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**DECEMBER 2021**





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1 Corinthians 10:11*

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# The DAWN

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# The Joy Set Before Jesus

***“Looking unto  
Jesus the author  
and finisher of our  
faith; who for the  
joy that was set  
before him endured  
the cross, despising  
the shame, and is  
set down at the  
right hand of the  
throne of God.”  
—Hebrews 12:2***

## **THE CHRISTMAS SEASON**

is a time each year when many among mankind renew their hope for “peace” on earth, and “good will toward men.” It is also a time when people contemplate the words of the angel, spoken to the shepherds: “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

(Luke 2:10-14) For most, however, such thoughts do not translate into an assurance that peace, good will, or great joy will ever come “to all people.”

It may surprise many that Jesus himself had such joy, and also confident assurance, that peace on earth and good will among mankind would come in due time. It was, in fact, this anticipated “joy that was set before him,” as our opening text states, which enabled the Master to endure the cross, “despising the shame.” This joy which Jesus had is the focus of our consideration in the ensuing

pages, as we review some of the wonderful divine provisions and blessings in store for God's human creation.

## **JOY—A WORTHY GOAL**

To be joyful is a worthy goal for all of God's intelligent creatures, for it is the normal state of those who seek to be obedient to him. The human race has suffered much and been generally unhappy because of sin and its effects. It was inevitable that Jesus should suffer—not for his own sin, because he had none—but on account of the sin of others. He endured suffering, Paul says, because of the “contradiction of sinners” which was leveled against him.—Heb. 7:26; 12:3

From the time of his baptism in Jordan, when he entered into a covenant with his Heavenly Father to do all that was written of him in the “volume of the book,” Jesus knew that he was to take the sinner's place in death. (Heb. 10:7) He knew, therefore, that the way before him was a difficult one, beset by many trials, and leading eventually to death. The assurance, however, of his Father's guidance and strength in every time of need was a constant source of joy to the Master, and this was a joy which he handed down to his disciples.

## **JESUS' PREHUMAN EXISTENCE**

The question naturally arises as to when the joy which enabled Jesus to endure the cross, and which will in due time “be to all people,” was “set before him.” The Scriptures are not explicit concerning the degree of information the Heavenly Father gave to his beloved Son during his prehuman existence with regard to the purpose of his future earthly mission.

Sincere students of the Bible have believed that the conversation recorded in Isaiah 6:8 was not just between Isaiah and Jehovah, but because of the use of the word “us,” it also included God’s dear Son, as in the creation account of man recorded in Genesis 1:26. Hence the question concerning the terrible results of sin, and as to who would be the emissary to assist in eliminating it upon the earth, the Son replied, “Here am I; send me.”

We know that Jesus’ coming to earth was wholly voluntary. He had supreme love for the Heavenly Father, and was completely dedicated to the doing of his will. He had absolute confidence that his Father’s will for him would be just and righteous. This would have been sufficient incentive for the Son of God to make “himself of no reputation,” and to take upon himself “the form of a servant.”—Phil. 2:7

## **THE RECORDED PROMISES**

We cannot be sure of things which are not clearly revealed in the Scriptures, but we can know and rejoice in those which are. There are many recorded promises which the Heavenly Father made to Jesus. He undoubtedly knew about and rejoiced in these, especially after “the heavens were opened unto him” at the time of his baptism and receiving of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 3:16) There are Scriptures which indicate that even before this, Jesus began to sense the divine purpose in his birth, and that he was the special object of his Father’s care.

In a prophecy of the cruel suffering which was inflicted upon Jesus while he was hanging on the cross, he is foretold as saying to his Father, “Thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst

make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts." (Ps. 22:9) This indicates that, at an early age, Jesus was beginning to sense his special relationship to God.

On his visit to the Temple when he was twelve years of age, in explanation to his parents Jesus said, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49, *New King James Version*) This question indicates that even then he knew to some extent the fact that he had a special, divine mission to perform. The account tells us that after this he became subject to his parents until he was thirty years of age. (Luke 2:51; 3:23) Apparently by his questioning the doctors of the Law he learned that he could not properly begin a priestly work for God until he was thirty.

It was after the Holy Spirit came upon the Master that he was able to grasp the full import of his mission, and it was then that he understood and appreciated the precious promises of his Father which set before him the joy which would follow his faithful sacrificial work. The Apostle Peter, in telling us about the prophetic testimony of the "sufferings of Christ," says that the prophets wrote also about "the glory that should follow."—I Pet. 1:11

## **ISAIAH'S RECORD**

One of the outstanding promises in this regard, which must have meant much to Jesus, is recorded in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. The first nine verses of the chapter are prophetic of the "sufferings of Christ," while the last three pertain to the "glory that should follow." What a joy the information contained in these verses must have been to Jesus!

Though he was to be cut off from the land of the living, with none to declare his generation, Jehovah promised, "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."—Isa. 53:10

Jesus no doubt understood that "his seed," or offspring, mentioned in this promise would be the restored world of mankind. This was an unselfish joy set before him, the holy pleasure of bringing back the sinful and fallen race to life. It was the same joy as expressed to the shepherds by the angel on the night of his birth in Bethlehem, a joy "which shall be to all people." To achieve this glorious outcome, it would be necessary for Jesus' days to be "prolonged." Thus, while he was to die as man's Redeemer, and so be "cut off out of the land of the living," his death would not be permanent, for he was to live again and be privileged to give life to others. Though it "pleased the LORD to bruise him," because this was an essential part of the redemptive work, Jehovah's "pleasure," as revealed in his plan to bless all the families of the earth, was to "prosper" in his Son's hand.—Isa. 53:8,10

Jesus' soul did indeed "travail" as he endured the many sufferings associated with his earthly ministry. What comfort it must have been to him to realize that it was not in vain, that wonderful results would accrue from his suffering, with which he would be wholly "satisfied." (vs. 11) What great satisfaction there will be in seeing the entire human race restored to perfection and life! What a marvelous joy was this that God set before his beloved Son in order that he might have strength to endure the cross.



Continuing in verse 11 of Isaiah's prophecy, Jesus was to be that "righteous servant" who would "justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." How this knowledge also must have strengthened him to endure the cross and despise the shame. Could any temporary shame which might be heaped upon him by the "contradiction of sinners" be compared with that immeasurable joy of providing to all mankind an opportunity for everlasting life upon the earth, when the "dead, small and great, stand before God?"—Rev. 20:12

### **"A PORTION WITH THE GREAT"**

In the last verse of Isaiah 53 is another inspiring promise to Jesus. Here the Father says that because of his Son's faithfulness, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great." The "great" referred to here is Jehovah himself. The Scriptures indicate that after Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit he was able to remember his prehuman life with the Heavenly Father. This is shown in his prayer, "O Father, glorify thou me ... with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."—John 17:5

Jesus knew what it meant to be associated with his Father, and the joy of being in his presence. The promise that he would again be given "a portion with the great" would mean more to him than any of us are able to appreciate. Here was a joy set before him that was indeed "unspeakable and full of glory."—I Pet. 1:8

Psalms 22 is another prophecy of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Verses 7 and 8 are descriptive of the ridicule and scorn which were hurled at the Master at that time: "All

they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." These words were fulfilled by the chief priests, who mocked Jesus, saying, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God." (Matt. 27:43) As Jesus hung suffering and dying on the cross, another incident occurred which is mentioned in the 22nd Psalm: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (vs. 18) Jesus, with his perfect and clear spiritual discernment, could not help but notice these fulfillments of the prophecy.—Matt. 27:35

This prophecy of David in Psalm 22, however, is not exclusively concerned with Jesus' suffering and death, for it also set before him a wonderful vision of the joy which enabled him to endure the cross. Verse 22 reads, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." The Apostle Paul quotes this, and indicates that the "brethren" referred to are the body members of the Christ. This means that as Jesus hung on the cross he was encouraged by the prospect of having these brethren associated with him in glory. Paul's comment is: "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."—Heb. 2:10-12

## A PROMISED KINGDOM

In the psalmist's prophecy Jesus also saw the kingdom blessings coming to mankind: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations." (Ps. 22:27,28) What a joy this was to set before Jesus while hanging on the cross—the joy of seeing all mankind "turn unto the LORD." It is another key part of the "good tidings of great joy" spoken of by the angel at the time of Jesus' birth. Paul tells us that, through Christ, God was "reconciling the world unto himself," and as Jesus was dying at Calvary, he realized that his death was a vital part of this work of reconciliation.—II Cor. 5:19

Jesus realized that the kingdom would be necessary in this work of turning the people back to God. This prophecy gave him the strength to reply to the thief when he requested, "Jesus! remember me, whensoever thou shalt come into thy kingdom," to which the Master replied, "Verily, I say unto thee this day: With me, shalt thou be in Paradise." (Luke 23:42,43, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) Then, as David prophesied, "all the ends of the world" will turn back to God.

Perhaps all the thief knew about Jesus' coming kingdom was from reading the inscription at the top of the cross, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews," which indicated the "crime" for which he was being crucified. (Matt. 27:37) However, Jesus knew more than this. He recognized that although he was then being killed by his enemies, the kingdom promises of his Father were sure. Jesus knew that Satan

would not be the prince of the world forever, and that in his Father's due time all the ends of the world would be given the opportunity, under just and righteous conditions, to turn unto God. How Jesus must have rejoiced in such a glorious prospect!

### **“IN THEE DO I PUT MY TRUST”**

Psalm 16 is another prophecy which applied to Jesus during the time of his earthly ministry, during which he was laying down his life as the Redeemer of the world. It is similar to Psalm 22 in that it forecasts both the suffering and future joy of Jesus. The larger portion of Psalm 22, however, describes his suffering, and only a few verses tell of the joy; whereas Psalm 16 makes only an incidental mention of the suffering, while most of the prophecy depicts Jesus' great trust in his Father, and his sure hope of the glorious outcome.

“Preserve me, O God,” the opening verse reads, “for in thee do I put my trust.” (Ps. 16:1) Jesus knew that his mission as a human being was to die. He said concerning himself, “My flesh ... I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51) Jesus was confident that this would not mean eternal death. It was in full assurance that he prayed, as prophesied by David, “Preserve me, O God.” His confidence stemmed from his determination to be faithful and fully obedient to his Father, and to him alone. “Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.”—Ps. 16:4

Jesus knew that the secret of true and lasting joy was in loving devotion to his Heavenly Father. Any course that might “hasten after another god”

could lead only to sorrow and ruin. In continuing the prayer he emphasized this, saying, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." (vss. 5,6) Jesus understood that his "cup" of experience was given to him by God, so in the Garden of Gethsemane he said to Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"—John 18:11

Why should he not drink this cup, Jesus reasoned, when such a glorious inheritance awaited him, and ultimately great joy would come "to all people!" This jubilant prospect, and the fact that even while drinking the cup of suffering his Father was with him to sustain and help, meant to the Master that his "lines," the path marked out for him by God, had indeed fallen in "pleasant places," made so by the "goodly heritage" which had been set before him.

"I have set the LORD always before me," the prayer continues, "because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope." (Ps. 16:8,9) The Hebrew word in verse 8 which is translated "before" means literally "counterpart." Jesus made the Heavenly Father his counterpart, therefore, he was not alone during his earthly experience of laying down his life.

Having his Heavenly Father as his helper, Jesus was confident of victory, and could say, "I shall not be moved." He freely acknowledged to his disciples that by himself he could do nothing. (John 5:19,30; 8:28) His words were those which the Father gave him to speak, and the works which he performed

were likewise those of his Father. He recognized that God was at his right hand at all times, and that he could be depended upon. "I knew that thou hearest me always," Jesus confidently prayed. (John 11:42) This being true, Jesus felt secure, assured that he could not be moved away from this blessed position of favor with his God.

This made the Master's heart glad despite the bitter enmity of his adversaries, and as he said, "My glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope." It was a hope based upon the many promises by which his Father provided this wonderful "joy that was set before him." He knew that he was to die for the sins of the world, but his God, who was at his right hand, had given him a sustaining hope of joy to come.

How completely the Master trusted in his Heavenly Father: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." (Ps. 16:10) Jesus understood that he was to give up his life, his "soul," in death. This was essential in order that he might take the sinner's place. However, he was not to be left in "hell" [Hebrew: *sheol*], the condition of death. This he knew because a great joy had been set before him by his Father. It would be the joy of returning to his Father's actual presence and partaking of his glory, and the great added joy of dispensing kingdom blessings, in due time, to all mankind, those for whom he would die.

### **"FULNESS OF JOY"**

Concerning this joy, the last verse of Psalm 16 represents Jesus praying, "Thou wilt shew me the

path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.” (vs. 11) Jesus saw that by being in his Father’s presence, and sharing his glory, all the other wonderful things which had been promised would follow as a natural sequence of events. This position with the Father would make possible the kingdom, and its promised blessings, provided by his sacrificial death on the cross. What “fulness of joy” this brought to the Master!

The Apostle Paul may well have had this very prophecy in mind when he wrote concerning Jesus, quoting again our opening text, “Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) Indeed, the prophet had written, speaking for Jesus, that at the Father’s “right hand there are pleasures forevermore,” and in his actual presence is “fulness of joy.”

This joy, set before the Master so definitely by the many wonderful promises of his Father, enabled him to endure. Paul tells us that we are to “consider him” who endured so much suffering, “lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” (Heb. 12:3) We cannot properly consider Jesus without recalling the provisions which his Father made to give him strength to endure. We should also realize that the same joy has been set before us, so that we also may be able to “endure unto the end.”—Matt. 24:13

In the promise God made to Jesus, “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great,” he also said concerning us, that Jesus would “divide the spoil with the strong.” (Isa. 53:12) We are associate heirs with him in this blessed promise. (Rom. 8:16,17)

After Jesus was resurrected and exalted to the right hand of God, he declared, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. 3:21) Jesus was given his promised place at the right hand of the throne of God, where there are pleasures forevermore, and where there is fulness of joy. We also can be confident that our joint inheritance with Jesus is assured, and will soon become a reality, if we are faithful, even unto death.—Rev. 2:10

May this joy thus set before all the followers of the Master encourage us to greater diligence in doing his will, greater faithfulness in his service, and more joyfully to lay down our lives in sacrifice. If faithful, we will share his glory and the kingdom work of blessing all the families of the earth, which will finally fulfill those words of the angel, repeated each year during the Christmas season: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!"—Luke 2:10,11 ■

## 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 Alex Rose, Gresham, OR—October 24.

Brother Jon Belea, Clarksville, TX—November 8.  
Age, 49

Brother Mel Stein, Sinking Spring, PA—November 8.  
Age, 93



## WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

**DECEMBER 2**—“And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized.”—Acts 22:16 (Z.’01-186 Hymn 14)

**DECEMBER 9**—“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”—James 1:12 (Z. ’98-41 Hymn 301)

**DECEMBER 16**—“How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, follow him.”—I Kings 18:21 (Z.’02-42 Hymn 306A)

**DECEMBER 23**—“A word in season, how good it is! A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”—Proverbs 15:23; 25:11 (Z. ’02-381,382 Hymn 275)

**DECEMBER 30**—“Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness.”—Psalm 65:11 (Z. ’00-365 Hymn 89)

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### THE MESSIAH

*“I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

*“... And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

*“... And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written,  
KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS!”*

*—Revelation 19:6, 11:15, 19:16*

# God's Requirements

***Key Verse: “Now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”***  
—Deuteronomy 10:12

***Selected Scriptures:***  
***Deuteronomy 5:1-3;***  
***10:12-17***

## **TODAY'S LESSON BRINGS**

into remembrance the Law Covenant given to Israel by God through Moses as the mediator. “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. (Deut. 5:1-3) It reflected the divine requirements set forth for that nation to become a part of the seed of Abraham, which would ultimately bless all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:15-18

Beginning in Exodus 24 and continuing through chapter 31, there is an account of Moses’

having ascended Mount Sinai to receive instructions for erecting a Tabernacle as well as the functions of the priesthood. God also inscribed on two stone tablets the Decalogue, known as the Ten Commandments.

As Moses prepared to descend with these laws for Israel, we read the following: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed

thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, ... that I may consume them.”—Exod. 32:7-10

Exhibiting indignation after addressing the people, Moses cast down the tablets and broke them. Additionally, God plagued the people for their sin. (vss. 19,35) Moses ascended Mount Sinai a second time, took two tables of stone with him, and wrote the Ten Commandments as God commanded, remaining there for forty nights without food or water before returning to the people of Israel.—Exod. 34:1,27-29

The Book of Deuteronomy contains the final exhortations by Moses before his death, and summarizes many of Israel’s experiences during their forty years in the wilderness. Although their rebellion involving the golden calf was significant, God was merciful to his people as they prepared to enter the promised land of Canaan.—Deut. 10:10

Our Key Verse outlines the requirements for Israel to retain divine favor, including demonstrating reverential honor to God, walking righteously, serving him faithfully and obeying all of the Heavenly Father’s statutes as evidence of their sincere love for the Creator.

The Ten Commandments were given to Israel, but as aliens and strangers, Gentiles never were under the Mosaic Law. Through full consecration and acceptance by God, true Christians, Jew and Gentile alike, are under the provisions of a Covenant of grace. (Rom. 6:14) Additionally, it is a Covenant which includes sacrifice. “Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” (Ps. 50:5) To the Jew, the law was a “schoolmaster” to bring them to Christ. (Gal. 3:24) However, Paul indicates that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”—Rom. 8:4 ■

# David's Kindness

**Key Verse:** *“David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”*  
—II Samuel 9:1

**Selected Scripture:**  
*II Samuel 9:1-13*

“Thou, O lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.”—Ps. 86:15

Following the death of Saul and his son Jonathan, King David manifested kindness and compassion, a god-like quality worthy of emulation by all who reverence our Heavenly Father. In our Key Verse, David inquired respecting any of the remaining members of Saul’s family. He especially desired to render kindness to any of Jonathan’s posterity despite the fact that Saul had repeatedly sought to prevent him from occupying the throne of Israel.

“There was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the

**KINDNESS AND COMPAS-**sion are synonyms. They embody thoughts of love, care and the desire to help. Additionally, they include a willingness to assist and help those who are suffering in some way. As we look at the word compassion in Scripture, it is often used to describe the good that God manifests towards mankind in various ways. Here is one such example:

kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar. Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar.”—II Sam. 9:2-5

Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s lame son, then appeared before the king and prostrated himself in fear. However, David made good on an earlier promise to Jonathan that he would show kindness to his posterity by allowing his son Mephibosheth to eat at the king’s table, among other acts of compassion.—vss. 6-13

David’s example as a member of the house of servants in this narrative contains lessons for spirit begotten followers of Christ who are members of the house of sons. One such admonition we should take to heart is: “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”—Luke 6:35,36

The ultimate example of doing good to all was Christ Jesus. He is prophetically described as follows: “He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: ... He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. ... Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”—Isa. 53:4,5,10

May our lives more and more reflect an appreciation of Christ’s magnificent sacrifice as well as his great love for us. May we also be enabled to derive strength and encouragement, and be obedient to divine principles. By such an attitude, we will also demonstrate our own willingness to daily follow the Master more closely. “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”—Eph. 5:2 ■

# A Just and Righteous Government

**Key Verse:** *“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.”*  
—Isaiah 9:7

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Isaiah 9:2-7*  
they would become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.  
—Exod. 19:5,6

**THE DISOBEDIENCE OF** Adam and Eve in eating the forbidden fruit caused them to be condemned to death. Because of this, they were cast out of Eden, and untold sorrow commenced for all their posterity who have ever lived. Nevertheless, God provided a glimmer of hope that a seed would come forth and rectify mankind’s disastrous circumstances because of the evil which ensued.—Gen. 3:6-24

As a means of demonstrating his intention to recover the human family from the fall, the Heavenly Father selected the nation of Israel as “chosen for his own inheritance.” (Ps. 33:12) If obedient to their covenant,

Later, Isaiah prophesied: “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. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.”—Isa. 9:2,3

The foregoing passage was not applicable during Isaiah’s day. It pertained to the time when Christ Jesus presented himself to the nation of Israel as their Messiah during his First Advent. The yoke of sorrow, pain and injustice under Satan’s rule will not be broken until God’s kingdom of righteousness is established. (II Cor. 4:4) Then an understanding of the ransom as well as restitution blessings for mankind will enlighten everyone concerning God’s plan, centered in Jesus.—Isa. 9:4-6

Our Key Verse asserts that unlike mankind’s elusive attempts throughout history to establish an enduring righteous government, this will only be achieved under the authority of the glorified Christ and his church. As footstep followers of the Master, we desire to serve the Heavenly Father with all of our power, mind, being and strength. This takes energetic devotion to put into daily practice, and it is in proportion to our love for the Lord that we will make corresponding, zealous efforts to fight the good fight of faith against fleshly propensities.

God’s requirements for Israel were not met in a satisfactory manner and, therefore, they lost the opportunity as a nation to be associated with our Lord in blessing all mankind during the kingdom of righteousness for which Christ taught his disciples to pray. (Matt. 6:5-15) May we daily manifest obedience to the terms of our covenant of sacrifice, thus enabling us to participate in the marvelous privilege of helping to reconcile the human family back to God. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6 ■

# God Delivers His People

**Key Verse:** *“The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.”*  
—*Nahum 1:7*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Nahum 1:1-15*

**THE BOOK OF NAHUM IS** prophetic. Its author had received a heavenly vision declaring judgment against Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, which had threatened to attack Judah. Well before this time, Nineveh had repented from its sinful ways, as recorded in the prophecy of

Jonah: “Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?”—Jonah 3:8,9

In today’s lesson, however, Nineveh evidently had resumed its wicked conduct and was ripe for judgment. (Nah. 1:1,2) God’s attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power will not allow unrighteousness to continue forever. Thus, in due course this present evil social order will be removed and replaced by a peaceful and holy government on a global scale.—vss. 3-6

This prophecy foretold the destruction of Nineveh as well as the deliverance of Judah, and should have brought comfort to the Jews as God’s covenanted



people. (vss. 9-15; Amos 3:1,2) Our Key Verse underscores the fact that those who trust and obey the Heavenly Father will be comforted and strengthened during perilous times. This principle continues to hold true today.

One of the principles that may help us to appreciate God's dealings with the nation of Israel recorded in the Old Testament is emphasized by Paul as follows: "These things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come."—I Cor. 10:11, *Revised Version*

Part of Israel's failure to please God was their disobedience to divine instructions and emulating idolatrous practices of heathen nations such as described in the judgment of Nineveh. For consecrated followers of Christ, we are reminded of a New Testament admonition: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." (I John 5:21) Spiritual idolatry would be the supplanting of God in our worship by giving some person or object a higher position of reverence or affection in our lives ahead of the Heavenly Father. Examples of this might include the desire to accumulate wealth, seeking fame, material possessions, self-indulgence and pleasure seeking, or even idolizing a faithful servant of the Heavenly Father.

As New Creatures in Christ, let us ever remember to put the true reverence for God first in our lives and fulfill our vows of consecration to him. When the Jews had their kingdom overturned and went into captivity, they experienced a great loss and greatly mourned because of their unfaithful conduct.—Ps. 137:1

May we learn from Israel's disobedience and exemplify the spirit and faithfulness of the Early Church, which enjoyed God's peace and favor. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied."—Acts 9:31 ■

# God's Thoughts Toward Us

*“Many, O LORD my  
God, are thy  
wonderful works  
which thou hast  
done, and thy  
thoughts which are  
to us-ward: they  
cannot be reckoned  
up in order unto  
thee: if I would  
declare and speak  
of them, they are  
more than can be  
numbered.”  
—Psalm 40:5*

**IN REVEALING HIS WILL** to consecrated believers of this Gospel Age, the Heavenly Father has made it plain that he wants them to work for him and with him in the carrying out of his plan. God's only begotten Son, in his prehuman existence, had this glorious opportunity in the original work of creation, hence we find Jehovah saying to him, “Let us make man in our image, after our like-

ness.” (Gen. 1:26) How wonderful it would be to have the Lord similarly include us in his work! This is exactly what he has done, for as the apostle writes, we have been made colaborers with God in the great work of reconciling the lost world to him. —I Cor. 3:9; II Cor. 5:19; 6:1

Jehovah has been zealous in the carrying forward of his plan, and he is pleased when his colaborers

exhibit a similar zeal. The footstep followers of the Master are described by Paul as a “peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Tit. 2:14) James indicates that we are to show our faith by our works. (James 2:18) It is undoubtedly pleasing to the Heavenly Father that we should rejoice in this privilege of working with him, and that we should be happy at every evidence of his blessing upon our efforts.

At the same time, we should ever keep in mind that what we do for the Lord is nothing in comparison with what he does for us. Truly, it is only by his grace that our imperfect works are acceptable to him at all. It seems appropriate, therefore, that we turn aside for a little while and consider the many “wonderful works” which he has done, and his solicitous “thoughts which are to us-ward,” as spoken of in our opening text. When we do this, we find how true it is that the many things which the Lord has done “cannot be reckoned up in order,” and that when we try to tell about them “they are more than can be numbered.”

### **“HE INCLINED UNTO ME”**

“I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry,” writes David in the first verse of the Psalm from which our text is taken. Throughout the ages millions, no doubt, have waited patiently for the Lord, yet it was not his due time to “incline” unto them and hear their cry. Indeed, many of these lacked understanding in their waiting. Paul speaks of them as the “whole creation,” which, groaning and travailing together in pain are waiting “for the manifestation of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:19,22) God knows about all

these millions, and when, in his plan, their day of visitation comes, he will incline unto them, hear their cries for help, and will save them. Then they will say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, ... we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."  
—Isa. 25:9

Meanwhile, during this present Gospel Age, the Lord has honored one here and there by responding to their cry. Paul speaks of these as seeking the Lord, "if haply they might feel after him, and find him." (Acts 17:27) It would be impossible for any to find the Lord unless he chooses to incline, or draw near to them, and to respond to their cry for help. Therefore, if we have had this blessed experience of finding him, it means that his thoughts have turned to "us-ward," and that we can accept this as a manifestation of his special favor.

When God inclined toward us, what was the first of his wonderful works on our behalf? David gives us the answer, saying, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." (Ps. 40:2) We were all in this "horrible pit," symbolic of our being lost in sin and death. We remember the literal pit into which Joseph was cast by his brethren. It was a place from which he could not have escaped. Had his brethren not changed their minds and sold Joseph as a slave, he would have died in that pit.

We were indeed in a symbolic pit from which escape was impossible and made the more so by the miry clay into which we were sinking. It was in this condition that God found us and heard our cry for help. He not only listened, but he took hold of us

and lifted us up out of the miry clay and out of the pit and set our feet upon a rock—"that Rock was Christ." (I Cor. 10:4) Then we had a firm footing, a sure foundation, and joyfully we could sing:

"On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand."

Then God's thoughts toward us began to be manifested in further blessings. David writes that the Lord "established" his "goings"—that is, his course in life, and that applies to us with equal force. While we were in the horrible pit, and our feet were sinking in the miry clay, life had very little purpose. Many times the question probably arose in our minds as to the meaning of our existence. We had no set objective, and we likely vacillated from one notion to another. All this changed, however, when God set our feet upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

Realizing that God had made a wonderful provision for us through Christ, our hearts responded in loving devotion to him. We knew that we no longer were our own, but belonged to him, and thus should spend the remainder of our lives serving him. We consecrated, or dedicated, ourselves to do his will, and in revealing his will to us, our Heavenly Father established our "goings." That is, he pointed out not only what he wanted us to do in his service, but also that at the end of the way, if we would be "faithful unto death," we would receive a "crown of life" in the "first resurrection." (Rev. 2:10; 20:6) Therefore God invited us to set our "affection on things above," and to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."—Col. 3:2; Heb. 12:1,2

Now life had a new meaning, and a definite objective. We had a job to do. We were to “work out” our salvation, for we knew that God was working in us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:12,13) Being thus established, we were ready to “give diligence” to make our “calling and election sure,” and with Paul, we said, “This one thing I do.” (II Pet. 1:10; Phil. 3:13) We heard Jesus saying to us, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God,” and hearing this, we realized that we could not afford to be halfhearted in striving for the goal that was set before us in the Gospel. (Matt. 6:33) Moreover, we rejoiced when we remembered that it was God’s thoughts toward us that had resulted in our being in this position of high favor with him, a position in which we rejoiced “in hope of the glory of God.”—Rom. 5:2

## **A NEW SONG**

“He hath put a new song in my mouth,” David continues, “even praise unto our God.” (Ps. 40:3) The song in the mouths of most in the world today is a very sad one, if indeed they have a song at all. It was so with us until we were lifted up out of that “horrible pit.” How could we sing while our feet were sinking in the “miry clay?” Now it is different. God has given us a song to sing, one of praise to him. This new song is in reality the melody of the Truth found in God’s Word. Various symbols are used in the Bible to help us comprehend the full meaning of the Gospel of Christ. It is water, the “living water.” It is a protection against evil, “the armor of God.” It is the “light” with which the Lord has shined into our hearts.—John 4:10-14; Eph. 6:11-18; II Cor. 4:6

The song symbolism suggests the wonderful harmony of the various principles of Truth, and the melody of the promises and prophecies of the Scriptures. It is described by the Apostle John as a “new song” and “the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” (Rev. 14:3; 15:2,3) This latter reference depicts those who sing this song as standing on a “sea of glass mingled with fire,” which undoubtedly symbolizes the position of the faithful people of God, those who have “gotten the victory,” John says. They enjoy, as do those also who are striving to gain the same victory, the vantage point given them by a knowledge of God’s plan. To these, the “sea” with its roaring, which so disturbs and frightens the world, is transparent. They see its purpose, and that beyond the trouble will come the glorious new day of blessing for all mankind.

Thus, they sing this new song, the song of Moses and the Lamb. This melody, beginning with the testimony of Moses, and ending with the revelation of Jesus Christ, is one gloriously harmonious theme of divine wisdom, justice, love and power as revealed in Jehovah’s plan for the blessing of all the families of the earth. It is this new song of Truth that the Lord has put into our mouths, and its sweet sound proclaims the blessings to be showered upon both the church and the world. Its very nature can do no less than cause us to show forth, Peter says, the “praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”—I Pet. 2:9

Continuing in Psalm 40:3, David says, “Many shall see it, and fear [reverence], and shall trust in the LORD.” We know that ultimately the whole world will come to reverence and trust in God, as they gain an

understanding of his true character and plan. Even now, many see and appreciate his Word to some extent, while one here and one there embrace it in full consecration and run diligently toward the “mark for the prize of the high calling.” (Phil. 3:14) To whatever extent an individual sees the Truth of the Gospel message and appreciates it, his reverence for and trust in the Lord is increased. What a blessing that is in this time of distress upon the nations!

The psalmist says, “Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust.” (Ps. 40:4) Today, one after another of the things in which men have put their trust are failing. Their idols are crumbling, and, symbolically speaking, they are calling for the “rocks” and the “mountains” to fall on and protect them. (Rev. 6:16) What a joy, therefore, it should be to us if in singing the new song of praise to God, and in putting forth the message of the Gospel of the kingdom, some hear and learn to put their trust in God, realizing that only in the fulfillment of his promises will peace and joy come to the world.

## **OUR JUSTIFICATION**

It was to “us-ward” that God was thinking when he made it possible for us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, with the assurance that our offering would be holy and acceptable to him through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 12:1) “Being justified by faith,” Paul writes, “we have peace with God.” (Rom. 5:1) In the “horrible pit” and “miry clay” we were alienated from God, but his thoughts toward us made provision for our return to harmony and peace with him. “While we were yet sinners,” the apostle continues, “Christ died for us.” (vs. 8) It is beyond



our ability to fully understand why God would make provision for our being at peace with him; but it is so, and by this loving thought of the Creator toward us we are overwhelmed.

Paul further explains that by justification through Christ “we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:2) This grace is that wonderful position of favor in which we rejoice in “hope of the glory of God.” We cannot truly grasp the totality of this hope. Yet, we know that God’s thoughts were “us-ward” in making this provision, for the Apostle Peter explains that by the “exceeding great and precious promises” of God we have the hope of being made “partakers of the divine nature.”—II Pet. 1:4

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

God has also given us his Holy Spirit, another evidence of his thoughts toward us. What does the Holy Spirit do for us? The Scriptures explain that by it we are begotten to a new hope of life; that we are taught by means of this anointing and thus authorized to be servants of God; that the Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God; and by the Holy Spirit we are “sealed unto the day of redemption,” or deliverance.—I Pet. 1:3; I John 2:27; Rom. 8:16; Eph. 4:30

God does all these things for us, and more, through the operation of his Holy Spirit in our lives. By that Spirit we are also guided in the narrow way; comforted in our sorrows; enlightened when the way seems dark; strengthened when weary; corrected when wayward; and warned when in danger. How wonderful is the Master’s assurance that the

Heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children.—Luke 11:13

## **GOD'S ARMOR AND FORTRESS**

Even though our feet are firmly established upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, we are surrounded by enemies. Satan as a roaring lion is seeking to destroy us. (I Pet. 5:8) In addition, we have to contend against the opposition of the world and also fight against the foes within, that is, our own fallen flesh. However, we need not fear. God's thoughts toward us have provided an "armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."—II Cor. 6:7

Paul tells us that we need to put on this armor in order to stand in this evil day. It is the armor of God, and it affords complete protection if put on and properly used. There is the "helmet of salvation;" the "breastplate of righteousness;" the "shield of faith;" the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God;" the girdle of truth; and for our feet there is the "preparation of the gospel of peace." (Eph. 6:13-17) We could not ask for an armor more complete than this. With such an all-inclusive armor, we are able to fight the "good fight of faith" victoriously.—I Tim. 6:12

Not only has God provided an armor, but he has promised that he will be a "fortress" to us. David wrote, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." (Ps. 91:1,2) Surely we can put our trust in the most High, for here we have another reminder of his "us-ward" thoughts. Even before he inclined toward us and heard our cry

for help, he made every provision whereby we might “war a good warfare” as “soldiers of Jesus Christ,” and be victorious.—I Tim. 1:18; II Tim. 2:3

## **THE THRONE OF GRACE**

In his thoughts toward us God knew that frequently we would need to commune with him in order to be reassured of his forgiveness and love, and to draw upon his grace to help in times of need. Thus, he made provision for this. He arranged that although sinful and imperfect, and by nature having no claims upon his grace, we could, through Jesus’ name, come into his presence to seek forgiveness, as well as to ask for his guidance and strength.—Heb. 4:16

Through his beloved Son, our Heavenly Father outlined the manner in which we should pray, and the things for which we should ask. We can pray for the coming of his kingdom, and for our daily bread, temporal and spiritual. Through Christ we can ask for divine forgiveness, provided we forgive those who trespass against us. We can claim his promise not to lead us into temptation, but to deliver us from the evil that threatens every day, and to help us attain unto the “first resurrection,” to live and reign with Christ.—Rev. 20:6

God has promised to supply all our needs, and for them all we can pray. (Phil. 4:19) How loving were his thoughts to us in making the provision of prayer. As New Creatures it is our lifeline to God. It is our means of communication whereby we keep contact with divine source of wisdom, strength, and courage to go on in the narrow way, to continue the “good fight” and to “press toward the mark.” “Prayer keeps the Christian’s armor bright,” wrote

the poet, and "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees."

Surely the psalmist was right when he said that God's thoughts toward us are so many and varied that they "cannot be reckoned up in order," and are "more than can be numbered." In his love he thought of all our needs from before the time he called us, even until we reach the end of the way; and beyond that, provided us the hope of "glory and honour and immortality." (Rom. 2:7) He inclined toward us with mercy and love to forgive, guide, strengthen, protect, encourage, comfort, and inspire us with a heavenly hope. Daily, as he lifts up his countenance upon us to give peace and the assurance that his thoughts continue to "us-ward," God invites us to commune with him so we may become more intimately acquainted with his character and plan, and thus rejoice the more that we are so richly blessed in being members of his divine family.

### **"LO, I COME"**

Returning to our lesson in the 40th Psalm, verses 7 and 8 read: "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." This passage is quoted by the Apostle Paul and applied to Jesus, describing his spirit of consecration. (Heb. 10:7,9) Many of the Old Testament promises and prophecies concerning Jesus apply also to the members of his body; that is, they refer to the entire Christ class. It seems reasonable that the 40th Psalm is one of these. Jesus personally did not need to be lifted up out of a horrible pit and from the miry clay. However, those who become members of his

symbolic “body” do thus need to be rescued from sin and condemnation, so he is represented as speaking for all those whom he “is not ashamed to call ... brethren.”—Heb. 2:11

It was Jesus, the Head of this little company whom the Heavenly Father so specially loved, who set the example of full devotion to God, as represented by the expression, “Lo, I come: ... to do thy will.” This also should be the spirit of our devotion. The loving-kindness of our God should induce us to be ever more determined that all our thoughts, words and deeds will be such only as are in harmony with his will, hence pleasing to him.

It may be difficult, at times, for our faith to grasp the reality of the love of God, and the fullness with which his thoughts have been toward us. In this connection it will help if we remember that Jesus, our Head, was the first to have this love bestowed upon him, and that the Father’s love for us is because we are all “one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28) Jesus mentions this in his prayer to God on behalf of his footstep followers, saying, “I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:26) Let us, then, never doubt that God thinks about us, loves us, and cares for us. He loved Jesus, who was daily his delight, and Jesus prayed that this same love be manifested toward us. Truly we are a favored people!

### **GOD’S LOVINGKINDNESS NOT CONCEALED**

In the Psalm, Jesus is represented as saying, “I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation:

I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.” (Ps. 40:10) How true this was of Jesus, God’s “faithful and true witness.” (Rev. 3:14) It should also be true of us, for Jesus is our example, and we are walking in his steps. How can we keep from declaring the faithfulness and lovingkindness of him whose “us-ward” thoughts have filled our lives with blessings so rich and bountiful? Such is especially so since we have learned that God has also made provision for the ultimate blessing of all the families of the earth.

In another place the psalmist writes, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night.” (Ps. 92:1,2) Indeed, this is the only thing we can properly do if we truly appreciate what the Lord has done for us. It should be a joy to show forth God’s praises! We can do this because he has put a new song in our mouths—the new song of truth and righteousness; the song of God’s plan of salvation for both the church and the world; the “song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.”

It is a wonderful song, a beautiful story of divine love which seems each time we tell it more wonderfully sweet. Let us, then, not conceal this song in our hearts, but sing it aloud, and thus let the people near and far know how wonderful our God is, and that his loving-kindness will yet be known throughout all the earth. Who shall not praise God when his righteous thoughts and acts are not only toward those who believe now, but are made manifest toward “all nations” and people, the entire human race!—Rev. 15:4 ■

# The City of God

***“By faith he  
[Abraham]  
sojourned in the  
land of promise, as  
in a strange  
country, dwelling  
in tabernacles with  
Isaac and Jacob,  
the heirs with him  
of the same  
promise: For he  
looked for a city  
which hath  
foundations, whose  
builder and  
maker is God.”  
—Hebrews 11:9,10***

## **THE FIRST RECORD WE**

have in the Bible indicating that God’s purpose toward humanity would be carried out through a “seed” is the statement he made to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, that the seed of the “woman” would “bruise,” or crush, its head. (Gen. 3:15) Various statements in the New Testament reveal that this foretold “bruising” is to be accomplished by Christ and his faithful followers when exalted to glory, and reigning

in the Messianic kingdom.—Rom. 16:20; Rev. 20:1-4

In the gradual unfolding of God’s plan, a more meaningful promise was made by him to Abraham, formerly called Abram. Jehovah told him that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. This promise of blessing was first made to Abraham while he lived in Ur of the Chaldees. It reads, “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 had entered the land of Canaan, the Lord said to him, “Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.”—Gen 13:14-16

Later, after Abraham had demonstrated his faithfulness by showing his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering, God confirmed his promise to him by an oath. This promise concerning the “seed” and the blessing of all the families of the earth is often referred to as God’s oath-bound covenant. (Gen. 22:15-18) In this statement of the covenant, a further item was added which reads, “Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.”

In the various foregoing statements of this covenant, a number of points may be noted. There was to be a seed of blessing; all families of the earth were to be blessed; the land of Canaan was promised to Abraham and his descendants; and his seed was to possess the gate of his enemies. In examining these various aspects of the covenant as they are touched upon throughout the Scriptures, it becomes apparent that the entire plan of God for human redemption and salvation is thus foretold.



## **ABRAHAM LOOKED FOR A CITY**

Our opening text informs us that Abraham journeyed in the land of promise, as in a strange country, lodging in temporary dwellings, looking for a permanent home, a “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Abraham originally lived in the city of Ur, and apparently had been prosperous. He subsequently lived in tents, or “tabernacles.” This was not because he had suddenly become poor and could not afford a better home, but rather, he was waiting for God to build a city for him, one which he could occupy in keeping with his understanding of the covenant of promise which Jehovah had given to him.

Cities in Abraham’s time were not like the cities of today. Usually they were small, and often surrounded by a wall. In many instances they were composed of people who were largely members of one family, or tribe, with a responsible head of the family as the ruler. The people of Ur were, for the most part, worshipers of heathen gods, and Abraham found himself almost alone in his worship of the true and living God. In this position he would have little influence in the government of the city.

God, however, had promised that Abraham was to have a seed, or offspring, of his own. This seed would exercise authority and power, as implied in the statement, “Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.” Abraham perhaps visualized his family becoming large and powerful, with its strength concentrated in a “city,” which eventually would extend its sphere of influence over other families and cities, and beneficently extend God’s promised blessings to them. We know, of course, that Abraham’s

understanding, in whatever conclusions he may have reached concerning the meaning of God's covenant, came far short of the reality. Ultimately, he "died in faith," not having received the fulfillment of God's promise.—Heb. 11:13,39

A city is used in the Bible to symbolize a government, or kingdom. Nineveh, Babylon, and other great cities of the past were viewed as governmental centers. The same was true of the city of Jerusalem, and particularly Mount Zion in Jerusalem. It is not to be supposed that Abraham could possibly realize all the implications of the promise which God made to him. However, the fact that he "looked for a city" suggests that he understood Jehovah's promise to him meant that one day God would set up a governmental arrangement that would bless all the families of the earth, and that his seed would be used in some manner by the Lord in this government.

Isaac and Jacob also had great faith in the promises made to Abraham. On his deathbed Jacob prophesied that "Shiloh," meaning "peaceful one," would arise in the family of his son Judah, and that "unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Jacob foretold that "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." (Gen. 49:10) This prophetic language implied the coming of a great ruler as the seed of Abraham.

Hundreds of years later this royal line of promise through the tribe of Judah was narrowed to the family of David. The Lord said to him, "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." (II Sam. 7:16) In response to this promise, David said

to God, “Thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come.”—vs. 19

David came closer to being right than he realized in making this remark, for hundreds of years later the angel Gabriel revealed that the real heir of David’s throne was Christ. He said to Mary, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”—Luke 1:32,33

## **OBEDIENCE AND FAITH REQUIRED**

In the New Testament we find the requirement of obedience emphasized in connection with the promised seed. This was also expressed with regard to the promise made to Abraham when God said that his worthiness to receive it was “because thou hast obeyed my voice.” (Gen. 22:18) The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day, who were natural descendants of Abraham, were informed by Jesus that they were not in reality the children of Abraham, because they did not obey the teachings of God and the righteous principles of the Mosaic Law.—John 7:19-24; 8:39,44

Paul also emphasized that simply being a natural descendant of Abraham did not in itself constitute one a part of his seed of promise. “I could wish,” Paul wrote, “that myself were accursed [margin: separated] from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers,

and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”—Rom. 9:3-8

In this statement Paul reveals that the true seed of Abraham are also “children of God.” This agrees with John 1:11,12, where we read that Jesus came to his own according to the flesh, the natural seed of Abraham. However, the majority of “his own received him not.” John explains, though, that those who did receive Jesus, by faith in his redemptive sacrifice, were given the power, right or authority, “to become the sons of God.” Thus, through obedience and faith, they became a part of the true seed of Abraham.

Another interesting truth comes to light in the New Testament concerning the seed of Abraham, which is that believing Gentiles as well as Israelites are considered to be a part of the seed class. As Paul explains the matter, nationalities do not enter into it at all. He states: “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:26-29, *New International Version*

## CHILDREN OF GOD

Thus does Paul explain clearly that the children of God of this age are also the seed of Abraham—that seed through which all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Jesus is the chief of this seed class. (Gal. 3:16) He is the Head over what Paul describes as his house: “But Christ as a son over his own house; which house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”—Heb. 3:6

Here the word “house” carries the same connotation as when the Bible speaks of “the house of David.” It is a royal, or ruling house, in which every consecrated follower of the Master can be a member if they “hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope” unto the end of their earthly course. Indeed, the followers of the Master are called upon to be faithful even unto death, and only upon this basis will they be rewarded with “the crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

Paul wrote, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And 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.” (Rom. 8:16,17) The words “heirs” and “joint-heirs” as used here by the apostle pertain to the throne, or kingdom of Christ, the greater fulfillment of David’s kingdom. Paul explained further concerning the prospect of sharing in the work of Christ’s kingdom, “It is a faithful saying: For 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

In Hebrews 12:22 the Apostle Paul associates the hope of the children of God, the faith seed of Abraham,

with “mount Sion,” and “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Based on the promises made to him Abraham looked for this city of God, but he did not comprehend the full truth concerning it. However, Abraham had faith to believe that through his seed God would at some future time establish rulership over the earth by means of a kingdom of justice and righteousness which would result in all the families of the earth being blessed.

## **MOUNT ZION**

David established his government on Mount Zion, which was a part of the literal earthly Jerusalem of his day. In harmony with this, the Bible shows those who constitute the greater ruling house of David as being in “mount Sion” [Greek spelling]. The Apostle John wrote, “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.”—Rev. 14:1

The “Lamb” of God is Jesus, this symbolism being used to remind us that it was first necessary for him to suffer and die as man’s Redeemer before he could rule from symbolic “mount Sion.” (Isa. 53:7; John 1:29; Rev. 13:8) Those who are shown with the Lamb on Mount Sion, John further wrote, “are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” (Rev. 14:4) There is no other way to be on Mount Sion with the Lamb, to live and reign with him, than to follow him by walking in his footsteps of sacrifice and service, faithfully unto death.

The present Gospel Age is the period set aside in the plan of God for the calling and preparation of those who will be on Mount Sion with the Lamb, to

share in the rulership of his kingdom. Peter testified that “God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name;” that is, the people who have the Heavenly Father’s name “written in their foreheads,” and who one day will be the “bride,” the “wife” of the Lamb.—Acts 15:14; Rev. 19:7; 21:2

These are partakers of a “heavenly calling.” (Heb. 3:1) Their hope is to be with Jesus, who promised to his faithful followers, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:2,3) The Apostle John also wrote, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—I John 3:2

## **A SPIRITUAL PRIESTHOOD**

Those who partake of the heavenly calling, and eventually will be with Jesus in glory to live and reign with him as the greater house of David, must offer themselves fully to God in service and sacrifice for the divine cause. The Apostle Peter wrote, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up ... sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people [Greek: God’s special possession]; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”—I Pet. 2:5,9,10

Peter's observation that those to whom he wrote had not in the past been God's people is in keeping with the divine arrangement that Gentiles, by their faith and obedience, could qualify to be the children of God, and members of his ruling house of sons. In the verses just preceding, Peter speaks of those who were "disobedient" and had rejected Jesus, "the chief corner stone" which God had laid in Sion.—I Pet. 2:6-8

Peter's words are a reference to the prophecy of Psalm 118:22,23. Jesus also quoted from this prophecy, and declared that because of the unfaithfulness of Israel as a nation in failing to accept him, the "kingdom of God" would be taken from them and "given to a nation bringing forth the fruits" of righteousness. (Matt. 21:42,43) Thus, Peter's reference to this in connection with his statement, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation," is a positive identification of the "nation" to which the kingdom of God was given when taken away from the nation of Israel.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly, however, that faithfulness and obedience to the Lord is the condition upon which anyone may hope to be a member of this new nation to which the privileges of rulership in the kingdom of God are given. This holy nation, this ruling nation, is made up of faithful individuals, beginning with Jesus, its Head. Many proved worthy of this exalted position as members of the royal seed of Abraham during the period of the Early Church. There have been some in each generation since. There are still those in the world today who are earnestly endeavoring to make their "calling and election sure" to a place in the future ruling nation.—II Pet. 1:10



Only when all the individuals comprising this holy nation have proven faithful, will it be brought together as a ruling house. This takes place at the end, or harvest, of the present age. (Matt. 13:39,43, *NIV*) The assembling of all the faithful individuals is made possible through the resurrection of the dead—the “first resurrection” of those who will live and reign with Christ a thousand years.—Rev. 20:6

Then, under Christ, and as the ruling seed of Abraham, this kingdom class will make up that “city” for which Abraham looked, the city whose “builder and maker is God.” It is that “holy city, New Jerusalem,” which John in his vision saw “coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev. 21:2) This holy city is the ruling seed of Abraham which will fulfill God’s promise to bless “all the families of the earth.”

Concerning this John wrote: “I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.” (Rev. 21:3-5) Could we have a better description of divine blessings being dispensed to all the families of the earth? Truly, God has made it crystal clear as to the extent to which the ruling seed of Abraham will bless all the families of the earth.

God promised Abraham that his seed would “possess the gate of his enemies,” meaning to subdue and control them. The ultimate and complete fulfillment of this promise is described by the Apostle Paul. He wrote that Christ, the Head of the ruling seed of Abraham, must 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 was not possible for Abraham to visualize this glorious fulfillment of God’s oath-bound promise, but how he will rejoice when he comes to a realization of God’s wonderful provision for all mankind!

John further wrote of this holy city, “The nations ... shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And 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. And 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. 21:24-27

Here the city of God is shown functioning as a government, with its subjects being drawn into its environs and being blessed. Even though the city is founded in heaven, its subjects are upon the earth, and in order to receive the blessings as such they must be purified, and wholeheartedly accept the rulership of the holy city over their lives. Assuredly, this is a bright prospect for the dying world of mankind, which so much needs the favor and blessing of our loving God! ■

# Gaining the Victory

*“Behold, I send you  
forth as sheep in  
the midst of  
wolves.”*  
—Matthew 10:16

**AS WE APPROACH THE** close of another year, it is not only good that we contemplate with heartfelt thanks the many blessings which the

Lord’s hand has bestowed upon us, but it is also needful to look introspectively at our progress in the narrow way. Such honest self-examination will most likely remind us that we have had both successes and setbacks during the year past in the way of character development and in the display of the fruits and graces of God’s Holy Spirit.

In the process of examining ourselves, we should also be reminded that regardless of how long we have been in the Christian way, there are enemies that we must contend with—enemies which continue to look for our weak points and seek to exploit them. In the words of our opening text, Jesus speaks of his followers metaphorically as “sheep in the midst of wolves.” Conditions in the world are somewhat different today than they were when Jesus sent his disciples out into the ministry and

said that they would find themselves “in the midst of wolves.” Nevertheless, our enemies as Christians are like wolves, willing to devour us spiritually. These enemies, we have come to realize, are three-fold—the world, our fallen flesh, and our most powerful enemy, the devil.

## **THE WORLD**

It is important to note first that when speaking of the world as our enemy, and our fight against it, we should not suppose that we are to do battle with its institutions, governments, social or economic systems. These aspects of the “present evil world” are in the process of falling and will soon give way to the righteous kingdom of Christ. (II Pet. 3:10,13) These are not our battles, but the Lord’s.

The world is our enemy, and we do battle against it, because it has a wrong set of character and moral values, and because its spirit of pride and selfishness will hinder us from making our calling and election sure. It is a spirit that will harm our endeavors to overcome the things that are of little eternal worth. The Apostle John stated emphatically: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”—I John 2:15-17

A proper appraisal of true values has emphasized in our minds the verity of the Scripture which says that the “things that can be seen are temporary,

but things that cannot be seen are eternal.” (II Cor. 4:18, *International Standard Version*) Every one of us recognizes as Christians that this is a true presentation of God-like values. To state the matter in perhaps even clearer terms, we might say that the blessings of the world are, at best, only fleeting, while the blessings of God last forever.

Another sense in which the world is our enemy is found in its spirit of indifference—indifference to sin, to one’s fellow man, to honesty as well as integrity, and to personal responsibility. If such a spirit should dwell in the character of the Christian it would likely find its expression in spiritual lethargy, complacency, and an attitude of taking things for granted. The Scriptures warn us of this spirit of lukewarmness, being neither cold nor hot—unconcerned, indifferent to God and our responsibilities to him.—Rev. 3:14-17

In Matthew 13:22 Jesus made this statement: “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” In this parable the Master tells us of two very formidable enemies which we meet in the world. Every Christian has certain cares of this life, but the thought of the Greek word translated “care” is that of anxiety and distraction. Though we must look after and manage the cares of this life, if they become distractions to us and cause anxiety, they can easily become an enemy to spiritual growth. Then there is the “deceitfulness of riches.” We can fall victim to the deceitfulness, or delusion, of worldly riches whether or not we actually possess them.

Our Lord told us to watch out for these two foes in the army of this world, because if we do not, they will deceive and outsmart us, and win the battle. They will have us so completely surrounded by thorns that our spiritual life will be choked out. Therefore, they must be fought against wherever they are found.

The cares of this life are found in the home, in our social activities, in our neighborhood contacts, and in our business life. Indeed, we rightfully owe something to every one of these "cares." We owe much to our husband or wife; we owe a proper upbringing and earthly provisions to our children as they grow to adulthood; certainly, also, we owe time and energy to our job and business associates; we owe friendliness and goodwill to our neighbors and all with whom we come in contact.

The question, however, that we have to answer is: Are we so overwhelmed by these otherwise legitimate cares, and the time and energy that are devoted to them, that we deprive God of something that he has a right to expect from us? Borrowing an illustration used by the Lord, are we rendering "unto Caesar" more than is his due? Are we rendering "unto God" less than even his reasonable expectation? (Matt. 22:21) These are heart-searching questions which every Christian must soberly consider.

In I Corinthians 2:12, the Apostle Paul makes this statement: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." If our successful endeavors in the affairs of this life, or in the obtaining of earthly

riches, to any extent seduces us from our consecration and devotion to the Heavenly Father, then to that extent, we will likely be lacking in the use of all the many spiritual “things that are freely given to us of God.”

Our associates in the world may consider us “failures” as they witness our devotion of time and energy to spiritual things. May it be so, for this will indicate “success” to the Lord and to us in the fulfillment of our consecration. Let us remember Paul’s counsel: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation [Greek: generation], among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life.” (Phil. 2:15,16) If we have fought the battle against the spirit of the world to the extent that we, as lights, are showing forth by our example the “word of life,” then we have gained a measurable victory, and will be “rich toward God.”—Luke 12:21

## **THE FLESH**

The flesh is a daunting enemy of the Christian, with its ambitions, passions, human desires and dreams. The flesh is subject to temptation from without, and so prone to weaknesses from within. Our battle is not merely to control the urges of fleshly gratification or sinful practices, but also includes additional areas. It is a battle of the human nature against the spiritual nature, to which we have been begotten as New Creatures. It is the internal conflict involving proper, wholesome aims and ambitions, to which the world has a legitimate right, versus the goals, desires, hopes and prospects of

the child of God. It is the struggle of self-will against the doing of God's will.

Similar to our battle against the world, a proper appraisal of values is key to approaching our fight against the fallen tendencies of the flesh. As already noted, the things of the flesh are temporal, but the things of God are eternal. The Apostle Paul wrote: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Rom. 12:1,2

How can we stimulate the work of being "transformed" into the image of God's dear Son? The next verse helps us along this line. "For I say," Paul continues, "through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly." (vs. 3) Later, in the 16th verse of the same chapter, the apostle, in concluding his argument, says: "Be not wise in your own conceits." In yet another place, Paul admonishes us, saying, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."—Gal. 6:7,8

Many people in the world have an inordinate love of themselves. Noticeably few, however, attempt to fight against this tendency. As Christians, we are not immune to this battle, and must fight "self" to a greater or lesser degree throughout our lives. We



have to fight pride, selfishness, self-will, and other propensities which promote our flesh. As children of God, in humility, we are to depend upon his providential assistance, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to win the fight against our flesh. Paul states, "If through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live."—Rom. 8:13, *New Living Translation*

Further advice in the fight against our fallen flesh is found in these words: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." "For we ... worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Phil. 2:3; 3:3) To follow these instructions is to control the natural pride and selfishness of the flesh and is essential if we would win our battle against this great enemy.

## **THE DEVIL**

Besides the spirit of the world and our fallen flesh, there is our most inherently powerful enemy, the devil. He is a sly, deceitful and wily foe. He has convinced many that he does not even exist, a very enchanting thought to the depraved mind. Then again, he suggests to others that although he exists, he is no worse than God, who he has falsely portrayed as willing to torment masses of mankind forever in a burning hell.

The Apostle Peter wrote: "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith." (I Pet. 5:8,9) This text of Scripture tells us one of the ways in which we must fight against the

devil, who as a lion is seeking those whom he can devour. Peter says we are to “resist” him, “stedfast in the faith.” Strong faith is a most effective and necessary weapon in battling this great foe. We may liken it to the small pebble from the brook which young David used to slay the giant Goliath.

Indeed, true faith is a powerful force against Satan, the devil. However, he does not give up, but continually attempts to attack our faith by every means possible. He may plant seeds of doubt in our mind; or use his weapon of discouragement; perhaps he will seek to lead us astray by means of error. The devil’s deceptions are indeed many and varied. However, “we are not ignorant of his devices.” Therefore, Paul says, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (II Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11) Let us remain steadfast in the faith, and in our appreciation of the Gospel of the kingdom!

Jesus spoke of some who would hear the word of God, but “then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts.” (Luke 8:12) The devil, our great adversary, has done this to individuals in the past, and he could do so to us, if we do not remain steadfast in the faith. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”—Heb. 2:1

## **NOT ALONE IN THE BATTLE**

Our battle against the world, our flesh, and the devil is a most challenging one. However, in this warfare we are not alone. If such were the case, we would be defeated almost before the fight started.

Let us, therefore, consider our comrades in this fight, the ones upon whom we can depend—the Lord, the Truth, and our brethren. “With us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles.” (II Chron. 32:8) This one promise in itself is a most powerful argument that the warfare is worthwhile.

“The LORD is my strength.” “I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (Ps. 28:7; Heb. 13:6; Josh. 1:9) Is there not great consolation in these words? We realize that it is in God’s strength that we will win the conflict. Because the battle rages, decisions have to be made, and sometimes it may seem that we fight alone, but this is not the case. We have never fought alone! No one fights the good fight of faith without divine help, and though we may even walk through the “valley of the shadow of death,” we will “fear no evil: for thou art with me.”—Ps. 23:4

“Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,” the psalmist continues. Most assuredly, in this battle the Lord is always there. It is our understanding of this that gives us courage to know that we are fighting under the banner of our Heavenly Father and his Son, Christ Jesus, the Captain of our salvation.

To do God’s bidding and to keep his commandments is the heart’s desire of all true Christians. If we continually open our hearts to the promises of God, the promises of help and strength for every time of need, the promises of his providences on our behalf, then we will go forth strong in the realization of the divine goodness manifest toward us.

We will have also the assurances of God's mercy and grace and receive the needed strength daily which these promises have always given to the people of God.

## **THE TRUTH**

We also have the Truth of God's Word, and what a sanctifying power it has been, and continues to be, in our Christian walk. (John 17:17) It has helped us not to be conformed to this world because it has given us an understanding of spiritual values, and it has greatly assisted us in our transformation into the likeness of God's dear Son. It has told us what the will of God is—what is good and well-pleasing and perfect in his sight.

We are thrilled by the words of the hymn:

“Praise to him, by whose kind favor  
Heavenly Truth has reached our ears;  
May its sweet, reviving savor  
Fill our hearts and calm our fears.

Truth, how sacred is the treasure!  
Teach us, Lord, its worth to know,  
Vain the hope, and short the pleasure,  
Which from other sources flow.”

The Heavenly Father has given us fundamental teachings and doctrine in his Word, the Bible. These truths will never change. Let us study them that we might grow in grace and in a knowledge of how to properly apply their righteous principles in our daily Christian life. It is only as we appreciate and internalize these essential elements of the Holy Scriptures that we are able to realize the privileges that we have in connection with them.

## THE BRETHREN

We have each other, our beloved brethren, to help us in our spiritual battle as well. The apostle chose his words well when he wrote to those who “have obtained like precious faith.” (II Pet. 1:1) Let us think of the beauty of those words and the effect they have had upon us as a brotherhood in Christ! What a blessing it is to have fellowship with those of “like precious faith.” What great encouragement it has been to us that we have others who can share our fellowship and participate in our mutual love for the Lord, for the Truth, and for one another. Our brethren have often been a source of stimulation when, at times, our own zeal and faith may have lagged.

Due to the weaknesses of our flesh, there are times when we, as brethren, are a source of trial and testing to one another. This is permitted by God and is part of the battle in which we are all engaged. Primarily, these are tests of our character, our motives, and of the “thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12) Let us remember that we are all part of “one body,” and thus seek to help “bear ... one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” (I Cor. 12:12; Gal. 6:2) Let us stand shoulder to shoulder encouraging one another as we fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

In Malachi 3:16,17 we read: “Then they that feared [reverenced] the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make

up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

This text of Scripture was written especially for our benefit. We speak often one with another because we need the mutual help and the encouragement which is thus provided. We “forsake not the assembling” of ourselves together because we need the fellowship, support, and love of one another. (Heb. 10:25) Even when we may only be two or three, nevertheless we can rejoice because we have the promise, “They shall be mine ... when I make up my jewels,” God’s special treasure.

Over the course of our Christian walk, the battles we engage in will be won or lost, not by the big things we do, but by the little things—little sacrifices; small expressions of sympathy and encouragement; little acts of unselfish kindness; consideration of others more than ourselves in small ways; little victories over little temptations; taking advantage of small opportunities to witness; small sacrifices of time and energy. If we are faithful in these little things associated with our battle, the big things will come into line under the direction of our Captain, and we will be victorious.

These little victories will attract the Lord more fully into our lives. They will attract the Truth into our hearts with a deeper appreciation of its beauty. They will also attract the brethren into a closer and richer fellowship with us. Let us, then, together with the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren, continue to fight, and by God’s grace, gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”—I Cor. 15:57 ■

# “I Wish I Knew What To Do!”

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# CONVENTIONS

*These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167*

**IBADAN, NIGERIA CONVENTION, December 4,5—DEC. 4 WILL BE IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE. DEC. 5 WILL BE IN PERSON ONLY**—Contact C. Egbu. Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

**CHICAGO CONVENTION, January 1,2—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact C. Martire. Phone: (312) 925-5434 or Email: christina.martire@gmail.com

**PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 15,16—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact A. Mengos. Email: samengos@yahoo.com

**AUSTRALIAN CONVENTION, January 21-23—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE (UBERCONFERENCE) ONLY**—Contact R. Charlton. Email: randscharlton@bigpond.com

**SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 18-20—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact K. Freer. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

**FLORIDA CONVENTION—March 5-7—WILL BE IN PERSON. AND BROADCAST ONLINE ALSO**—Holiday Inn Orlando Airport, 5750 T. G. Lee Boulevard, Orlando, FL 32822. Contact L. McClellan. Phone: (727) 260-2632 or Email: larrydmcclellan@gmail.com

**HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, April 2—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

## ***It Came Upon the Midnight Clear***

*It came upon the midnight clear,  
That glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth  
To touch their harps of gold,  
    "Peace on the earth, good will to men  
    From heaven's all gracious King."  
The world in solemn stillness lay,  
To hear the angels sing.*

*Still through the cloven skies they come,  
With peaceful wings unfurled;  
And still their heavenly music floats  
O'er all the weary world.*

*Above its sad and lowly plains  
They bend on hov'ring wing,  
And ever o'er its Babel sounds  
The blessed angels sing.*

*And ye, beneath life's crushing load  
Whose forms are bending low,  
Who toil along the climbing way  
With painful steps and slow;  
    Look now! for glad and golden hours  
    Come swiftly on the wing;  
    O rest beside the weary road  
    And hear the angels sing.*

*For lo! the days are hast'ning on,  
By prophets seen of old,  
When with the ever-circling years  
Shall come the time foretold,  
    When the new heaven and earth shall own  
    The Prince of Peace their King,  
    And the whole world send back the song  
    Which now the angels sing.*

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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. 55

