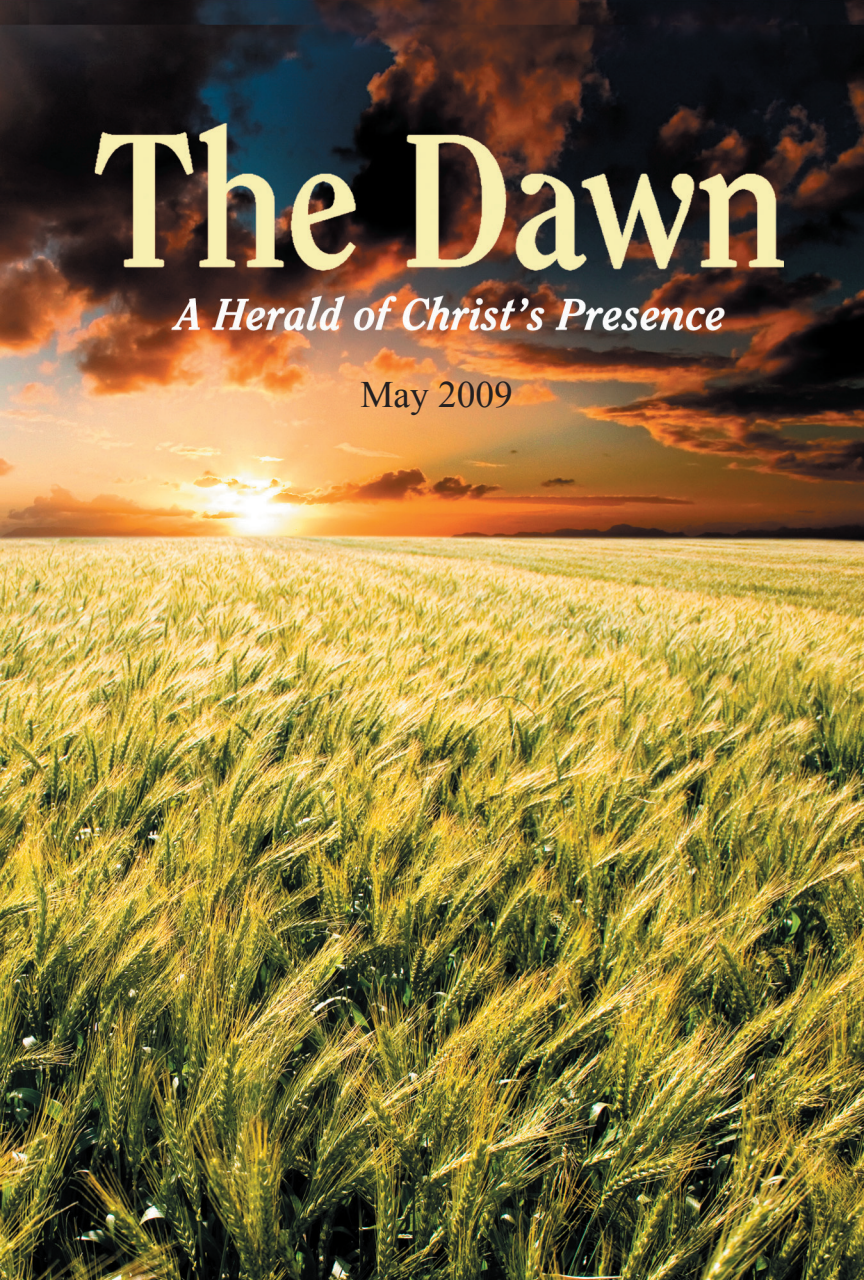


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The DAWN

VOLUME No. LXXVII, Number 5
(USPS 149-380), May 2009

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Second-class postage paid at Rutherford, NJ. Published monthly by The Dawn Bible Students Association, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. \$5.00 a year; Great Britain £2. Write to foreign addresses for other prices.

ARGENTINA: El Alba, Calle Almirante Brown 674, Monte Grande 1842, Buenos Aires

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

BRITISH ISLES: Associated Bible Students, P.O. Box 136, Chesham, Bucks HP5 3EB

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

FRANCE: Aurore, B. Boulrier, 8 rue du Docteur Laennec, 95520, Osny

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

ITALY: Aurora, Via S. Leonardo 21, Ottaviano 80044, Napoli

SOUTH AMERICA: El Alba, Apartado 1390, Trujillo, Peru

SPAIN: El Alba, Via S. Leonardo 21, Ottaviano 80044 Napoli, Italy

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Violence on the United States Border: Mexico's Drug Wars

*“Shut out from the
city shall be the
depraved, the
sorcerers, the
impure, the
murderers and the
idolaters, and
everyone who loves
and practices a
lie!”*

*—Revelation 22:15,
J. B. Phillips
Translation*

THESE PROPHETIC WORDS

were recorded by John the Revelator nearly two thousand years ago, and describe those immoral individuals who will not have obeyed the righteous principles and commandments that will be in place under the administration of Christ's future kingdom of blessing for the world of mankind. They will thus be denied any access to the tree of life, and to experience the joys that will be associated with the glorious ages to come when there shall be no more sin, violence or death.

John writes of these incorrigibles in connection with all evil and all evildoers who will be forever removed from the perfected earth and its people, saying, “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”—Rev. 21:27

A PURE LANGUAGE OF TRUTH

When describing the blessings that will be made available to all of the willingly obedient under the righteous rule of Christ’s future kingdom of life and peace, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “They shall not 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. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.” (Isa. 11:9,10) Another of the Heavenly Father’s prophets said, “Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.”—Zeph 3:9

SORCERERS

Our featured scripture points to many immoralities, but our attention is especially drawn to the word ‘sorcerers’ and the impact they have on those who have been led astray by their godless activity and influence. This word has been translated from the Greek word ‘*farmakeia*’ which is found in the New Testament. *Farmakeia* is the root word from which the English word ‘pharmacy’ has been taken, and it pertains to the preparation of drugs and their use. The word sorcerers was

used by the translators in our featured text because of its close connection to enchantments and other ill effects that may be derived from the use of illegal drugs.

The uncontrolled use of drugs, their distribution and far-reaching association with sorcery and incantations thus have serious implications for the spread of violence and evil. This effect clearly identifies one of the great evils that marks our day, and the closing scenes of the present Gospel Age. The use of illicit drugs in our society has become a serious and growing threat, and has the danger to cause major havoc and distress among those who are affected by it.

PHARMACEUTICAL DRUGS

Pharmaceutical companies produce various medicines and other substances that they make available to the general public. They do this under a patent which then gives them exclusive rights to market their products in a lawful manner. Within a controlled environment medicinal drugs are used by doctors and other health professionals as a means to treat many types of illnesses, or symptoms, of disease. The dispensing of these medicines is usually regulated by the government. Some of these medicinal products may be obtained over the counter from pharmacies without any restrictions. Behind-the-counter drugs are also available without a doctor's prescription, but must be carefully dispensed by a licensed pharmacist. Prescription-type drugs are only available when a doctor or other medical professional has authorized them.

ILLICIT DRUGS

The use of uncontrolled drugs and its trafficking has become a powerful global black market that creates enormous profits for the traffickers. This activity consists in the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of illegal drugs, and it controls an international market. The United States Department of International Narcotics Control Strategy warns that the world's illicit drug trade is destabilizing democratic governments, corroding efforts to protect the environment, and helping organized crime to flourish. The State Department has said recently that the legal, economic, and social institutions of countries around the world are being undermined by this trade and its relationship with crime, corruption, and violence.

United Nations reports estimate that the evils of this illicit drug trade produce more than \$400 billion in revenues every year worldwide. Drug-related violence in South American countries and Mexico is already escalating at unprecedented levels, and is expected to continue even further in the coming years. In its quest for power and control, drug cartels are likely to target top Mexican politicians and law enforcement agents. It is also possible that United States officials may be targeted, according to reports submitted by diplomats and intelligence experts on both sides of the United States and Mexican border.

DRUG CARTELS

This dire warning underscores the difficult choices facing Mexico's current President Felipe Calderon as he attempts to confront the drug

cartels, and while weighing implications of growing casualties and the present slowing down of the economy. The problem reflects the rising concern among United States officials and analysts about the deteriorating security situation along our southern border. They are deeply concerned about the rising corruption among Mexico's top crime fighters, and the vulnerability of the Mexican military toward possible corruption in battling drug-related gangs.

It is already being reported that the uncontrolled violence is crippling cities and whole regions in Mexico. Some of these areas are on the immediate border with Texas and other border states. Top United States officials and analysts describe Ciudad Juarez, which is directly across the border from El Paso, as one of these failed cities, in which powerful drug cartels have taken total control.

MEXICO'S GROWING CONCERN

Frustration among senior United States officials over Mexican corruption is acute, particularly since the arrest of drug czar Noe Ramirez. He is alleged to have been receiving \$500,000 a month from the Arturo Beltran Leyva drug gang in exchange for intelligence gathering. Some of this originated with officials at the United States Embassy. Also, several high-ranking officials and police officers in Mexico have been arrested as part of an anticorruption effort known as Operation Cleanup. Recently, an army officer in Calderon's presidential guard was arrested and accused of selling secrets concerning the movements of his government in connection with the drug cartels. A senior administration official,

speaking on condition of anonymity, described the issue of corruption as being very complicated and very dangerous.

DRASTIC MEASURES REQUIRED

Frustration increases as the United States attempts to expand its role under the Merida Initiative, which is a \$1.4 billion program. This project is aimed at providing Mexico with new technology, training, and military equipment. The effort is designed to assist the Calderon government in battling cartels, and to help the Mexican government gain control of several of its cities, which totals about ten percent of its territory. Assistance may trickle in more slowly, however, as a result of the economic crisis in the United States at the present time. The initiative under the incoming administration of President Barack Obama, may be adjusted to address the issue of United States demand for drugs.

Drug trafficking has the capacity to corrupt, and the violence inflicted by these cartels presents a real threat to public security across America. Americans must either partner themselves more affectively with Mexico and others in the region, or face a far less secure future. Of immediate concern to both Mexican and United States officials is an increasingly skeptical Mexican public, whose support is essential. Although Calderon's strategy has succeeded in disrupting the cartels to some extent, the Mexican people are alarmed that their country's security situation has continued to worsen. Even when a journalist is killed nothing is done about it, and more than half a dozen journalists were slain in 2008.

CIUDAD JUAREZ

The mayor of Ciudad Juarez and some other elected officials have moved to El Paso, Texas in recent months and they then commute to Juarez. They report that in the year just ended there had been hundreds of drug-related killings. Throughout Mexico there have been more than 5,700 criminals, soldiers, police, journalists, and innocent bystanders killed. This figure is more than double the estimated numbers of those who were slain in the previous year.

Philip Heymann, a Harvard law professor and expert on terrorism, has characterized the present and ongoing violence in Mexico as narco-terrorism. He uses this term because of the extreme level of threats and gruesome tactics that are now being used in an effort to silence and intimidate the people, including the beheading of some victims of terror. He is reported as saying that the situation in Mexico is very dangerous for everyone, including the United States. He further points out that the situation hasn't yet registered in the minds of most Americans, but it will when they become the targets.

A news item was published recently in the *Los Angeles Times* (December 20, 2008) that draws attention to the true dimensions and level of violence in Ciudad Juarez. It appeared under the title, "In Ciudad Juarez, Death Is Just Around The Corner." The article was submitted by Ken Ellingwood, a staff writer who was reporting a drive-by shooting in which two people had just been killed in their van. His report suggests the horrific dimensions of violence that has taken place in this border town where more than 1,350 men, women, and children

were killed during the year 2008, and still counting at the time of his writing. The drug trade and fear rule the streets.

AN EVERYDAY OCCURENCE

Ellingwood describes the scene which he had observed in his news report. We quote from the article in part. "Two victims rest at a 45-degree angle, embraced by seat belts that at this moment seem an odd precaution, given the manner of death. Gunmen had pulled alongside the forest-green Chevy Tahoe on a gritty downtown street, and, in broad daylight, pumped 52 shots into where the bodies now lean.

"Is that twelve today?" a young man standing nearby asks. 'Ten,' I answered, meaning that ten people have been slain in Ciudad Juarez so far on this chilly afternoon. It is barely 3:00 in the afternoon. Seven more people will die later, bringing the day's total to seventeen in the city of 1.3 million residents. The young man nods. Around us, amid cut-rate dentists offices and bars, the looky-loos keep their rapt silence as workers from the coroner's office wrestle the newest victims from their car. It is a time of extraordinary violence all over Mexico. Feuding drug-trafficking groups and the federal government's military crackdown against organized crime have left hundreds of people dead this year. Nowhere has the bloodletting been worse than in Ciudad Juarez, a sprawling border city.

THE JUAREZ CARTEL

"The city's main drug-smuggling group, known as the Juarez cartel, is battling with rival traffickers from the northwestern state of Sinaloa for a piece of the lucrative drug trade in to the United

States. The gangland-style violence has left almost no corner of Ciudad Juarez untouched. Drug-related slayings take place in houses, restaurants and bars, at playgrounds and children's parties, and in car-to-car ambushes. The dead, mostly little known foot soldiers but also innocents caught in the crossfire, make up a ceaseless procession of clients for harried coroner's workers and daily fodder for the so-called red pages of local newspapers. In a country that each month finds new ways to scare itself with violence, Ciudad Juarez has become emblematic of how nasty things can get.

"A three-day visit by a pair of (*Los Angeles Times*) journalists to the rough-and-tumble factory town, across the border from El Paso, Texas, reveals a fear-struck place where most residents assume—often correctly—that the police are crooked and the government's control of the streets appears tenuous at best. In the Ciudad Juarez of 2008, you don't have to wait long for the next casualty."

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

In another *Los Angeles Times* news item (January 15, 2009), staff writer Denise Dresser, writing under the title "Nice Won't Do," submitted the following report from which we quote in part. "President-elect Barack Obama and Mexican President Felipe Calderon engaged in a time-honored tradition: at the outset of a new United States administration, the American president meets the Mexican head of state. Obama and Calderon got the chance to speak about the importance of United States-Mexico relations—the diplomatic equivalent of new neighbors meeting over a cup of tea.

“Now it’s time to move beyond etiquette and face hard facts. Mexico is becoming a lawless country. More people died here in drug-related violence last year than were killed in Iraq. The government has been infiltrated by the mafias and drug cartels that it has vowed to combat. Although many believe that Obama’s greatest foreign policy challenges lie in Afghanistan or Iran or the Middle East, they may in fact be found south of the border. Mexico may not be a failed state yet, but it desperately needs to wage a more effective war against organized crime, and it must have the right kind of American help and incentives to succeed.

A DYSFUNCTIONAL DEMOCRACY

“Over the last decade, the surge in drug trafficking and Calderon’s failed efforts to contain it have been symptomatic of what doesn’t work in Mexico’s dysfunctional democracy. In 2007, violence related to the drug trade resulted in more than 2,000 murders in Mexico, and in 2008, the toll was more than 5,000. Only a few months ago, top-level officials in the Public Security Ministry were arrested and charged with protecting members of Mexico’s main drug cartels. Calderon’s promises to clean up the house have not gone far enough. People denounce the war while preserving the type of society that makes it inevitable.

“The Mexican president, who is seeking a stronger strategic relationship with the United States, told Obama that the heightened level of violence was a result of government inefficiency in combating drug cartels. In that view, the rise of street executions is evidence of a firm hand, not an ineffectual

one. But Calderon's self-congratulatory stance masks a president who insists on closing his eyes in the face of deep-rooted problems and complex challenges. The current strategy—based largely on the increased militarization of Mexico—isn't doing enough to end government corruption. Drug traffickers finance politicians, and politicians protect drug traffickers. Judges take bribes, and unregulated financial institutions make it easy to launder money. A weak, ill-trained, underpaid police force is easily infiltrated. And most important, Mexico's economic structure thwarts growth and social mobility, forcing Mexicans to either cross the border for a better life or join the narco-culture.

“Instead of the polite, traditional Mexico-United States meet-and-greet, Obama and Calderon must meet to change the facts on the ground in both nations. They could call it the audacity of moving beyond tea and sympathy.”

PROPHETIC FOREGLEAMS

In the prophetic words of Isaiah, we read about the wonderful change that will come to pass when all of the earth's willingly obedient will have been lifted up to an appreciation and love for their Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus' kingdom of blessing. “The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.”—Isa. 60:14,15

NO MORE VIOLENCE

Under the ruling power of the church of Christ, the prophet writes, “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.” (vs. 18) When the righteous laws of the future kingdom have been established over all the earth, there will be no more evil or evil-doers. “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”—vss. 19,20

THE CITY OF GOD

John the Revelator provides further dimension and beauty to this wonderful scene that describes our Lord’s kingdom of Truth and blessing that will be made available to all the families of the earth. “I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”—Rev. 21:22-24

The sun and moon were symbols used by the Prophet Isaiah to describe the righteous laws of Christ’s kingdom and the true light of the holy temple of God. “The gates of it shall not be shut at

all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.” (vss. 25,26) Sin, and the sentence of death that was pronounced upon our first parents because of disobedience so long ago, will be ended. “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”—vs. 27

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Rev. 22:11,12) All shall be judged by the great judge. “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”(vs. 14) “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—vs. 17

A PREVIEW OF THE KINGDOM

More than a hundred years ago students of the Bible were blessed by the publication of a book entitled, *The Divine Plan of the Ages* in which an inspiring account of the perfected earth and its people is presented. This will occur when the blessings associated with Christ’s future kingdom have accomplished the lifting-up process of all the obedient of mankind from the present scenes of sin, sickness, and death, to that of everlasting life in the world to come.

We quote from pages 191,192, in which the author says, “Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth’s society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realize the resurrection work complete.”

“Shut out from the city shall be the depraved, the sorcerers, the impure, the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices a lie!”—Rev. 22:15, *J. B. Phillips Translation* ■

“The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion.”—Joel 3:16,17

New Family in Christ

Key Verse: *“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”*
—*Ephesians 1:5*

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 1:3-14
world.—Rev. 13:8

TODAY'S LESSON BEGINS

with an expression of thanksgiving and praise to the Heavenly Father for the spiritual blessings which believers receive through Jesus Christ.—Eph. 1:3

Paul then affirms that God's plan for human redemption was conceived even before man was created, through his only begotten Son as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the

Our Key Verse indicates that the saints were predestinated as a class through Jesus Christ to be adopted into God's family as his children. A parallel to this teaching is found elsewhere in scripture. “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom. 8:29) This entire arrangement is an act of grace by God for the accomplishment of his good pleasure.

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.”—Eph. 1:7-9; Col. 1:27

The essence of the mystery is that the Heavenly Father planned for the salvation and blessing of the human family to be accomplished solely by the Savior. However, a class of individuals is now being called from mankind who will be united with Jesus Christ to bless all people during the promised kingdom of God, in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham long ago.—Gen. 12:1-3

“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: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”—Eph. 1:10-12

The foregoing portion addresses the period when God’s eternal purpose will have reached its fulfillment. When all things that offend and every evil doer that does not change his course will be destroyed after Satan shall be bound for one thousand years (Rev. 20:3), paradise shall be restored, and mankind will live in harmony with God and attain everlasting life on the earth. Ultimately, everyone and all things will be under subjection to God.—I Cor. 15:25-28

After receiving the assurance of sonship by accepting the offer of salvation and devoting their lives in consecration to do God’s holy will under all circumstances, believers also are granted the Holy Spirit as a foretaste of their ultimate Divine inheritance to reign with Christ as a member of his body. “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth: . . . in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”(Eph. 1:13,14) How enthusiastic all the saints should be towards faithfully fulfilling their vows of consecration. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10 ■

New Life in Christ

Key Verse: “*By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,*”
—**Ephesians 2:8,**
English Standard Version

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 2:1-10

AS THIS CHAPTER COMMENCES, Paul informs his readers that prior to their conversions they were under Divine condemnation because of their sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. Additionally, they willingly disobeyed God and were under the influence of the Devil.—Eph. 2:1-3

A great change came upon Paul’s hearers because of God’s love and mercy towards them. “God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”—vss. 4-6, *ESV*

This miraculous transforming act of grace will be a theme of eternal revelation throughout all ages. (vs. 7) All intelligent beings will understand and appreciate the great cost to both the Heavenly Father and his Son to effect the restoration of the human family back to earthly perfection, as well as the exalted future heavenly station for the saints who follow the Lord “whithersoever he goeth.”—Rev. 14:4

Our Key Verse negates the idea that mankind can attain salvation by their own efforts. God’s grace or

unmerited favor has been bestowed upon believers who through faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice have been granted sonship. "Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."—Eph. 2:9,10

Thus, if the Christian's standing with God was attained as a result of his own works, there would probably be some room for boasting. However, that would mean the death of Christ was unnecessary and contradictory to scriptural testimony. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."—Rom. 5:12

As New Creatures in Christ, believers should progress in the doing of good works as an outgrowth of their new life in Christ. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit, God works in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13) This would result in a character that produces fruitage.

"Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [love]. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Pet. 1:5-8) The persistent cultivation of these essential virtues will insure that we will be more than overcomers and inherit the kingdom of Christ. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: . . . For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—vss.10, 11

How wonderful it will be for faithful believers to be received with loving embrace by the Master, to assist him in the great work of restoring the human family back into favor with the Heavenly Father.—Matt. 25:23 ■

New Revelation in Christ

Key Verse: *“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”*
—Ephesians 3:8,9

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 3:1-13

THE SPECIAL MINISTRY OF

Paul to believing Gentiles had been manifested earlier to one of God’s servants, Ananias. “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.”—Acts 9:15

Paul describes his stewardship as a dispensation of grace. This permitted him to understand by direct revelation of God that the church would be composed of both converted Jews and Gentiles developed during the Gospel Age, and become part of the Messiah under their Head, Jesus Christ, to bless all the families of the earth. (Eph. 3:1-4) This truth was not made known to the sons of man during Old Testament times, but was now being revealed—“The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.” (Col. 1:26)

“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.”—Eph. 3:6,7

In our Key Verse, Paul’s humility is brought to our attention as he recognizes his own personal unworthiness to have received his great commission, especially in view of the fact that before his conversion he actively persecuted believers. Nevertheless, he repented from his past deeds, accepted forgiveness in Christ and energetically proclaimed the details of God’s hidden plan to provide an opportunity of salvation for all through the sacrifice of his Son as the world’s Redeemer.

As a result of Christ’s faithful sacrifice on our behalf, we now have the privilege of communion and access to God through prayer, making our requests known to him. In view of the great manifestation of the Father’s love and mercy he had received in becoming an instrument in God’s service, Paul exhorted the saints not to become discouraged as they considered his sufferings. He appreciated the privilege of enduring tribulation as he carried out his mission of preaching Christ to the Gentiles.—vss. 12,13

The Master predicted that his faithful servants should expect opposition and persecution, sometimes even unto death. “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.”—John 16:1-3

May we be energized to follow Christ as did Paul, ever strengthened by the promise that the good fight of faith would result in victory not only for the apostle, but also, for all believers who would persevere to the end of their course in the doing of God’s will.—II Tim. 4:7,8 ■

New Life in the Home

Key Verse:
***“Submitting
yourselves one to
another in the fear
of God.”***
—Ephesians 5:21

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 5:21-6:1-4
ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”—Gal. 6:2

OUR KEY VERSE SETS

forth the principle that Christians should have a mutually submissive attitude towards each other as evidence that we reverence God and are obedient to his Word. Paul expresses a similar thought in another passage of scripture, saying, “Bear

Our lesson continues by noting that the fact that believers are one in Christ does not abolish the various earthly relationships that exist within the family structure as set forth by God. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the

church.”—Eph. 5:22-29

This submission typifies the relationship of the church to Christ. Such yielding by the wife is to be done as an act of loving devotion and relates to all things that are prompted by the spirit of holiness, purity, and unselfishness. Husbands properly exercised would note their responsibilities to love, nourish, and protect their wives as Christ has done for the church.

Paul concludes his treatment on this topic by referring to the institution of marriage (Gen. 2:24), and after mentioning the great mystery of God’s eternal purpose in calling out a people to become the body of Christ to bless mankind, he summarizes the relationship that should exist between husbands and wives.—Eph. 5:31-33

Another aspect of family relationship is the responsibility of parents and children to each other. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”—Eph. 6:1-3

As a rule, children reflect the principles which they see manifested in their parents. They are anxious to please, and even as they grow into young adulthood and feel the influence of peer pressure, if parents are consistent, loving, and patient, yet firm in their beliefs, children will generally not stray that far away. It has been suggested that one of the reasons children appear to be so irreverent and disobedient today is because the adult models in their own family are not there for them to imitate.

The responsibility for appropriate Christian parenting is very great. “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (I Tim 5:8) This surely is not limited to providing material blessings, but also includes helping to raise children with a reverence for God. ■

Equipped for New Life

Key Verse:
***“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.”***
—Ephesians 6:13

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 6:10-18

AS THIS EPISTLE DRAWS
to a close, Paul appeals to the saints. The life of a Christian is warfare because the spiritual powers of evil are committed to deter us from faithfully completing our earthly course. Left to our own resources, we surely would fail and, therefore, we need to be strengthened by God’s power—“My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”—Eph. 6:10

“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.”—vss. 11,12

In order for believers to overcome all of the enemies who are conspiring against us, our Key Verse urges that we utilize the complete armor of God for protection against the wiles of the Adversary.

Here is a description of each component part: “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of

the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”—vss. 14-17

“Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (I Pet. 1:13) Not only are we to have the ‘loins’ of our mind strengthened by the precious promises of God’s Truth, but also, we are to have the ‘breastplate of [Christ’s] righteousness’ that provides us with justification securely fastened as our means of protection. Our feet shod with the sandals of peace should assist us in our consecrated walk to overcome the rough pathways of life as we manifest the various graces and fruits of the Spirit.

The ‘shield of faith’ enables us to trust in God’s love and the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice as the means of our ultimate deliverance from this sinful world. The ‘helmet of salvation’ supplies us with an intellectual appreciation of God’s wonderful plan. Finally, the ‘sword of the Spirit’ as reflected in God’s Word may be used as either a defensive or offensive weapon for the advance of Truth or as a protection against error when we rely upon scriptures to furnish a “thus saith the Lord” in support of what we believe and teach.

Although not directly included as part of the Christian’s armor, we should cultivate the habit of communing often with our Heavenly Father that we and all the saints may be sustained in our Christian walk. “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”—Eph. 6:18

It is a source of special comfort and strength to realize that God desires ever to bless his children abundantly. “The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.”—Ps. 84:11,12 ■

Paul Has A Vision

“A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

—Acts 16: 9, New American Standard

Bible

THE DIVINE ORDER AND

ultimate purpose in preaching the Truth and making known the invitation for the heavenly calling is shown by the manner in which the Apostle Paul’s ministry was being directed by our Lord Jesus. This was manifest to the faithful followers of our Lord Jesus whose hearts had been opened to the special

invitation during this present Gospel Age to share as members of the spiritual body of Christ in our Lord’s future kingdom. We will consider some of the remarkable events that were taking place at that time, and that immediately preceded the vision given to Paul.

FORBIDDEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Luke, the historian, was a companion to the apostle. He carefully recorded the unusual circumstances that eventually led to what Paul saw and heard as a result of the Lord’s direct intervention in his ministry. He writes, “They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been

forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.”—Acts 16:6-8, *NASB*

It is apparent from the scriptural account that Paul’s intentions were to preach the message of Christ to as many prospective brethren in Asia Minor, Phrygia, Galatia, Bithynia and wherever else he could possibly reach. However, we learn that in some manner that is not explained to us, the Spirit of Jesus did not allow him to continue with his ministerial plans. Although there were no details given to him at that time, he would soon receive a vision as to what our Lord’s instructions were. He would learn that there were some of the Lord’s people in Macedonia, and they were waiting anxiously to hear about the heavenly call as it was being proclaimed by the apostle to the class of believers in Christ Jesus.

DIRECTED BY THE LORD

It is important to realize from this brief record that the Gospel message was not to be preached everywhere indiscriminately in an effort to find hearing ears for the Truth. This dramatically indicates that the Truth work was being carefully directed by the Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus. Paul had no way of knowing that there was a serious need for him to go to Macedonia and to minister to them. This redirection of his service to the Truth was revealed to him only when he and his companions had reached the western side of Asia Minor, and had arrived at the port city of Troas. It

was there that he experienced the vision, and where he saw a man of Macedonia entreating him to come there to help them.

At a later time, the apostle was again permitted to go into the other areas of Galatia, Phrygia, and Bithynia, but at this particular time it was necessary for him to help those who were then being prepared by God to receive the invitation of the heavenly call, and to become members of the body of Christ.

COME AND HELP US

Luke's record confirms, "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." (Acts 16:9) The apostle wasted no time in preparing himself to make the journey as requested. "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. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days."—vss.10-12

GOD'S WILL MANIFEST

There are various instances in the Scriptures where certain servants of God received visions, some of which were given for assurance of Divine favor. On one occasion, we read, "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. 15:1) At another

time it is recorded, “Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.”—Gen. 46:1-4

At other times, visions were more specific and gave direction in the doing of God’s will. This had occurred earlier in connection with the Apostle Paul’s experiences. After the glorified Jesus had appeared to Saul of Tarsus, Saul had a vision in which he saw a man named Ananias lay his hands upon him so that he might recover his sight. (Acts 9:10-12) In the context of this same chapter, we read about Ananias being directed to the very house where Saul was staying in Damascus. (vss. 11-19) When the apostle later went to Corinth, he preached to both Jews and Gentiles; but, when opposition arose among them, he decided to preach only to the Gentiles. (Acts 18:1-6) God spoke to reassure him. “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.”—vss. 9,10

THE JOURNEY TO MACEDONIA

Having received the special instructions from the Lord, Paul and his travelling companions prepared

to leave for Macedonia. (Acts 16:10-12) From the record, we learn that Luke accompanied the apostle on his journey. In proof of this, we note in the above scripture text where the historian states, “we endeavored to go” (vs. 10), “we came with a straight course” (vs. 11) and “we were in that city abiding certain days.” (vs. 12) From this point in time it becomes apparent that Luke became a more active member of the apostle’s missionary activities, and the Heavenly Father wanted him to record Paul’s ministry.

When they arrived in Philippi—the chief city of Macedonia—they found that there was no synagogue, but instead there was an open park area by a river where the Israelites could gather for prayer. It was not unusual for Jews to use such places for devotional services. A similar place was used for prayer by Jesus when he was in Galilee. “It came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”—Luke 6:12

HEARTS WERE OPENED

Paul and the others made their way to this riverside gathering place on the Sabbath Day and found certain women of Israel assembled there for worship. We read, “A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”—Acts 16:14

We are immediately impressed by the fact that Lydia’s heart had already been opened by God. He is the one who opens the heart to understand and

appreciate his word of Truth, and Lydia was one of those who had especially been seeking him. She and other members of her family had formed the nucleus of a small ecclesia in her city. "When she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us."—vs. 15

Being given to much hospitality and no doubt yearning to learn more about the Truth, Lydia invited Paul and his companions to stay in her house during their visit at Philippi. Paul was hesitant to accept her kind invitation, not wanting to impose upon her, but she encouraged them and opened her home to them. In the meantime, the apostle continued to go to the place by the river to preach to others who were seeking knowledge of the heavenly call and to learn more about having a place in the body of Christ. We are not told how many interested people responded to the apostle's message, nor their names.

WOMAN WITH A SPIRIT

As Paul walked to the place of prayer one day, he was met by a woman who had powers of divination. She was able to foretell events because she was possessed by a familiar spirit, and her masters had profited a great deal from her special powers. (Acts 16:16) "The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus *(Continued on page 35)*

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(Continued from page 31) Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.”—vss. 17,18

The spirit quickly obeyed the apostle, thereby making this maidservant of little use to her owners since she had lost her peculiar powers. The masters of the slave girl were so angry that they seized Paul and Silas. They took them before the magistrates of the city, and accused them of creating a disturbance, and of preaching customs that were unlawful for Romans to observe.

“The multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.” (vss. 22-24) These two faithful servants of God were not able to sleep that night because of the pain of their wounds. They had been thrown into the ‘inner prison’ or dungeon which was usually reserved for the vilest of criminals. There they were confined by stocks which further added to their discomfort.

A MIRACLE AT MIDNIGHT

Luke records, “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his

sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.”—vss. 25-28

The jailor had been awakened by all of this commotion, and saw the open prison doors and assumed that all the prisoners had escaped. Fearful of the consequences, he drew his sword and was ready to kill himself. But Paul encouraged him to not harm himself. All the prisoners were still there, no doubt due to Paul and Silas who had convinced them all to stay. The jailor asked for lamps; and then in gratitude fell down before Paul and Silas, subsequently leading them out of the prison and into his home, which was probably nearby the prison.

THE JAILOR AND HIS HOUSEHOLD

The jailor then asked what he must do to be saved. Paul and Silas answered him by saying, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (vs. 31) The jailor must have overheard an earlier discussion between these two servants of God and some of the other prisoners on the matter of being saved. Otherwise it is not likely that he would have asked this particular question.

The apostle and Silas convinced the jailor and his entire family to accept the provisions of the heavenly call. “They spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”—vss. 32-34

BLESSINGS AT MACEDONIA

Paul and his companions were surely rejoicing in the wonderful manner in which they had been directed to make their pilgrimage to Macedonia. They were richly blessed by travelling to Philippi where they received Lydia and her household's warm welcome. They were again unexpectedly blessed in their experience with the jailor and his family who desired to know the Truth and God's wonderful plan of salvation for the human family.

The next morning the magistrates of Philippi sent word to the jailor to release Paul and Silas, but Paul refused to leave. He contended that he was a Roman citizen who had been beaten and imprisoned unlawfully, and that he had been condemned without a court trial. There was great fear on the part of the magistrates when they heard this, and they went to entreat Paul and Silas to leave their city in peace.

The scriptural record described what happened. "The serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed." (vss. 38-40) The two faithful servants of God eventually complied, but not before they had finished their preaching activity in that particular city. The jailor and his family were now new members of the congregation, along with other brethren who are mentioned by Luke, but not named.

THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

We learn a little more about some of these brethren and their names through the letter that the apostle wrote to the church at Philippi. It was written when he was a prisoner at Rome, and of which he makes mention. “So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace [Caesar’s court, *Marginal Translation*], and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”—Phil. 1:13,14

His letter included greetings to all of the bishops and deacons who were at Philippi. (vs. 1) Paul said to them, “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.” (vss. 2,3) Paul referred to some of the brethren, and we thus learn who a few of them were. He said, “Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.”—Phil. 4:1-3

THE SISTERS AT PHILIPPI

It is interesting to note that Paul included the names of some of the more prominent sisters who were members of the ecclesia at Philippi. He evidently singled them out because of his deep appreciation for their loving spirit for the Lord, as well

as for their special and untiring service to the other brethren in the ecclesia. During Paul's day, the general position and respect for women in Macedonia was quite different than that found in other places where he had visited. At that time, monuments had been erected to women by public bodies in Macedonia. As well, women were also permitted to hold property.

When Paul and his companions arrived in Philippi, we learn from Luke's record that they first sat down in the park area to speak with a group of women who had gathered there for prayer on the Sabbath. (Acts 16:13) It was Lydia who soon separated herself from the rest of the women and identified herself. She was one of the sisters whose heart the Lord Jesus had especially prepared for the apostle's arrival. (vs. 14) Later on, it is recorded that it was to Lydia's home that the apostle and his companions went, after they had been released from prison. It was also from there that they departed Philippi, and set out on their way to Thessalonica.—vs. 40

It is suggested, therefore, that the apostle, when writing his letter to the church at Philippi, included a special greeting in which he said, 'I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel.' This may have been addressed to Lydia, and he wanted to be especially remembered to her in his letter written to the congregation there. We note that Paul also sent Christian greetings to several of the sisters, and included their names when he sent his letter to the church at Rome. (Rom. 16:1-15) We learn that the apostle had dictated his thoughts to Tertius who in

turn wrote the letter, and who also sent his greetings to the brethren at Rome.—vs. 22

EPAPHRODITUS

In this letter to the church at Philippi, Paul also remembered Epaphroditus. He was a very dear brother, and had made the long journey to Rome with a gift to the apostle from the Philippian brethren. He reveals the great love and appreciation that he had for this brother in Christ and said, “Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”—Phil. 4:14-18

RECOLLECTIONS OF MACEDONIA

Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke had spent many weeks preaching the Truth and helping to establish the ecclesia at Philippi. A congregation had been started there, and the brethren were learning much about the heavenly call and other important subjects in relation to the wonderful Word of God.

This is revealed to us when he wrote to the church at Thessalonica. Paul spoke of their also having assisted the new brethren in Christ who were at Macedonia. “Ye became followers of us, and

of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit: So that we were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.” (I Thess. 1:6-8) The apostle again said, “Yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.”—chap. 2:1,2

While Paul and his companions were at Thessalonica they found a synagogue, which they attended on the Sabbaths. There he reasoned with the Jews from the Scriptures for a few weeks. (Acts 17:1,2) His preaching was fruitful in encouraging several of them, both men and women, of the heavenly call and the wonderful words of Truth. They soon began meeting together as an ecclesia in Jason’s home. (vs. 5) The message concerning the wonderful invitation of the heavenly calling was being sent out as designed by our loving Heavenly Father for his ultimate blessing of the whole human creation, and the promise that all of the willing and obedient will be lifted up to the joys of Christ’s kingdom. ■

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”—Proverbs 30:5

The Power of God's Word

***“The word of God
is quick, and
powerful, and
sharper than any
twoedged sword,
piercing even to the
dividing asunder
of soul and spirit,
and of the joints
and marrow, and
is a discerner of
the thoughts and
intentions of the
heart.”
—Hebrews 4:12***

THE APOSTLE PAUL POINTS

to the words of our Heavenly Father and proclaims that they are quick and more powerful than all others in the wide expanse of the heavens. It is well that we all recognize the manner in which God accomplishes his Divine purpose, and especially in connection with his earthly creation and their ultimate reconciliation to him. Paul states, “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”—Heb. 4:13

WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God directed the writing of his Word by the power of the Holy Spirit which he exercises in the accomplishment of all of his purposes. It is beyond our

finite minds to understand how the power of God guided the writings of his Word of Truth and it is not necessary that we do. However, it is very important to know and to believe that when we read and study his Word that we are reading the thoughts of God even as he has caused his various servants to record them.

Paul said, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” (Heb. 1:1,2) The apostle also drew attention to the Heavenly Father’s purpose. “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (I Cor. 10:11) This wonderful assurance is corroborated by the Apostle Peter who also wrote, “Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”—I Pet. 1:12

SEEKING THE LORD

Writing many centuries ago, the Prophet Isaiah brought our attention to the wonderful thoughts and words of our loving Heavenly Father, when he wrote, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and

he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”—Isa. 55:6,7

HIGHER THOUGHTS

Further to these words of the prophet, he provides us with an important perspective concerning the greatness and power of our loving Heavenly Father, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (vss. 8,9) This realization is shown in the manner in which God’s wonderful and diverse creation functions. “As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 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.”—vss. 10,11

ENDURING FOREVER

When speaking of God’s Word, Peter wrote, “The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” (I Pet. 1:25) Peter draws our attention to the Gospel message that is a major theme of God’s plan and purpose for mankind. In his message to the church at Galatia, Paul reminded them that the Gospel had been preached to Abraham, saying, “The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be

blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”—Gal. 3:8,9

The ‘gospel’ is the good news that through the promised seed of Abraham all the families of the earth are to be blessed under the administration of Christ’s future kingdom. There are many aspects of this good news, and God has caused the prophets, the apostles, and our Lord Jesus to touch upon and emphasize its various facets. It required many hundreds of years for the entire Word of God to be completed and therefore made available for his special people during this present Gospel Age. In the Lord’s providence, all of the important messages to his people have been preserved and recorded. This is to the extent that historical events concerning the world, and especially of the Lord’s people, are important to help them make their calling and election sure.

The Old Testament writers of God’s Word did not understand much of what they wrote, but the Holy Spirit directed their writings according to his wisdom and ultimate purpose. The Holy Spirit also operated to assure the accuracy of the historical portions of the Bible. Those ancient servants of God may have appreciated only in part the messages they recorded for the benefit of spiritual Israel. For example, David, having been a shepherd understood the lesson contained in those wonderful words, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”—Ps. 23:1

THE HEAVENS OPENED

At the beginning of our Lord Jesus’ earthly ministry during his First Advent, the Holy Spirit revealed to him much pertaining to the Word of God. This is indicated in the Heavenly Father’s dealings

with his beloved Son. It was at the river Jordan when Jesus was thirty years of age that the Holy Spirit came upon him, and we are told, "It came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Mark 1:9-11

Mark's Gospel record points to a revealing to Jesus of heavenly or spiritual things, and the truths pertaining to the ultimate purpose of his Heavenly Father. It was at this point in his life that Jesus presented himself in consecration to his Father, thus fulfilling the prophecy concerning him that was recorded earlier by the psalmist—"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."—Ps. 40:7,8

Jesus had faithfully presented himself to the Heavenly Father, and agreed to do his will as it had been foretold in the Old Testament scriptures. What had been written concerning him was then revealed as indicated by the heavens being opened to him. From that time forward, he understood clearly the various prophecies that had been written by the prophets that would serve to guide him as he laid down his life in sacrifice in connection with the Father's will.

THE DISCIPLES

On every suitable occasion throughout the three and one-half years of his ministry, Jesus presented

to his disciples the great truths which had been revealed to him. However, much of what he tried to explain to them was quite beyond their ability to understand, because they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. An example of this lack of understanding was their refusal to believe that he would be arrested and put to death as he said he would be. This point is particularly significant, for one of the most important truths set forth in the Old Testament scriptures was that the promised Messiah would suffer and die for the sins of the people. It shows that the disciples understood these truths little better than those who had previously recorded them, until they received the Holy Spirit of God.

Jesus realized the difficulties his disciples had in understanding his teachings and, on the night before he was crucified, he explained to them, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me; for He will take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you. A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me." (John 16:12-16, *New American Standard Bible*) In these verses of Scripture, the Holy Spirit has been referenced in the masculine gender which may be misleading to some. It is important to understand that all Truth comes from the Heavenly Father and not from any other individual.

The disciples had not yet received the Holy Spirit, and they did not understand Jesus' promise, as seen in their immediate reaction. We read from John's account, "Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith."—vss. 17,18

While it was true that the disciples did not understand much of what Jesus said to them, these truths being under the influence of the Holy Spirit were later remembered and their meaning grasped. Thus did Jesus prepare the minds of his disciples for the subsequent and wonderful revelation to them of the plans and purposes of God.

AFTER PENTECOST

At Pentecost, Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on behalf of his disciples, and what a marvelous change was realized in their ability to understand the further dimensions of the Divine plan. We recall the zealous manner in which Peter opposed the idea of Jesus being put to death. He believed that would be completely out of harmony with God's will for the Master. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that a dead Messiah could not accomplish all the wonderful things which had been foretold concerning him.

After the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter preached a sermon in which he spoke of Jesus having been raised from the dead, and he quoted one of the prophecies relating to both the death

and resurrection of our Lord. “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him [Ps. 16:8-11], I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [the grave], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.”—Acts 2:24-28

This and other prophecies of Jesus’ death had always been in the Old Testament scriptures, but Peter had been blind to their real meaning until he had received the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The revealing ministry of God began with the followers of Jesus, even as it had been with the Master himself when he gave himself to his Heavenly Father at the river Jordan.

For Jesus’ apostles and faithful followers, the Holy Spirit became not only a revealing power but an inspirational one also. The teachings of Jesus and the apostles are illuminated by the Holy Spirit of God as it relates to his great plan of the ages. This is also true of the Old Testament writers, the difference being that they did not necessarily understand what they wrote.

THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

The inspired words of God were brought together for the enlightenment of his people during this present Gospel Age. The writings of the Old Testament

and the New Testament are of great value and importance, for they all contribute toward the Lord's purpose of instructing and encouraging his consecrated people whom he is preparing to be the spiritual rulers in the forthcoming messianic kingdom. We can be certain that God's Word will accomplish his design, and will prosper in all things.

"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. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."—Isa. 55:11-13 ■

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 Wana Hudson, WA—February 17. Age, 89

Lucy Mae Trent, WV—March 2. Age, 90

VeeAnn (Nalivka) Lammerding, Havre, MT—
March 11. Age, 62

If

If you can keep “the faith” when those about you are losing it and seeking something new;

If you can stand the firmer though they flout you as being simple and old fashioned too;

If you can smile when human hopes are banished, when castles fall and cherished prospects die;

And just keep on, tho’ earthly props have vanished, content to see the pattern by and by.

If you can meet abuse without complaining, and greet your unkind critic with a smile,

If, conscious that your human love is waning, you claim a calvary love that knows no guile;

If you can bear the unjust imputation without a murmur or revengeful thought,

And even forfeit rights and reputation because His glory is the one thing sought;

If you can give an honest commendation to him whose work looms larger than your own,

Or scorn to speak a word of condemnation to him who falls or reaps what he has sown.

If you can be content with His provision, though others seem to prosper and succeed;

Nor let repining mar the heavenly vision, and simply trust in God for every need.

If you can let the mind of Christ possess you, to think on “things of good report” and true;

And ever let the love of Christ obsess you—constraining everything you say and do;

*If you can find in Him your highest treasure, let
Him hold sway o'er heart and soul and limb,*

*Then Life is yours, and blessing without mea-
sure, And—what is more—*

You'll live and reign with Him!

"I can . . . through Christ!"

Philippians 4:13

—selected

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MAY 7—"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."—
I Corinthians 9:16 (Z. '03-174 Hymn 261)

MAY 14—"Speaking the truth in love,...grow up into
him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."—
Ephesians 4:15 (Z. '03-200 Hymn 109)

MAY 21—"All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is
profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for in-
struction in righteousness, that the man of God may be
perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—II
Timothy 3:16,17 (Z. '97-170 Hymn 22)

MAY 28—"Therefore we are always confident, knowing
that, whilst we are at home in the body [so long as we
feel entirely contented with present conditions—our-
selves and our surroundings], we are absent from the
Lord."—II Corinthians 5:6 (Z. '97-305 Hymn 170)

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General Convention Bulletin

July 18-23, 2009—Johnstown, Pennsylvania

THE 2009 GENERAL CONVENTION will be upon us in less than three months. If you haven't yet made plans to attend, now is the time to do so. We encourage as many as are able to join in the blessings of this annual gathering of the Lord's people. The convention will be held on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style apartments (also air conditioned) with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities are available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge in their own sleeping bag if both beds are occupied. If a child is alone in a bedroom sharing the bathroom with other adults, the double occupancy rate will apply to all family members.

The convention program appears in this issue of *The Dawn*, on the pages following the General Convention registration form. Included on the program this year is an assigned discourse on the subject, "Spiritual Peace in Economic Turmoil," which we believe will be of special interest and an encouragement to the Lord's people as they view and are touched by these events of today.

All room and meal costs for children 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. In addition, 100% of the 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 in cash at the door.

The convention will provide one shuttle bus leaving the Pittsburgh airport in the early evening for the college in Johnstown on Friday, July 17. There will be one shuttle bus leaving the college in the early morning hours for the Pittsburgh airport on Friday, July 24.

We encourage you to make your plans now to attend, and participate in the blessings of this year's convention.

Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast	\$7.00	\$6.00
Lunch	8.00	7.00
Dinner	11.00	10.00
Total, three meals	\$26.00	\$23.00
Lodging (per night)		
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)	\$30.00	\$25.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)	\$25.00	\$23.00
**single occ (LLC)	\$55.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)	\$30.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals		
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)	\$325*	\$290*
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)	\$195*	\$160*
**single occ (LLC)	\$460*	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)	\$235*	n/a
If no breakfasts, deduct—*\$35 **Air-conditioned ***100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group		

General Convention Registration

1425 Lachman Lane — Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

E-mail: Nekora@aol.com (310) 454-5248

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 17, 2009				
Saturday, 18th				
Sunday, 19th				
Monday, 20th				
Tuesday, 21st				
Wednesday, 22nd				
Thursday, 23rd				

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:

Saturday, July 18

Chairman: Michael Balko, *Orlando FL*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Orientation by College

10:00 **Welcome Address**

Tom Ruggirello
Chicago IL

10:45 Intermission

11:15 Discourse

O. B. Elbert
Delaware Valley PA

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Dan Wesol
Albuquerque NM

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse

Michael Nekora
Los Angeles CA

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Rick Sconyers
Orlando FL

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Paul's Missionary Journeys:**

1st Journey

Brian Montague
Highland Park NY

2nd Journey

Russ Marten
Chicago IL

3rd Journey

Austin Williams
New York NY

8:15 Songs in the Night

Sunday, July 19

Chairman: Doug Rawson

San Francisco Bay Area CA

9:30 Morning Devotions

[illegible]

10:30 Intermission

11:15 Theme Discourse—Romans 8:28
 “All things work together for good to them
 that love God . . .”
 Carlton Chandler, *Portland OR*

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony George Tabac
Chicago IL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Robert Goodman
Orlando FL

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Mark Nemesh
Detroit MI

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 Handling Turbulent Economic Times
 Len Griehs
Delaware Valley PA

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Monday, July 20

Chairman: Homer Montague, *Highland Park NY*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 **“Ye Shall Know the Truth”—John 8:32**

Ray Luke
Jersey City NJ

10:30 Intermission

11:15 Discourse

Dan Larson
Chicago IL

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

David Rice
San Diego CA

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony

Allan Allers
Boise ID

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Ed Byrd
Pittsburgh PA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **The Tabernacle Shows:
A Progression**

Todd Alexander
Columbus OH

Conditions

Ernie Kuenzli
Orlando FL

8:00 Songs in the Night

8:15 Elders' Meeting

Tuesday, July 21

Chairman: David Christiansen, *Seattle WA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 **Baptismal Discourse**

Edmund Blicharz
Orlando FL

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Immersion Service**

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony

Larry Young
Columbus OH

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse

Erwin Kalinski
Chicago IL

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Robert Gorecki
New York NY

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

Wednesday, July 22

Chairman: Jonathon Freer, *Sacramento CA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Convention Business Meeting

Robert Gorecki
New York NY

10:30 Short Recess

10:45 Convention Business Continues

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Bill Dutka
Metro Detroit MI

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony

Rick Suraci
New Haven CT

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Arbur Fernets
Vernon BC

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **We are his Workmanship”**
—Ephesians 2:10

Mike Balko
Dawn Pilgrim

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Thursday, July 23

Chairman: Randy Shahan, *New York NY*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Praise and Testimony Tim Thomassen
Albuquerque NM

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Symposium: Priesthoods**

Aaronic: Jim Parkinson
San Gabriel Valley CA

Melchisedec: Richard Doctor
Milwaukee WI

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse Byron Keith
Seattle WA

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Jerry Moore
Milwaukee WI

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Frank Nemesh
Detroit MI

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Closing Discourse** Ken Fernets
The Dawn

7:45 Melodies of Praise

8:30 Love Feast

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.

R. Gorecki

Vernon, BC	May 2,3
Red Deer, AB	6
Saskatoon, SK	8
Prince Albert, SK	9
Yorkton, SK	10
Winnipeg, MB	11
Fargo, ND	12

T. Krupa

Lamorlaye, France	May 26,27
Waller, France	28
Korbach, Germany	30,31

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

T. Alexander

Los Angeles, CA	May 23-25
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G. Balko

Buffalo, NY	May 2,3
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R. Goodman

Jacksonville, FL	May 3
Chicago, IL	23-25

L. Griehs

Chicago, IL	May 23-25
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S. Jeuck

Chicago, IL	May 23-25
-------------	-----------

E. Kuenzli

Jacksonville, FL	May 3
Los Angeles, CA	23-25

H. Montague

Los Angeles, CA	May 23-25
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F. Nemesh

Buffalo, NY	May 2,3
-------------	---------

J. Panucci

Buffalo, NY	May 2,3
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R. Shahan

Buffalo, NY	May 2,3
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MOVING?



If you are moving, please let us know six weeks before you move so that we can change the address on your Dawn subscription.

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.

BUFFALO CONVENTION, May 2,3—Holiday Inn, 5440 Camp Road, Hamburg, NY 14075. Contact R. Morin for reservations by April 18, 2009. Phone: (585) 322-7459

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 3—Embassy Suites Hotel, 9300 Baymeadows Road, Jacksonville, FL 32256. Phone: (904) 731-3555. Contact C. Hires. Phone: (904) 781-0506

WEST NEWTON SPRING CONVENTION, May 17—Sewickly Grange Hall, State Route 136, Belle Vernon, PA. Contact J. Krasonic, Sr., 1106 State Route 136, Belle Vernon, PA 15012. Phone: (724) 872-6215

CHICAGO DECORATION DAY CONVENTION, May 23,24,25—Addison Park District, 120 E. Oak Street, Addison, IL 60101. Contact J. Farrell. Phone: (630) 776-9511

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 23,24,25—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. Contact M. Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone: (310) 454-5248

WATERBURY CONVENTION, June 6,7—Saturday, June 6, held in Morris, CT. Sunday, June 7, at the Litchfield Firehouse Hall. Contact A. Tsimonis, PO Box 1494, Waterbury, CT. 06721-1494. Phone: (860) 567-0109

PORTLAND ASSOCIATED BIBLE STUDENTS CONVENTION, June 19,20,21—Holiday Inn, 2752 NE Hogan Drive, Gresham, OR 97030. Phone: (503) 907-1777. Before May 15, contact D. Grudzien, 11970 SE Zion Hill Drive, Damascus, OR 97089. Phone: (503) 658-4757

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 3-5—Siwak Farm, RR1 (STN) MPP, Prince Albert, SK S6V 5P8. Contact A. Siwak. Phone: (306) 764-7692

YORKTON CONVENTION, July 10-12—Ramada Yorkton Hotel, 110 Broadway Street E, Yorkton, SK. Contact: B. Sweeney. Phone: (306) 782-0436 or (306) 563-5441

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 18-23—University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, PA. Registration information—page 53 of this issue. Contact M. Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone: (310) 454-5248

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, August 15,16—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Farchione. Phone: (262) 895-4583

NIGERIA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 21-23—Emmanuel College Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu, #2 Darlington Street, Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Phone: 2348033339949

NORTHWEST MONTANA KALISPELL CONVENTION, September 18,19,20—Red Lion Hotel, 20 N. Main Street, Kalispell, MT 59901. Contact M. Burns. Phone: (406) 756-7789

*Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.*

*We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.*

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DAWN PUBLICATIONS

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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 the 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