembered her prayer, remembered his mistake; remembered his words of blessing to her.

Hannah continued: “For this boy I prayed, and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him. So I have also dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD.”—vss. 27,28, *NASB*

Filled with thankfulness, and speaking under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Hannah gave utterance to her feelings in a prayer and psalm of thanksgiving recorded in I Samuel 2:1-10. Elkanah and Hannah returned to their home at Ramah, leaving young Samuel with Eli. “Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.” (vs. 18) Being a loving mother, Hannah never forgot her young son Samuel. She “made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.”—vs. 19

A SPECIAL BLESSING

When they parted from their child, Samuel’s parents received a special blessing from the aged

priest. We read that Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, “May the LORD give you children from this woman in place of the one she dedicated to the LORD. And they went to their own home.” —I Sam. 2:20, *NASB*

Eli’s words were fulfilled, for we read in verse 21: “And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters.” So they were not left childless. Their firstborn was absent, returned to the Lord, but their home was not empty. What a wonderful example of how God honors those who honor him.—vs. 30

We read no more of Hannah. If she lived to see her firstborn become a courageous prophet, a faithful servant of the Most High, an upholder of the true religion in Israel, it must have been real joy to her. What higher blessing can we desire for ourselves than that our lives be spent in the joyful service of our Heavenly Father? The signs of the times tell us with deafening emphasis that we are living in the closing days of the present Gospel Age. What manner of persons ought we to be—living up to our privileges and discharging faithfully our responsibilities!—II Pet. 3:11-14

Let those who are comparatively young in years rejoice to be used in God’s service. Let those of more mature years bear up bravely and wisely under the heat and burden of the day. Let the more aged pilgrims, leaning upon the staff of God’s Word, press on as beacon lights to others. Let us all—the young, the not so young, and the aged—in full assurance of faith, never doubt that God remembers us. If faithful, we will be able to fully realize this, because in the Bible it is written of Hannah, “The LORD remembered her.” ■

General Convention Bulletin

July 15-20, 2023—Johnstown, Pennsylvania

PLANS ARE CONTINUING to move forward with regard to the 2023 General Convention, which will be held at the familiar facilities of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, on the dates noted above.

Air conditioned rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style air conditioned apartments with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities will be available on campus. A child may sleep on the floor at no charge if both beds are occupied. Despite the current effects of inflation, prices to the brethren for food and lodging have been held to 2017 levels.

All room and meal costs for children 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. In addition, 100% of the room and meal cost of those from ages 13 through 17 will be refunded if the young person attends at least 75% of the studies for his or her age group. This subsidy does not cover meals paid at the door.

In addition to a discourse on the convention theme text, Isaiah 26:3,4, there will be a dialogue which will consider the subject, “Types/Shadows versus Antitypes/Realities.” There will also be a

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707
E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com (407) 670-4189

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 14, 2023				
Saturday, 15th				
Sunday, 16th				
Monday, 17th				
Tuesday, 18th				
Wednesday, 19th				
Thursday, 20th				

Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals ☐
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts) ☐

Check: ☐ private bath **or** ☐ shared bath
☐ double occupancy ☐ single occupancy
☐ interested in APTS

Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)

Address:

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

G. Balko

Orlando, FL March 4-6

R. Charlton

Detroit, MI March 25,26

M. Davis

Orlando, FL March 4-6

R. Goodman

Highland Park, NY March 18

L. Griehs

Detroit, MI March 25,26

S. Jeuck

Detroit, MI March 25,26

M. Kerry

Highland Park, NY March 18

T. Krupa

Orlando, FL March 4-6

T. Malinowski

Orlando, FL March 4-6

N. Seattle, WA 18,19

Detroit, MI 25,26

H. Montague

Orlando, FL March 4-6

Detroit, MI 25,26

M. Nemesh

Detroit, MI March 25,26

J. Parkinson

Detroit, MI March 25,26

2023 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Tuesday, April 4, 2023.

Memorial Services in MP3 format are available for listening or download at:

dawnbible.com/memorial

DVD versions can be ordered free of charge.

Please send your request to:

Dawn Bible Students Association

PO Box 521167

Longwood, FL 32752-1167

Please place your order by March 15.

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, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 4-6—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Holiday Inn Orlando-International Airport, 5750 T.G. Lee Blvd, Orlando, FL 32822. Contact R. Goodman. Phone: (407) 353-5936 or Email: goodmanrw@gmail.com

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, March 18—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 25,26—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact P. Nemesh. Email: nemeshfp@aol.com

KAMPALA, UGANDA CONVENTION, April 1,2—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Jjuuko. Email: eliezer1874@yahoo.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 7-9—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Contact S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

METRO DETROIT CONVENTION, May 6,7—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Milford Senior Center, 1050 Atlantic Street, Milford, MI 48381. Contact B. Johnson. Email: beckystevej@aol.com

HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 7—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—West Hartford Senior Center, 15 Starkel Road, West Hartford, CT. Contact J. Slivinsky. Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

WEST NEWTON CONVENTION, May 7—IN PERSON ONLY—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West

Newton, PA 15089. Contact L. Mlinek. Email: lisa.mlinek@aol.com

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 3—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

PRATO, ITALY CONVENTION, June 3,4—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Hotel Delta Florence. Contact V. Prepelita. Email: prepelita.violeta@gmail.com

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 10,11—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC Canada. Contact B. A. Smith. Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, JUNE 17,18—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Bible Students Retirement Center, 1801 NE 201st Avenue, Fairview, OR 97024. Contact J. Wojcik. Email: janetlwojcik@gmail.com

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.

Brother Andrzej Schab, NY Polish Ecclesia—January 19. Age, 70

Sister Dona Lawrence, Northglenn, CO—January 28. Age, 85

Brother Robert Gorecki, New York, NY—February 1. Age, 84

Brother Erwin Kalinski, Chicago, IL—February 10. Age, 91

Brother Chuks Edward Ogbonna, Onitsha, Nigeria—February 13. Age, 74

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD

—peculiarly “his workmanship”; that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age—ever since Christ became the world’s Redeemer and the chief “corner stone” of this temple, through which, when finished, God’s blessings shall come “to all people”, and they find access to him.—I Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

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

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

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

