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Man's Search for God

*“As I passed by,
and beheld your
devotions, I found
an altar with this
inscription, TO
THE UNKNOWN
GOD. Whom
therefore ye
ignorantly
worship, him
declare I unto
you.”*
—Acts 17:23

WHEN WE CONSIDER ALL the turmoil in the world today, its challenges and problems of such enormous magnitude, we might be inclined to believe that mankind has mostly given up on any real belief in God. Indeed, atheism is on the rise in many parts of the world, with an estimated 500 million claiming no belief in God, according to surveys

done in recent years. Not surprisingly, China and Russia are major contributors to this number, and of the total number worldwide who identify themselves as atheists, over 75% reside in Asia.

Notwithstanding the growth of atheism, the same surveys show that well over 90% of the world's population still believe in some type of deity or supreme being. In one particularly interesting observation, a 2004 survey revealed that of those who responded that they were atheists, 30% also said

that they sometimes prayed. Perhaps this shows that, even among those not professing belief in God, there is seemingly an inborn desire in man to worship and commune with a higher being.

As we look at such things, it is apparent that one of mankind's challenges when contemplating the existence of a deity or supreme being is a general lack of understanding as to who God truly is, what his attributes are, and what his plan is for the earth and its inhabitants. Scholars, teachers, and philosophers, both religious and secular, have weighed in on these matters for centuries, promoting theory after theory. Yet, to many, the various explanations given as to who God is have not been very satisfying to the soul.

We suggest to any who are truly seeking to know more about God that the philosophies and traditions of men first be put to the side. In their place, we recommend that a consideration of what is found in the Scriptures be pursued and studied, to see whether, in its pages, can be found harmonious and reasonable conclusions concerning the one whom so many in the world still desire to worship. If such reasonableness and harmony can be thus found, then we may be enabled to gain a better understanding of the supreme being, his character and his purposes.

ATHENS—A PLACE OF MANY GODS

An appropriate place to start when considering what the Bible has to say about God is the ancient Greek city of Athens, well known in history as a place of many gods. When the Apostle Paul visited Athens near the beginning of the Christian era, he found the people given over almost entirely to the

worship of idols to various deities. It has been claimed that there were more idols in Athens at that time than in all the rest of Greece, and that the Athenians imported the deities and superstitions of every nation, along with their arts, philosophies and learning. A historian once satirically noted that it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man.

In addition to the worship of many gods, there were also numerous philosophers in Athens. Two primary groups of these are both cited by Paul—the Epicureans and the Stoics. (Acts 17:18) The Epicureans were followers of the Athenian philosopher Epicurus, and as one writer has stated, “Materialism and sensual selfishness was the ultimate tendency of Epicurus’ teaching.” These, even as many still do today, tended to live according to the phrase, “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” The Epicureans graciously, and probably for reasons of personal popularity, did not deny outright the existence of the many heathen gods of the times, but insisted that these really had nothing to do with the creation of the world and what is in it.

The Stoics, on the other hand, more firmly believed in being submissive to natural laws, but were very vague in their philosophy, and they had little or no faith in a future life. They generally attempted to live a morally righteous life, but egotism and pride were at the root, rather than humility. The Stoics also bowed to fate, rather than viewing life’s experiences in the light of divine providence.

It was these two groups of philosophers who called Paul in question. To them he was advocating “strange

gods,” because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. “And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?”—Acts 17:16-19

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PAUL

This furnished Paul with a unique opportunity to set forth some basic truths pertaining to the great and loving God of the Bible, the Creator and ruler of the universe. As Paul was led to Areopagus, or Mars’ hill, the route took him close to a large display of idols, each ascribed to a particular god. When he stood on the hill and faced his audience these idols would be visible in the valley below. Towering above him was the Acropolis on which there stood in all its architectural glory that massive temple—the Parthenon.

Paul made full use of this setting as he explained to the Greek philosophers important facts concerning the God he worshipped, and the “new” religion he was advocating. He began his sermon by reminding them that one of their idols was ascribed “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.” Even in Paul’s day, and among the wisest philosophers of the time, there was the acknowledgment of the existence of a God about whom they knew little or nothing.

Paul explained that this “unknown God,” whom they ignorantly worshipped, was the one he now proclaimed to them. He then proceeded to call their attention to some of the characteristics of this unknown God. This was the great and powerful God who had “made the world and all things therein.” Furthermore, this true and living God, Paul explained, “is Lord of heaven and earth,” and

since this was true, he could not be expected to dwell in “temples made with hands.” (Acts 17:24) Here we can envision Paul taking a glance at the magnificent temple which towered above him as he spoke, a temple that housed many gods. His words would indicate that the unknown God he was identifying for them was entirely too great and too glorious to be confined in any structure which could be erected by man, regardless of how beautiful and magnificent it might be.

This is a great truth concerning the God of all glory which is important for all to remember. Man’s finite minds are often impressed by the displays of splendor which are to be seen throughout the world in the various temples, churches and buildings of worship. To the extent that these lift our minds and hearts to the true and living God of wisdom, justice, love, and power, and inspire us to devote our lives to his service, they serve a useful purpose. May we ever realize, however, that the true God of our worship, and to whom we are devoted, could not now be expected to dwell in buildings made with hands any more than in the days of Paul.

King Solomon of Israel recognized this many centuries prior to Paul’s day. Solomon’s temple was probably the most magnificent ever constructed up until that time. Yet, when it was completed, he realized that the great God of Israel could not be confined within its walls, and in his prayer of dedication said, “Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!”—II Chron. 6:18

JESUS' AFFIRMATION

Jesus also affirmed this larger viewpoint of the true and living God. A Samaritan woman raised the question with Jesus as to where God should be worshipped, whether at Mt. Gerizim in Samaria, or Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. Jesus' reply did away with the necessity of limiting the worship of God to specific locations. He explained that "God is a Spirit," hence invisible to human eyes, and that the true worship of him is "in spirit and in truth."—John 4:20-24

The word "spirit" is used here in contrast with that which is material and visible. Visible images and representations of God, as in idols, are hindrances to true worship, for the mind concentrates on the image and sees little beyond. God is a living being, but not human, and so far above us that it is impossible for us fully to conceive him. Our minds and hearts should "see" him as the one in whom is centered all that is good and holy. From him, "the Father of lights," comes "every good gift and every perfect gift," the Scriptures declare.—James 1:17

Prayers to this glorious God of love reach him without the aid of temples made with hands, and without the imagery associated with rituals and ceremonies. We can lift up our hearts to such a God at any time of day or night, regardless of place or circumstance. Costly temples may give a temporary sense of awe and reverence, but so much more should the "temple" of the created universe which God himself has provided, and in which we dwell, help us to realize his exalted character and majesty.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman that our great God of glory and of love should be worshipped not

only in spirit, but also in truth. There are certain basic truths concerning God which must be known if we are to worship him acceptably. It will not do to conjure up a concept of him based upon our own superstitions or others' traditions and philosophies. The Athenians did this, with the result that they worshipped many idols, but the true God remained "unknown" to them.

The human mind can never know more than a mere fraction of the whole truth concerning God, but that fraction must be veritable if we are to worship him "in spirit and in truth." All concepts of God which depict him as other than a God of wisdom, justice, love, and power, merely hinder true worship. Idols, images, and sacred objects are barriers between the human mind and the glorious and loving God of all creation.

SOURCE OF ALL LIFE AND BLESSINGS

As Paul declared to the Athenians, this true and living God, who is still unknown to much of the human race, does not dwell in man-made temples, "Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:25) How perfectly plain it should be that the Creator of all life, including our own, does not need anything from us, and that nothing wrought by human hands can be used to induce him to bless us.

God said to ancient Israel, "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the

fulness thereof.” (Ps. 50:10-12) We have nothing that we can give to God that we did not first receive from him. “In him we live, and move, and have our being,” Paul said. (Acts 17:28) We are alive only because God gave us life. We are able to move about in the pursuit of life’s responsibilities and blessings only because God designed our organisms to make this possible. Our very existence depends upon the continuance of his loving provisions.

These common blessings of life are showered upon mankind without respect to the degree of appreciation which may be manifested. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus expressed it beautifully, saying: “Your Father which is in heaven ... maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matt. 5:45) The sun and the rain, and all the other elements by which life is sustained, are the handiwork of God. They are beyond our ability either to create or to regulate.

In one sense, it is not difficult to realize why there have been those from time to time who worshipped the sun and the rain. Their failure was that they did not look beyond these to the great God of the universe who created them and pour out their heartfelt devotion to him. David did this, and wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, ... their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.”—Ps. 19:1-5

ONE HUMAN FAMILY

The Greeks were reputed to be a wise people, especially in their philosophies. It has been suggested that the Epicureans and Stoics considered themselves to be somewhat superior to the rest of society, especially those of other nationalities. If they had illusions of this sort, they would not like Paul's bold assertion that the God who was unknown to them had "made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation."—Acts 17:26, *New American Standard Bible*

Here is a great truth, simply stated, according to the Scriptures. The human family is one family, the offspring of one father, who was created by the God the Athenians called "Unknown." The great Creator of heaven and earth has made "from one man" all the various races and nationalities of humanity. The one man referred to by Paul is Adam. Paul believed in the Genesis record of creation, and in his letter to the church at Corinth he referred to Adam as being the "first man."—I Cor. 15:45

GOD IS NOT FAR FROM US

Paul additionally told the Athenians of God's desire for his human creation: "That they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, For we also are His children. Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man."—Acts 17:27-29, *NASB*

Here two great truths concerning the true and living God are beautifully expressed. He is the fountain of all life. In him “we live and move and exist,” and he wants us to seek him and to know him. Furthermore, as Paul reminds us, in seeking God we are not to think that we will find him in images of gold, or silver, or stone which are fashioned by human hands, for this would imply that the great Creator is something less than his creatures.

God is “not far” from any one of us, Paul also asserts. The apostle is not referring to distance, but to the Creator’s interest and love, and his ability to do for his human creatures all that his wisdom and love sees is best for their eternal welfare. We are not to think of God as being austere and unapproachable. Neither are we to seek him in fear, but with the assurance that he is understanding, merciful and kind.

To find and to know God is a glorious experience in one’s life. The Prophet Jeremiah wrote, “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”—Jer. 9:23,24

GOD’S WAYS HIGHER THAN OURS

We must not expect to find God in our own limited, and oftentimes, short-sighted, concepts of what we would like him to be. Many make the mistake of trying to find God in the midst of the confusion of

a selfish and dying world. They think of the crime, war, accidents, injustices, sorrow and suffering from all causes, and they wonder where God can be found in it all. The truth is that he is found in none of these things, although he has permitted them for a time. If we are to find God, we must look for him apart from all that has been distorted and defiled as a result of the deceptions of mankind which have originated from Satan.

The great God of all creation said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."—Isa. 55:8-11

Truly, God's ways are higher than ours. How beautifully he has illustrated this in his reference to the purpose served by the rain and snow. Short-sighted humans often complain when it rains or snows, forgetting that their very life depends upon the objects of their complaints. However, God in his love does not withhold the rain and the snow because his human creatures, in their foolishness and selfishness, may complain about it. The rain and snow continue to fall and water the earth, "that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater."

“So shall my word be,” the Lord adds. God’s Word is the expression of his plans and purposes for his human creatures. Moses wrote concerning “the days of old, ... When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people.”—Deut. 32:7,8

Such designs of the Creator for his earthly creatures are not understood nor appreciated by the vast majority of mankind. They are born; they experience briefly a measure of joy; they suffer; they die. Most who do think of God usually do so in terms of their own restricted experiences and limited understanding and viewpoints. The majority throughout the ages have not even discerned, as some of the Athenians did, that there is an “unknown God” whom Paul said is not far from any one of us.

However, just as man’s lack of understanding has not hindered the periodic falling of the rain and snow to water the earth, so it has not interfered with the “Word” of God. His detailed plan, set forth in his Word of truth, has been going forward through the ages for the accomplishment of a wise and loving purpose by which he will eventually be revealed to all mankind. Then, all will be enabled to know and serve him with rejoicing. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9

“CURSED IS THE GROUND”

The universal blessings of the rain and snow are today not without their drawbacks, for thorns and thistles are also thereby helped to grow. Here again we see the result of disobedience to divine law. “Cursed is the ground for thy sake,” God told Adam

after he sinned. (Gen. 3:17,18) The Lord has promised, however, that when his Word, his plan, has been accomplished, this also will be changed. "There shall be no more curse." (Rev. 22:3) Furthermore, God promises mankind, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."—Isa. 55:12,13

Because of the "curse," the soil of this planet has been more or less continuously plagued with pests and convulsions of nature, which is not always to be the case. We might also think of the "thorns and thistles" of human experience—the disappointments and sufferings of the people throughout all the ages. These also are to be removed, and they will no longer serve to obscure the people's vision of the true and loving God. On this point, Isaiah wrote: "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces. ... And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Nothing shall be permitted to "hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," or kingdom.—Isa. 25:8,9; 11:9

GOD TO BE REVEALED

Throughout all the ages of human experience there has been a searching after God. Yet, few have been rewarded with anything better than to be told

that God is to be found in the imagery of various man-made idols, rituals and traditions. For most, the gods they have thus found have been vindictive and cruel, particularly the wholly unscriptural god of torment and torture.

Eventually, in the Creator's own due time, he will reveal himself to his human creatures. They will see him as one who loves and cares, who is sympathetic and understanding. They will see also an all-powerful God who is able to rid the world of everything which contributes to human unhappiness, suffering, and yes, even death. As Isaiah prophesied, he will "swallow up death in victory," which means that there will be no more sickness, pain or sorrow.

The Apostle John wrote concerning that time, "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." (Rev. 21:3,4) No wonder the people will say, "This is our God; we have waited for him!" Truly they will be glad, and will rejoice in the salvation from death which God has provided through his only begotten Son, Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. ■

"Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

*You will seek Me and find Me
when you search for Me with all your heart."*

—Jeremiah 29:12,13,

New American Standard Bible

Judgment Against Israel

Key Verse: “*Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.*”
—Amos 5:24

Selected Scripture:
Amos 5:18-27

IN TODAY’S LESSON THE phrase, “The day of the LORD,” is used multiple times with reference to the impending trouble which was foretold to come upon Israel due to their lack of obedience to Jehovah. The nation of Israel is often used in the Scriptures as a general picture of the world of mankind in their present sinful state. In addition, “The day of the LORD” is used prophetically to speak of the period of time in which this “present evil world” comes to an end, to be supplanted by the Messianic kingdom of righteousness and peace.—Gal. 1:4; Isa. 9:6,7

The demolition of the present world’s evil systems and institutions is accompanied by much trouble. Satan, the ruler of this world, will continue to fight against God and his plans and purposes until he is bound, when he shall “deceive the nations no more.” (Rev. 20:1-3) The Prophet Amos in our lesson describes this day of trouble with these words: “Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light; As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him.

Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?”—Amos 5:18-20, *New American Standard Bible*

We note that Amos speaks of this period of trouble using the words “darkness” and “gloom with no brightness.” Such are the conditions which mark the closing scenes of the “nighttime” of sin and sorrow in contrast to the dawn of the morning of joy to follow. This same thought is expressed by the psalmist: “His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.” (Ps. 30:5, *NASB*) God’s anger is only for “a moment,” compared to the “lifetime” of favor to follow. The “night” of darkness and its resulting confusion and uncertainty will give way to a “morning” of light, in which truth and righteousness will be revealed to all. As a result, the “weeping” world of mankind will give a “shout of joy” for this glorious change of administration.

The trouble in the world during the present “day of the LORD” is a natural consequence of the transfer of authority and rulership from the Adversary, Satan, the “prince of this world,” to Christ Jesus, the Messiah, whose “right it is” to reign over the earth. (John 14:30; Ezek. 21:27) The Apostle Paul wrote concerning God’s appointment of the risen Lord to a position of high authority, stating that he “set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come.”—Eph. 1:20,21

Daniel prophesied also of a great “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation,” but that during this time Michael—another name denoting Christ, the Messiah—would “stand up” in authority on behalf of all people to deliver them. (Dan. 12:1) Then, as stated in our Key Verse, perfect judgment and righteousness will “run down as waters, and ... as a mighty stream,” for the eternal benefit of all mankind. ■

Habakkuk's Prayer for Justice

Key Verse: *“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”*
—Habakkuk 1:13

Selected Scripture:
Habakkuk 1:1-4, 12-14

Our Key Verse illustrates God's requirement that only perfect human beings shall be counted worthy to abide on the earth forever. As Habakkuk states, our Heavenly Father is “of purer eyes” than to behold evil, or to look upon iniquity. This being the case, the prophet in our lesson expresses his perplexity concerning the sins of Israel and the apparent silence of God with respect to them. (Hab. 1:1-4) Though not a perfect Israelite himself, Habakkuk's desire to live up to God's righteous standards to

TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING of these words, we are first reminded of the cause of all the troubles that have afflicted mankind for thousands of years—the act of disobedience on the part of our first parents against the righteous law and authority of their all-wise and loving Creator. Their sin brought upon them and their progeny the penalty of death. (Gen. 2:17; 3:6-13,16-19) While it might appear that Adam and Eve's error was not of a terrible sort, yet it was the clear disobedience of the divine law of which they had been previously made aware.

the best of his ability caused him, and properly so, to be more concerned that the holiness of God should be vindicated than that Israel should escape punishment.

The character of God calls for our development of holiness, even though he understands that we cannot do this perfectly at the present time. However, the intents of our hearts must become pure, and must be guarded to remain so, if we are to have the full approval and blessing of God. The attainment of holiness, however, goes beyond just our heart condition. We must work on the development of such a character, and its resulting fruitage, as exemplified in God's beloved Son, Christ Jesus. Our fitness of character to meet God's approval is being established and tested now, while we are in the flesh. (Eph. 2:8-10; II Tim. 2:15) Thankfully, our unintentional weaknesses and failures are covered by the merit of Christ's redemptive sacrifice, and by his position as our Advocate before God. (I John 1:7-9; 2:1) Under this gracious arrangement, we are thus admonished by God: "Be ye holy; for I am holy."—Lev. 11:44; I Pet. 1:15,16

The importance of purity of heart, as well as the need to continually examine the thoughts of our mind, are brought to our attention throughout the Bible. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Peter later added, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Paul admonished, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." (Matt. 5:8; I Pet. 3:15; Rom. 12:2) The Apostle Paul even testified of his own personal battle with sin: "With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."—Rom. 7:25

We look forward to the time soon to come, in God's kingdom on earth, when all mankind will be given the opportunity to dedicate themselves to the Lord, and to develop a character in harmony with that of their Creator. (Matt. 6:10) All who do so obediently from their hearts will have emblazoned upon their characters, "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD."—Zech. 14:20 ■

God Answers the Prophet

Key Verse: *“The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”*
—**Habakkuk 2:14**

Selected Scripture:
Habakkuk 2:2-14

IN OUR TWO PREVIOUS lessons we considered the nation of Israel, their many transgressions of God’s laws, and the judgments which would come to them as a result. (Amos 5:18-24) We also looked at the prayer of the Prophet Habakkuk in which he appealed to God to administer justice to the nation. (Hab. 1:1-4,12-14) In today’s lesson we come to God’s answer to Habakkuk’s inquiry, not only with regard to Israel, but also concerning the world in general, which the nation of Israel appropriately represents.

Israel was punished severely for their habitual disobedience. Likewise, mankind has suffered much as a result of Adamic sin ever since our first parents fell from perfection. Yet, the Heavenly Father’s ultimate plan for both Israel and all mankind is to recover them from sin and its effects, and to give them the opportunity, under a righteous arrangement, to attain to everlasting life and blessings upon the earth. This will be in fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: “In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” —Gen. 22:18; 26:4; 28:14

One of the most important things to take place with regard to man’s recovery is that which is emphasized in

our Key Verse, namely, having the knowledge of the Lord fill the earth. Jesus promised that the day would come when all those in the grave would “come forth” in the resurrection. (John 5:28,29) Then will begin the all-important work of educating mankind in righteousness and in the character likeness of their Creator. In similar words to those of Habakkuk, the Prophet Isaiah spoke of this time: “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. 11:9) It is the desire of God himself that all men may be saved, but that salvation cannot truly benefit mankind without knowledge, so God has also provided that all may come to the knowledge of the truth.—I Tim. 2:4; Rom. 10:14,15

One of the vital aspects of Christ’s coming kingdom, during which this education process is to take place, will be the elimination of the many bonds of ignorance and superstition which have plagued man’s understanding of God and his plans and purposes for thousands of years. The Prophet Isaiah alludes to this, saying of that time: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.” (Isa. 35:5) Not only will this be true of physical blindness and deafness, but mankind’s spiritual eyes and ears will also be enabled to “see” and “hear” the knowledge of God and his ways. As a result, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:10,11

The coming Messianic Age of Christ’s kingdom will furnish to all people full knowledge and ability to follow God’s laws and precepts. “They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.” (Jer. 31:34) Then, the glorious brightness of God’s wisdom, justice, love and power will be seen by all. “Blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory.”—Ps. 72:19 ■

What the Lord Requires

Key Verse: “*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*”
—*Micah 6:8*

Selected Scripture:
Micah 6:6-8

Aaron, and Miriam to lead and instruct them.—vs. 4

The people of Israel seemingly had not profited from these gracious acts of Jehovah on their behalf, and instead followed many of the idolatrous practices of the heathen nations around them. In verses 6 and 7 of our lesson they are represented as asking how they might please God, as though he had never given them any instructions along this line. “Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?” they asked. They knew that the Lord had called for the sacrificing of animals, and so they further asked, “Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” Here we find an example of an exaggeration of the Lord’s

THROUGH MICAH THE prophet, God queried Israel regarding their frequent waywardness from his laws, asking them, “O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.” (Mic. 6:3) The Lord then reminded his people of some of the many ways in which he had demonstrated his care over them. He had brought them out of bondage and servitude in Egypt, and had raised up Moses,

requirements out of all proportion to his instructions. Indeed, the Israelites had not kept God's reasonable instructions properly, much less these inflated and exaggerated statements.

In our Key Verse, the Prophet Micah answers the questions propounded in the previous verses. He sums up the Lord's requirements quite simply—they were to practice justice, have a love for mercy, and walk humbly with God. These requirements not only applied to Israel, but also to all God's people of every age. "To do justly" simply means to do what is right in God's sight. In our dealings with others, this principle is particularly applied by following what we have come to understand as the Golden Rule. (Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31) How much the lives of most of us would be changed if each day we made sure that we treated others exactly as we would want them to treat us—fairly, righteously, and without injustice.

In the phrase "to love mercy," the Hebrew word translated mercy is often rendered "kindness" or "lovingkindness" in other Old Testament scriptures. In addition to being just, the Lord wants his people to exhibit the quality of kindness, motivated by unselfish love. God is just, merciful, and kind, and he wants his people to be like him. Jeremiah wrote that the Lord loves "with an everlasting love," and with "lovingkindness." (Jer. 31:3) It is God's delight to do this, and if we would be pleasing to him we must also delight in showing mercy, love and kindness to all.

Finally, the prophet says that the Lord wants his people to walk humbly with him. To the Jews in that ancient time this meant obedience to the Law given to them at Sinai, and also a realization that their standing before God was of his doing, not theirs. Similarly, the will of God for his people of this present age—those who endeavor to follow in the footsteps of Jesus—is that they walk humbly in the narrow way of sacrifice. Indeed, we should not be seeking what we can get out of life, but how much we can put into our service to the Lord. ■

Robbing God

Key Verse: “*Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.*”
—*Malachi 3:8*

Selected Scripture:
Malachi 3:5-10

THE PROPHET MALACHI was a contemporary of Nehemiah. It is thought by some Bible scholars that Malachi’s prophecy was given during the period of Nehemiah’s absence from Jerusalem at the court of Persia, during which time there was much confusion among the Israelites. The burden of Malachi’s prophecy is a mixture of God’s love for Israel, his rebuke of the sins of the priests, and his displeasure with the people, many of whom had gotten away from worshipping the Lord properly. In Malachi 1:6, a fixed principle is laid down that a son should honor his father, and a servant should honor his master. These principles were applied here to the relationship between God and Israel. If they claimed God as their Father, they should render to him proper love and reverence as his children. As servants they should also render to him obedience and honor.

Israel, especially their religious leaders, had drifted away from proper reverence for God, and Malachi addressed them as if they did not recognize the true situation. He said they had offered “polluted bread” upon his altar, but they asked, “Wherein have we polluted thee?” The prophet continues saying they offered blind, lame and sick animals for sacrifice, and then asks, “Is it not evil?” (vss. 7,8) He then urges that they pray to God, and ask for grace and

forgiveness, else how could they expect his special favor to continue in the future.—vs. 9

Turning to chapter three of Malachi's prophecy, we come to our Key Verse, where the Lord, through the prophet, inquires, "Will a man rob God?" This is a startling question. Who would dare think or imagine to rob God? First, we must realize that everyone has a responsibility to God, the one who created us, and without whom we do not exist. It is our obligation, yea privilege, to bring to him the best that we have in the way of obedience, love and service.

To rob God with full knowledge and willfulness would, we believe, be rare. Hence, the Israelites are represented as doubting this matter and saying, "Wherein have we robbed thee?" Israel had often expressed displeasure with what it viewed as a lack of divine favor and blessing. However, the Lord's testimony now came to them through Malachi to show them that their problems were not the result of God's lack of care over them, but due to their own irreverence and failure to show appreciation to him by rendering true worship from their heart. This failure on their part was well illustrated by the fact that they were bringing blemished and polluted offerings to God.

Verses 10-12 give us the point of this lesson. When the Lord reproves, it is not for the purpose of discouraging his people. Rather, it is to stir them to repentance and growth in a way pleasing to him. It is God's desire that all his people in every age are daily revived and motivated to serve him with a singleness of purpose, even if there have been past failures. Thus, we all are encouraged, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (vs. 10) Let us pray as the psalmist did when he recognized his wayward course: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."—Ps. 51:10 ■

Thoughts on the Memorial Season

*“As often as ye eat
this bread, and
drink this cup, ye
do shew the Lord’s
death till he come.”*
—*I Corinthians*
11:26

THE PASSEVER SEASON, as celebrated by the Jews, is approaching, beginning this year on the evening of April 8. However, the interest of Christians in this season centers especially in the slaying of the

lamb, which preceded the seven-day Passover feast, and pointed forward to the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus. (John 1:29) Our commemoration, therefore, relates to the greatest event of all history, the sacrificial death of the Savior of the world. This year our celebration properly begins on the evening of April 7.

As recorded in Exodus 12:1-27, the Israelites were commanded to celebrate the Passover as the first feature of the Law and as one of their greatest memorials as a nation. Hence, we find that in some degree the Passover is still celebrated by Jews in all parts of the world. They still have a measure of respect for the Passover as an ancient custom. However, most do not seem to give much serious thought to the meaning of this celebration.

Why was the Passover lamb slain and eaten? Why was the blood sprinkled on the doorposts and lintels of their dwellings? God so commanded, but what was the reason, the motive, behind the divine command? What was the lesson and the object of this ordinance? Truly, a reasonable God gives reasonable commands, and will, in due time, cause mankind to understand the significance of all his requirements. In the case of the Israelites, all the various features of the laws and ordinances given to them by God, through Moses, were designed to foreshadow important aspects of the divine purpose and plan, yet to be revealed and brought to pass.—Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:11

FIRST-FRUITS AND AFTER-FRUITS

Blessed are those whose eyes can see that Jesus was indeed “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” The cancellation of the world’s inherited Adamic sin is to be effected by the application of the value of Jesus’ perfect ransom sacrifice in due time for the benefit of all mankind. Only the footstep followers of the Master have as yet received of the value of the ransom provided by Jesus’ death. Greatly favored are those who can see that as the whole world lost God’s favor and came under the divine sentence of death, so it was necessary that a satisfaction of justice should be made before this sentence could be removed. Therefore, as Paul and Peter harmoniously declare, “Christ died for our sins,”—“the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” (I Cor. 15:3; I Pet. 3:18) Thus he opened up a new way—a way to life everlasting.—Heb. 10:19,20

The Scriptures call the church of Christ the “church of the firstborn,” “a kind of firstfruits of his creatures,” and “the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.” (Heb. 12:23; James 1:18; Rev. 14:4) These expressions imply that ultimately there will be others who will become part of God’s family—“after-fruits.” Christian people in general, however, seem to have overlooked the implications of these Scriptures. Most have generally come to believe that only those who are designated in the Bible as the “firstfruits” will be saved—that there will be no after-fruits.

However, the Passover picture clearly indicates that it was God’s purpose to save all the Israelites. As a nation they aptly represent all of mankind that will ever come into harmony with God and be granted everlasting life. Let us note that there were two great miracles associated with the Passover and the subsequent deliverance of Israel from Egypt. First, there was the miracle in which the firstborns were “passed over” by God’s angel and spared from the death associated with the tenth plague. (Exod. 12:21-23) Secondly, there was the miracle at the Red Sea, where by divine power the whole nation of Israel was delivered and led across the channel on dry ground. These “passed over” to the other side of the Red Sea and were saved, while the hosts of Pharaoh were overwhelmed and drowned. (Exod. 14:21-30) The Israelites’ passing over the Red Sea pictures the ultimate deliverance from the power of sin and death afforded to every creature of Adam’s race who desires to come into accord with the Lord and to render him worship. Thus it was that not one Israelite, who willingly

obeyed the Lord's instructions, was left behind in Egyptian bondage.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FIRSTBORNS

The special interest of the Christian at the present time is the passing over of the firstborns of Israel in the land of Egypt. Only the firstborn ones were endangered on that night, and their deliverance from death was necessary in order to affect the liberation of the entire nation from Egyptian bondage. Similarly, only the "church of the firstborn," the faithful and obedient footstep followers of Christ, are under the sprinkled blood of Jesus and are now being passed over during this nighttime of sin and death still upon the world of mankind.

We see, in harmony with the Scriptures, that during the present Gospel Age only "the firstfruits unto God," "the church of the firstborn," have sufficient light and knowledge which permits them to be on trial for eternal life. If faithful unto death, these will be "passed over," as were the firstborn of Israel. The remainder of mankind, all who will desire to follow the greater Moses—Christ and his church—in the coming Messianic kingdom, shall be led forth from the bondage of sin and death. Thus, at the present time, these are not part of the called-out firstborn class, nevertheless, they are not in danger of eternal destruction, for their time of deliverance and subsequent judgment "in righteousness" is yet future.—Acts 17:31

The church of the firstborn consists of those of mankind who, in advance of the remainder of the race, have had the eyes of their understanding opened. They have come to a realization not only of their condition of bondage and their need of deliverance,

but also of God's willingness to fulfill in them all his good promises. Furthermore, they are such as have responded to the grace of God, have made a full dedication of themselves to him and his service, and in return have been begotten of the Holy Spirit. They abide under the merit of the blood of Christ, just as the firstborns of Israel remained within the houses whose doorposts and lintels had been sprinkled with the blood of the Passover lamb.—I Pet. 1:18-20

Through the begetting of the Holy Spirit and the greater knowledge and privileges which they enjoy in every way, the church of the firstborn has a far greater responsibility than has the world. The Apostle Peter identifies this called-out class as, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 1:2) For any of these to go out from under the blood would imply a disregard of God's mercy, and would signify that they were indifferent to divine goodness and grace. The Apostle Paul admonished the church along this very line, that they "receive not the grace of God in vain." (II Cor. 6:1) Thus is shown the great importance, as Peter states, of "sanctification" and "obedience" in order to be of the "elect" firstborn class during the present age.

By and by the night of sin and death will have passed away, and the glorious morn of deliverance will have come. (Ps. 30:5) Christ and his faithful church, the greater Moses, will lead forth and deliver, all the world of mankind. (Deut. 18:15,18,19; Acts 3:22-25) All will be given the opportunity to come to know, reverence, honor and obey the will of God. That day of deliverance will be the thousand-year

kingdom of Christ, at the close of which all the willing and obedient of mankind will be forever free from the bondage of sin and death.—I Cor. 15:22-26; Rev. 20:4; 21:1-7

JESUS OUR PASSOVER LAMB

The Apostle Paul positively identified the Passover Lamb with our Lord Jesus, saying, “Our Passover Lamb has already been offered in sacrifice—even Christ. Therefore let us keep the festival.” (I Cor. 5:7,8, *Weymouth New Testament*) He informs us that we all need the blood of sprinkling, not upon our houses, but upon our hearts. (Heb. 10:22) We are to partake of the Lamb by appropriating to ourselves the merit of Christ, the value of his ransom sacrifice. We must also eat of the pure, unleavened bread of truth, if we would be strong and prepared for our deliverance into the heavenly phase of Christ’s kingdom. Thus we “put on” Christ, not merely by faith, but more and more we put on his character and are transformed into his glorious image in our hearts and lives.—Rom. 12:2; 13:14; Col. 3:12-17

By faith, we are to feed on Christ, as the Jews fed on the literal lamb. (Rom. 4:7,8,11) Instead of the bitter herbs, which aided and whetted their appetites, the Lord permits us to have bitter experiences and trials caused by our commitment to righteous living and walking in Christ’s footsteps. These help to wean our affection from earthly things, and to give us increased appetite to feed upon the Lamb and the unleavened bread of truth. We, too, are to remember that we have here “no continuing city.” Rather, as “strangers and pilgrims,” and with staff in hand, we are to gird ourselves for our journey to the heavenly Canaan, and

(Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31) to all the glorious things which God has in reservation for the church of the firstborn.—Heb. 13:14; I Pet. 2:11

A MEMORIAL INSTITUTED

On the same night of his betrayal, just preceding his crucifixion, Jesus gathered his apostles in the upper room. “As they were eating,” the Master instituted a new remembrance—a memorial—based upon the foundation of the Passover picture, saying, “This do in remembrance of me.” (Matt. 26:26; Luke 22:8-14; I Cor. 11:24,25) We recall the circumstances of this first Memorial. There was the Lord’s blessing of the bread and of the cup, the fruit of the vine, and his declaration that these represented his broken body and shed blood. There was, too, the invitation that all his followers should participate by symbolically feeding upon him, and by partaking of the merit of his blood, his sacrifice. How blessed are these thoughts to those who have been rightly exercised to remember the precious Lamb of God!

In presenting to his disciples the emblematic use of bread, Jesus said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” The evident meaning of his words is: This bread symbolizes or represents my body. The bread was not actually his body, for in no sense would it have been possible for them to have partaken of him literally. The picture is enhanced when we recognize that the pure, unleavened bread represented our Lord’s sinless flesh. Leaven is a symbol of sin, and under the Jewish law, the Israelites were especially commanded to remove all leaven from their homes at the Passover season. (Exod. 12:18-20; I Cor. 5:6-8) On another occasion Jesus gave a lesson which further

clarified this symbol. He said, “The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” “I am the bread of life.” “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”—John 6:33,35,51

In order to appreciate how we are to eat, or appropriate, this “living bread,” it is necessary for us to understand just what the bread signifies. According to our Lord’s explanation of the matter, it was his flesh which he sacrificed for us. It was not his pre-human existence as a spirit being that was sacrificed, although that was laid aside, in order that he might take our human nature. It was the fact that our Lord Jesus—as a perfect human being—was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” (Heb. 7:26) He was without any contamination from Father Adam, and hence free from sin. This enabled him to become the Redeemer of Adam and his race by giving his life “a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”—I Tim. 2:3-6

When we understand that it was the pure, spotless nature of our Lord Jesus that was laid down on behalf of sinners, we see of what it is that we are privileged to partake. The very thing that he laid down for us we are to “eat,” appropriate to ourselves. Jesus’ perfect human life was given to redeem all the race of man from condemnation to death, to provide the opportunity for all to return to human perfection and everlasting life. We are to realize this and thus accept him as our Savior from death.

Jesus also instituted a second symbol as he and the apostles sat in the upper room. It was the

“cup,” or “fruit of the vine,” which he said represented his shed blood. (Matt. 26:27-29) In order that any of the race of Adam might profit from the sacrificial death of Jesus, it was necessary that he should rise from the tomb, and that he should ascend to the Father to deposit in the hands of divine justice, as it were, the value of his perfect sacrificial offering as man’s Redeemer. That value was represented by his shed blood, which, in turn, is shown emblematically by the cup offered by Jesus to his disciples the night before his death. As relates to the world, the benefits to accrue to them from the value of the blood of Jesus will be manifest in his coming kingdom. Under that arrangement, Christ Jesus, along with the faithful “firstborn” class, will oversee the bringing of mankind—all who will avail themselves of the wonderful privileges then to be offered—back to righteousness and to harmony with God.

The firstborn of this age, by faith in their Redeemer, now receive a similar blessing, though by a somewhat different arrangement. They are “justified by faith,” reckoned righteous in God’s sight. Their “justification” is made possible only by the blood of Jesus, which he presented to the hands of God’s justice upon his resurrection from the dead. Thus, the partaking of the “cup” at the Memorial season is a reminder to us of the appropriation to ourselves, by faith, of the value represented in the precious blood of Christ. It is by this mechanism that God has reckoned us as justified, or righteous, in his sight, and has bestowed upon us all the rights and privileges attached thereto.—Rom. 3:24-26; 5:1,8,9

LOOKING TOWARD THE KINGDOM

On the occasion of the institution of the Memorial supper, our Lord had something to say about his Father's kingdom, a subject which was the great theme of his entire earthly ministry. On previous occasions he had promised his faithful followers a share in this kingdom, declaring that he would go away to "receive for himself a kingdom," and would come again and receive them to himself to share in it. (Matt. 19:28; Luke 19:11-17; 22:29,30) He then added that this Memorial which he was instituting would find its fulfillment in the kingdom, and that he would no more drink of the fruit of the vine, "until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."—Matt. 26:29

Just what our Lord meant by this statement might be difficult to determine positively. However, it does not seem inconsistent to understand him to mean that in contrast to the trials and sufferings—even death—symbolized in his cup presently, there would be jubilation in the kingdom. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." (Isa. 53:11) Christ Jesus will look back over the trials and difficulties endured in faithful obedience to the Father's will and rejoice as he sees the grand outcome of blessings which will come to all mankind. This joy will be shared by all his disciples who have similarly drunk of this cup, and who have received his promise that, if faithful, they shall reign with him. (Heb. 12:2; II Cor. 4:17; II Tim. 2:11,12) When the kingdom shall have been established, looking back they will praise the way that God has led them each day unto the end of their earthly sojourn, even though it has been a narrow way of self-sacrifice and of service toward others.

Our dear Master's faith stood the test in all these trying hours which he knew to be so near the time of his apprehension and death. The fact that he rendered thanks to the Father for the bread and the cup is indicative of his joyful acquiescence in all the sufferings which the breaking of the bread and the crushing of the grapes implied. He was fully satisfied with the Father's arrangement. In line with this spirit was the singing of a hymn as they parted. (Matt. 26:30) It was, no doubt, a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Father that his course on earth was so nearly finished, and that he had found thus far grace sufficient for his need.

It would only be a few hours later that night when Jesus would be betrayed into the hands of his enemies—ironically, the religious leaders among his Jewish brethren—and be arrested. We behold how calm he was as this scene unfolded, and thereafter as he was brought before the chief priest, the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again. As Isaiah had prophesied, "He opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." (Isa. 53:7) We see him faithful, courageous to the very last, and we have his assurance that he could have asked the Father for more than twelve legions of angels for his protection. (Matt. 26:53) Yet, instead of petitioning for aid to escape his sacrifice, he only sought the strength to endure it faithfully. What a lesson is here for all Jesus' foot-step followers!

On the other hand, we recall that even among his loyal disciples, the most courageous forsook the Master and fled, and one of them, in his fear and

perplexity, even denied his Lord! (vss. 69-75) What an occasion this is for examining our own hearts as respects the degree of our faith, our courage and our willingness to suffer with him who redeemed us. What an opportunity is thus afforded us to reinforce our minds with the resolution that we will not deny our Master under any circumstances or conditions, and that we will confess him not only with our lips, but also by our conduct.

OPPOSITION FROM THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

It is astounding to think that it was God's professed people who crucified the "Prince of life." (Acts 3:14,15) Not only this, but it was the leaders of their religious thought, their chief priests, scribes and Pharisees and doctors of the law, rather than the common people, who were responsible for this dreadful act. We remember the Master's words, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." (John 15:18) It was primarily the religious world that hated him. Realizing this, we should not be surprised if the same is true for us, his followers. We are not to be astonished, then, if opposition to the message of truth should come from the more prominent religious teachers of the various sects of Christianity of our day. Such opposition, however, should not cause us to hate either those who may be our own opponents, or those who persecuted our Lord to the point of death. Rather, we are to remember the words of the Apostle Peter respecting this matter: "I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also."—Acts 3:17, *New American Standard Bible*

Indeed, a lack of knowledge together with blindness of heart and mind is at the source of the

oppositions against Christ and his footstep followers. The Father permits it to be so now, until the members of the church of the firstborn shall have filled up “that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.” (Col. 1:24) Soon, as our dear Lord declared, those who now partake of his symbolic “body” and “blood,” and who follow in his footsteps of suffering, sacrifice and service, will drink with him the new cup of victory and joy in the kingdom. With that glorious morning will begin the great work of the world’s release from the bonds of sin and death, the blessed privilege of uplifting mankind, and bringing to pass the “restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”—Acts 3:21

The thought before the mind of each of those who participate in the annual Memorial celebration should be that expressed in the words of Paul: “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (Rom. 8:18; II Cor. 4:17) With these thoughts respecting the passing over of our sins as the firstborns through the merit of the precious blood of the Lamb, and our privilege of sharing with our blessed Lord in his experiences of suffering and of glory, we may indeed “keep the feast” with joy, not merely in this special manner once a year, but even in the midst of trials and difficulties. (I Cor. 5:8) By continuing faithful as Jesus’ followers, very soon we shall have the great privilege of joining him in leading forth the world of mankind out of the bondage of sin and death, to the land of promise—earth, man’s eternal home. ■

Gethsemane's Cup

“He went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

—*Matthew 26:39*

IN THE BIBLE, A CUP IS used both in the literal and figurative senses. In the figurative sense it may represent something good or blessed, as in Psalm 23: “My cup runneth over.” More often, a cup represents experiences of a difficult nature, as indicated when Jesus asked two of his disciples, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” (Matt. 20:22; Mark 10:38) Here Jesus used the symbols of the cup and of baptism to illustrate his own sacrificial life, which represented the Father’s will for him. The drinking of this cup and the carrying out of this baptism entailed a difficult course, which was brought out by the Master’s added words: “How am I pressed, till it may be consummated.”—Luke 12:50, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

From a study of the Old Testament scriptures, Jesus was aware, in advance, of many of the

experiences which would come to him in the drinking of this cup of experience. Without question Jesus recognized that he was the Lamb of God of which John the Baptist had spoken, and from the time features of the Passover picture, he knew both the day and the hour in which he would be slain as the greater lamb. (John 1:29; Exod. 12:2-6) Jesus also quoted from Isaiah 53:12, applying to himself the expression "numbered with the transgressors." (Luke 22:37) Other Old Testament scriptures probably indicated to Jesus that crucifixion was the form that his death would take, to which he alluded.—Num. 21:9; Deut. 21:22,23; John 3:14; 12:32,33

All of these were matters in which Jesus was instructed by the Scriptures, and he willingly followed their leadings. As we read, "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth." He asked, with the obvious answer, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Again his words, "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." (John 18:4,11; 12:27) The Master was fully dedicated to the doing of his Father's will even when it involved hardship, suffering and death. This he made very plain; he was indeed willing to drink the cup which the Father had given him.

IN THE GARDEN

In view of Jesus' acquaintance with many of the details of his death and his complete dedication to the Father's will, some have wondered about a statement made shortly before his betrayal and arrest. Jesus had taken his disciples just outside of

Jerusalem to a place called the Garden of Gethsemane, situated on the side of the Mount of Olives. After instructing his closest companions—Peter, James, and John—to watch and pray, Jesus drew apart for private reflection and communion with the Father.—Matt. 26:36-39; Luke 22:39-42

Moments earlier Jesus had said to his disciples, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” (Matt. 26:38) Now he fell upon his face and began to pray in great earnest. His request was brief, but three times with equal intensity, Jesus uttered his prayer. To this day some find his words difficult to understand: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”—vs. 39

What was this particular cup which Jesus desired be removed from him, if it was God’s will? Whatever it represented, it certainly was a matter that weighed most heavily upon our Lord. The intensity of the mental stress which he experienced in Gethsemane is attested to by the Gospel writers. Both Matthew and Mark write that Jesus was very distressed and grieved, even to the point where he said that he felt as if his soul was being crushed.—Matt. 26:37,38; Mark 14:33,34

The very word “Gethsemane” seems to reflect the bitter trial which our Lord encountered there. The name signifies “an oil press,” undoubtedly because olives from the surrounding grove were there pressed to extract the valuable oil. This, then, became the very site of our Master’s great distress, the place where he was put to the test and his soul pressed with such severity as he had never before experienced.

A FLAWED INTERPRETATION

The first thought that might enter the mind regarding the meaning of the cup in Matthew 26:39 is that it referred to Jesus' impending death. Jesus, after all, was a human being. Might not his words have been merely an expression of his humanity, and the natural and instinctive desire to avoid death if at all possible? Perhaps there was another way by which the Heavenly Father could accomplish his plan of salvation for the human race without requiring the sacrifice of his own dear Son.

This idea, however, we reject as being wholly out of harmony with the Scriptures. As already noted, Jesus was fully aware of the Father's plans and purposes. While in his pre-human existence, he had agreed to come to the earth and be transformed from a spirit being to human flesh, for the very purpose of laying down his life as a ransom sacrifice for Adam. It had long been determined that the death of the Redeemer would be an absolute necessity for carrying forward this phase of the Father's plan. He was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. 13:8) Jesus himself specifically predicted that his death was imminent and acknowledged that he had been selected for the very purpose of laying down his life as the ransom price for sinful man, represented in Adam.—Matt. 20:28

Since Jesus had already expressed his willingness to offer himself as a ransom sacrifice, it would be inconsistent with his own character and the resoluteness of purpose demonstrated throughout his ministry now to pray that his death experience be removed. Having predicted his own death to the disciples on several occasions, would he now be

requesting that this should not occur? After asking the two disciples if they were able to drink “the cup that I shall drink of,” was he now asking that he himself should not be required to drink it? Neither of these alternatives is in any sense reasonable. Thus, we conclude that the cup Jesus prayed might be removed could not have been that of his death.

A SUGGESTED MEANING

Jesus knew according to the Scriptures that he must die, and that this death would be brought about by crucifixion. In order for him to be thus condemned by any tribunal, his enemies would have to misrepresent his character and his teachings. Somehow they would have to make it appear that he was the vilest of criminals and a blasphemer of the true God. Crucifixion was considered such a horrible and humiliating form of death that it was reserved for the very lowest class of criminals. The pains of death were protracted for an especially long period by this method, sometimes lasting for days. Death was finally brought on by the utter exhaustion, hunger and thirst of the victim and sometimes was accelerated by the breaking of his legs.

For Jesus, such a death by crucifixion would carry with it, in the minds of many, a double significance. First, it would imply that he was a criminal in the sight of his fellow men—those whom he loved so dearly, to whom he had ministered so unselfishly, and for whom he was actually laying down his life. Secondly, it would also carry with it the thought that he was accursed of God, being punished as a blasphemer, and one who had dishonored the name of Jehovah. What a fate for one who had come to

earth for the very purpose of demonstrating God's love, of glorifying his name, and of providing redemption and salvation for the human race! It can be no wonder that in those hours at Gethsemane, Jesus was overcome with mental distress and anguish as he contemplated the events that lay just ahead.

Did this indicate weakness on Jesus' part, or a lack of courage? Certainly not. Looking back upon his ministry, we see how thoroughly Jesus was dedicated to the accomplishment of the Father's purpose and the tremendous determination and strength of will that marked his efforts. Time and again he had shown no fear of the authorities as he taught the people, and on some occasions had found it necessary to speak out openly against them. However we interpret Jesus' request to have the cup removed, surely it could not contain any element of weakness or lack of courage.

Our Lord's character was that of one possessed of perfect virtue and of a boundless capacity for love and justice. These would combine to make him keenly aware of the shame that death by crucifixion would heap upon him and of the unjust nature of the accusations. Above all else, however, was the thought that he was to be slain as a blasphemer and opponent of God, his Heavenly Father, whom he loved so supremely and whose character he had revealed.

It was this shame and ignominy which attached to death by crucifixion, and the wholly unjust suggestion that he was a blasphemer of God, that we consider the primary aspect of Gethsemane's cup, which seemed almost too much for Jesus to

bear. We suggest that in his petition to the Father, Jesus was merely requesting that, if it were possible, his impending death be brought about in some other way than to imply that he who had been so faithful in leading men to God was now an opponent, an enemy of the Almighty Creator. Let us not fail to take note, however, that in his request, as fervently as the desire was expressed by the Master, it was accompanied by the qualifying words, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”—Luke 22:42

Why, we may ask, did the Heavenly Father require that his dear Son pass through such an experience? The answer is provided in Hebrews 5:8, where we read: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.” Even our Lord Jesus, who was perfect after the flesh, was in need of developing absolute obedience to the Father. This could come only through suffering, trial and testing. The Apostle Paul later related obedience to the sacrificial path of the cross when he wrote: “Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”—Phil. 2:8

What an extreme test this was of the loyalty of heart possessed by Jesus, and yet how necessary it was in the divine purpose. Let us remember that such tests of absolute obedience to God’s will were required not only of Jesus, but of his footstep followers as well. Both are heirs of God and destined for positions of great trust and responsibility in regenerating the human race to perfection. Both will be endued with the divine nature which, unlike that possessed by even angels, is not subject to death

and represents inherent life of the very highest order. Only those who have proven themselves thoroughly loyal to the Father, even under the most adverse circumstances, will be elevated to such a position of honor and trust.

STRENGTH FROM ON HIGH

Returning now to the garden scene, we find Jesus continuing to meditate upon the matter and to beseech divine guidance. Hence we note it was no less than three times that Jesus lifted his heart in prayer, earnestly seeking to know the full extent of the Father's will for him. A careful reading of the words which the Master uttered reveals a progressive tone. In the first prayer the sequence of phrases indicates an initial mention of his own preference: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. 26:39) Notice, though, how this request was modified in his last two prayers and how full submission to the Father's will became dominant: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." (vss. 42,44) Ending his meditation, Jesus was fully resolved to accept the Father's will, to which he then obediently submitted.

His period of intimate communion with the Father then over, Jesus gave every evidence that he had received the answer and the strength which he sought. With resoluteness he awakened the disciples and prepared them for his arrest and betrayal just at hand. Already they could hear the commotion of the approaching band of officers and men, Judas at their head. Yet throughout the difficult hours of the

night and the day which followed, Jesus exhibited no fear or concern. Even under the most trying circumstances, he remained calm and at ease. His concern was no longer for himself but centered now upon those around him and upon their welfare. How dramatically we see the power of prayer thus illustrated for us in the crucial hours of our Lord's experience.

The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus, "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) This suggests to our mind that as a result of his moments of prayer and communion with the Father, Jesus was able to disregard the impending shame which was to be heaped upon him, knowing that it was God's will for him. Further, since the shame would be brought on charges which were wholly without foundation, he would refuse to let the experience bear him down. The strength to do this came in large measure, we believe, from his earnest prayer and his complete acquiescence to the will of God. Thus, shortly later as he was being arrested, he said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"—John 18:11

As Hebrews 12:2 suggests, Jesus must also have been reminded of the great joy and privilege which awaited him in the future—that of being God's instrument in restoring the lost world of mankind to perfection and harmony with him. This, too, must have given him great assurance, even while under such severe circumstances. As Isaiah prophesied concerning Jesus, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."—Isa. 53:11

AN ADDITIONAL MEANING

We believe that there was another aspect to this cup, one which the Heavenly Father in his goodness saw fit to take away. Throughout the course of his earthly ministry Jesus enjoyed a most intimate relationship with the Father. To the very end Jesus appeared confident that he had carried out God's will fully and completely. Just prior to entering the garden he had prayed: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me." "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." (John 17:4,6,8) There was not so much as the slightest hint or suggestion here that Jesus had come short in any respect thus far in his mission.

However, as we again enter the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, we notice that Jesus' confidence seems now to be severely tested. In contemplation of all that went before in his ministry, was he now somewhat uncertain of his faithfulness? Without question, Satan, the master tempter, was desirous of presenting just such a suggestion to the mind of our Lord. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry Satan had arisen to tempt him in the wilderness and then had "departed from him for a season." (Luke 4:13) Now it appears he had returned at the final hour. This time his message was not to say, "If thou be the Son of God," but seemingly to suggest doubt as to the success of his mission.

This thought seems to be implied from Hebrews 12:3,4, where we are asked to consider Jesus and what he endured. We are then reminded that we have not yet "resisted unto blood, striving against

sin.” Satan is the author of sin. In the case of Jesus, because he was perfect, his “striving” against sin was not directed toward any fallen tendencies on his part, but was fully toward the Adversary himself. This struggle had gone on continually to some extent throughout Jesus’ ministry, but it appears quite possible that now, so close to the time of his greatest suffering and trial, Satan purposely interjected a sinister temptation. What better time and place to do this, the Adversary perhaps reasoned, than in the Garden of Gethsemane, just prior to Jesus’ arrest?

What might some of the thoughts have been which Satan desired to instill into the mind of our Lord? His ministry was now nearing its close. He had done a good work, certainly, but had he actually fulfilled every feature of the law and carried out all that which had been written beforehand by the prophets? Had he been perfect in every thought, word and deed? Had he pleased the Heavenly Father completely as his representative and spokesman? Would he on the morrow be able to continue unflinchingly to perform his role, even in the face of the added shame and ignominy, to the very end?

Might he not have failed, perhaps in some slight particular, and thus be accounted unworthy in the Father’s sight? Would he not then lose everything that he hoped for, including the joy of restoring the lost race, and even his own future life? With all the arts and cunning that the Adversary was able to command, he attempted to place all these weights, questions and doubts upon our Lord. No wonder Jesus’ heart was so burdened that he said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful.”—Matt. 26:38

Let us now consider the answer to this prayer, as it came to Jesus. In Luke's gospel, but no other, there is mention made of an angel who strengthened him in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Luke 22:43) This verse is of doubtful authenticity, not being found in any manuscripts prior to the sixth century. Thus, we will not consider it specifically in this regard. Paul, however, speaks of Jesus' experience, stating, "In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety." (Heb. 5:7, *New American Standard Bible*) The Greek word translated "heard" in this text is stated by *Thayer's Greek Definitions* to have the thought of a request being granted—that is, of being heard favorably.

We believe that Jesus was heard favorably and answered with regard to the temptation of Satan. In some way, perhaps through the influence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus derived the strength, the assurance, and the comfort he needed to become wholly victorious. Through his communion with the Father he was able to reaffirm the assurance that he had been entirely faithful. Satan had once again utterly failed in his attempt to thwart the Master's obedience, faith and trust. Jesus was faithful to the very end. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

THE LESSON FOR US

We believe that in the providences of God, "Gethsemane" experiences are permitted to come upon us all. The Adversary is our main foe. At times he succeeds in breaking through our defenses, to plant seeds of discouragement within us. In one way or

another, he would like to make us think that the trials and besetments of the Christian way will be too much for us, that we will not be able to bear up under the difficulties, and that we might just as well cease our efforts.

For one who has sacrificed all his earthly hopes in favor of the heavenly, this trial could be most severe indeed. If the Adversary can succeed in any measure in preventing the Lord's people from beholding the Father's face and appreciating the greatness of their own calling and their own present position in it, how helpless it could leave them.

What is the course that should be followed at such a time of special testing? It should be the one that was demonstrated by our Lord—to draw apart from everything for a time, to seek the sweet communion with the Father in quiet prayer and meditation. Let us unburden our hearts to him, mention the difficulties of the way which seem too great for us, and look to him for guidance and help.

Let us, too, be reminded of God's precious promises to us and of the many assurances he has provided in his Word. Let us be confident that if we are seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, these promises will find their fulfillment in our lives. (Matt. 6:33) Let us draw upon the tremendous resources of God which are available to us through communion and prayer. We should call to mind the admonition found in Paul's words: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, ... Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)."—Heb. 10:22,23

In contemplating the lessons of the Garden of Gethsemane, may we realize that now, as never

before, we are in need of following our Lord's example. In addition to being on guard against all the wiles of the Adversary, let us also be wary of the allurements of the world and all unreasonable and unscriptural demands of the flesh. Above all else, let us remember our blessed privilege of prayer, of seeking the face of our Father, and of receiving from him the encouragement and help we need. Only by this means can we be fully shielded from those temptations which would otherwise be too great for us.

There is a wonderful experience awaiting all those who will conscientiously do as Jesus did. That experience will be to enjoy the peace which pervaded the final hours of his earthly life, the same peace he so lovingly enjoined upon us: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27) What a rich portion of divine blessing can thus be ours! ■

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Helen Jeuck, Orlando, FL—February 4.
Age, 93

Sister Barbara Jezuit, Chicago, IL—February 10.
Age, 87

2020 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Tuesday, April 7, 2020.

A complete Memorial Service is available for any who wish to have it. CD or DVD versions can be purchased for \$6.00. Please send your request to:

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

Please place your order by March 23, if possible.

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MARCH 5—“If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”—Philippians 4:8 (Z.’03-9 Hymn 208)

MARCH 12—“The end of the commandment is love from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an undissembled faith.”—I Timothy 1:5 (*Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) (Z. ’00-360 Hymn 256)

MARCH 19—“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”—I Peter 1:14,15 (Z. ’03-55 Hymn 344)

MARCH 26—“We are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others.”—I Thessalonians 5:5,6 (Z. ’03-70 Hymn 20)

Remember Me

According to thy gracious word,
In meek humility,
This will I do, my dying Lord,
I will remember thee.

Thy body, broken for my sake,
My bread from heav'n shall be;
Thy testamental cup I take
And thus remember thee.

When to the cross I turn my eyes
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God, my Sacrifice,
I must remember thee.

Remember thee and all thy pains
And all thy love to me;
Yea, while a breath, a pulse remains,
I will remember thee.

Then of thy grace I'll know the sum,
And in thy likeness be,
When thou hast in thy kingdom come
And dost remember me.

—Hymns of Dawn

*“This is good and pleases God our Savior,
who wants everyone to be saved and to understand
the truth. For there is only one God and one
Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—
the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase
freedom for everyone. This is the message God
gave to the world at just the right time.”
I Timothy 2:3-6, New Living Translation*

General Convention Bulletin

July 18-23, 2020—Johnstown, Pennsylvania

THE 2020 GENERAL CONVENTION is only a few months away. This year the convention returns to the facilities of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. Air conditioned hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style apartments (also air conditioned) with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities will be available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge if both beds are occupied. Air conditioned apartments off-campus will also be available this year. These are located one-half mile directly west of the LLC.

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

The convention will provide one shuttle bus leaving the Pittsburgh airport in the early evening for the college in Johnstown on Friday, July 17. There will also be a shuttle bus leaving the college in the early morning hours for the Pittsburgh airport on Friday, July 24. There will be a \$20 charge each way per adult (\$10 per child under 18) for this service.

There will be special programs at the convention for young people of all ages. Six different age groups, beginning at age 3 up to age 25, will have daily studies, fellowship, recreation and other activities designed especially for them. Well qualified brethren have been selected to coordinate each of these groups.

A complete pricing table and registration form is provided for your convenience immediately following this announcement. We encourage you to register early. Advance payment is not required. ■

	Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast		\$9.00	\$8.00
Lunch		11.00	10.00
Dinner		15.00	14.00
Total, three meals		\$35.00	\$32.00
Lodging (per night)			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$44.00	\$39.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$39.00	\$37.00
**single occ (LLC)		\$80.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$44.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$425*	\$390*
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$290*	\$255*
**single occ (LLC)		\$646*	\$611*
single occ (non-LLC)		\$334*	\$299*
*If no breakfasts, deduct—\$45		**Air conditioned	
***100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group.			
NOTE: A Convention Fee of \$10.00 per person, regardless of age or length of stay, lodging and meal arrangements, will be added to your invoice to help offset convention expenses unrelated to lodging and meals.			

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707

E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com (407) 670-4189

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 17, 2020				
Saturday, 18th				
Sunday, 19th				
Monday, 20th				
Tuesday, 21st				
Wednesday, 22nd				
Thursday, 23rd				
Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals <input type="checkbox"/>				
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts) <input type="checkbox"/>				
Check: <input type="checkbox"/> private bath or <input type="checkbox"/> shared bath				
<input type="checkbox"/> double occupancy <input type="checkbox"/> single occupancy				
<input type="checkbox"/> interested in APTS				
Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)				
Address:				

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

J. Dolan

Kenya:
Nairobi March 10
Pokot Region 11,12
Nairobi 13-18
Migori 19-23
Uganda:
Entebbe 24-31

W. Dutka

Kenya:
Nairobi March 10
Pokot Region 11,12
Nairobi 13-18
Migori 19-23
Uganda:
Entebbe 24-31

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

T. N. Alexander

Orlando, FL March 7-9

J. Dolan

Orlando, FL March 7-9

O. B. Elbert

Orlando, FL March 7-9
Highland Park, NY 28

A. Fernets

Orlando, FL March 7-9

B. Keith

Orlando FL March 7-9

E. Kuenzli

New Orleans, LA March 14,15

H. Montague

Orlando, FL March 7-9

T. Ruggirello

Orlando, FL March 7-9

B. Sweeney

Orlando, FL March 7-9

*“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”
—Hebrews 10:24,25, English Standard Version*

CONVENTIONS

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

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 7-9—Holiday Inn Orlando International, 5750 T. G. Lee Blvd., Orlando, FL 32822. Phone: (407) 851-6400. Specify “Orlando Bible Students” for special rate by February 22. Online booking code: SBO. Other information, contact S. Jeuck. Phone: (407) 247-4641 or Email: sjeuck@aol.com

NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION, March 14,15—Holiday Inn Gulfport/Airport, 9515 Highway 49, Gulfport, MS 39503. For room reservations, contact Holiday Inn. Phone: (228) 679-1700. Other information, contact M. Costelli, PO Box 6235, Gulfport, MS 39506. Phone: (228) 861-2822 or Email: michael@simpkins-costelli.com

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, March 28—DoubleTree by Hilton, 789 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06854. Phone: (203) 853-3477. Other information, contact S. Koterba. Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 4,5—Quality Inn Troy, 2537 Rochester Court, Troy, MI 48083. Contact P.Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588 or Email: nemeshfp@aol.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 10-12—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Send reservations and meal counts to S. Thomassen by April 1. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

NIGERIA CONVENTION, April 11—Agwa Ecclesia, Uzi Obudi Agwa, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact V. Ekeh. Phone: 2348080205812 or Email: abiblestudecc@yahoo.com

HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 3—Mandell Jewish Community Center, 335 Bloomfield Avenue, West Hartford, CT. Contact J. Slivinsky. Phone (860) 289-0116 or Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 23,24—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. For room reservations, contact Portofino Inn Burbank. Phone: (818) 848-5100. Deadline for special group rate of \$85.00 is March 31. Other information, contact T. Parkinson. Phone: (818) 247-9800 or Email: Ti77park@gmail.com

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 7—Falls Township Senior Center, 282 Trenton Road, Fairless Hills, PA. Contact J. Elbert. Phone: (732) 710-8754 or Email: obe3@comcast.net

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 13,14—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada. Contact B. Smith. Phone: (250) 947-8802 or Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 19-21—Monarch Hotel & Conference Center, 12566 SE 93rd Avenue, Clackamas, OR 97015. Phone: (503) 652-1515. Contact hotel for reservations. Other information, contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 438-1086 or Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 18-23—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. See pp. 59-61, this issue. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

BIBLE STUDENTS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 5-9—Orle Gniazdo, ul. Wrzosowa 28 A43-370, Szczyrk, Poland. For information go to biblestudentsconventions.com or contact M. Davis. Email: lmkdavis@earthlink.net