

The DAWN

VOLUME No. LXIII, NUMBER 10
(USPS 149-380), OCTOBER 1995

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Second-class postage paid at Rutherford, NJ. Published monthly by The Dawn Bible Students Association, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. \$3.00 a year: Great Britain £2. Write to foreign addresses for other prices.

CANADA: P.O. Box 175, Elmwood Postal Outlet, Winnipeg, Man. R2L 1M0

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

AUSTRALIA: Berean Bible Institute, 1 Springfield Street, Briar Hill, Victoria 3088

FRANCE: Association des Etudiants de la Bible-Publications Aurore, B.P. 3066, 68062 Mulhouse CEDEX

GERMANY: Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung, Eisenstrasse 9, 91231 Neunkirchen am Sand

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), Afexidiou 81 Ano Ilisia, GR 15771 Athens

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

NEW ZEALAND: P.O. Box 27468, Mt. Roskill 1004

SOUTH AMERICA: El Alba, Calle Almirante Brown 674, Monte Grande 1842, Buenos Aires, Argentina
y
Padre Bruzzone 1166, Espeleta 1882, Buenos Aires, Argentina

SPAIN: El Alba, Via S. Leonardo

HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

The Day of Small Things 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

Becoming a Servant 14
The Worth of a Person 16
Confronted by Jesus 18
No Partiality 20
Purposeful Living 22

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

God's Holy Prophets 24
Our Refuge and Strength 42
For What Are You Seeking? 53
Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 41

PUBLICATIONS' LIST

Ten-cent Booklets 32
Five-cent Booklets 33

"FRANK AND ERNEST"

Domestic Radio Stations 34
Foreign Radio Stations 35

THE BIBLE ANSWERS TV 63

OBITUARIES 41

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 63

HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

In conjunction with the observance of 1995 National Engineers Week, a group of prominent engineers were designated "All Stars." This was a diverse team of men and women which included corporate executives, astronauts, elected officials, heads of government agencies, the President's science advisor, and engineers in non-traditional fields.

These were surveyed and were asked to identify the technological achievement of the last fifty years which had the largest impact on our daily lives. Although several candidates were mentioned, the majority of the engineers selected the integrated circuit, which the public now knows as the microchip.

Some of the comments made were as follows: Gilbert Amelio, president and CEO of National Semiconductor, speaking of integrated circuits, said, "It has revolutionized the everyday world on the same scale as Gutenberg's invention of movable type, or Watt's development of the steam engine."

Arati Prabaker, director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, noted that the solid state transistor, invented almost fifty years ago, "was a big and clunky affair, but it would become the basis for integrated circuitry, including today's fantastically powerful microprocessors."

Norman Augustine, chairman and CEO of Martin Marietta, said that the integrated circuit "has made possible cellular phones, home computers, advanced medical diagnostic equipment, life-saving airbags in automobiles, even video

games." He added, "Many devices taken for granted in the modern world, from satellites forecasting the weather, to TV remote controls, to microwave ovens, would not exist without the microchip."

William Brannen, chairman and CEO of Florida Power and Light, marvelled: "The ENIAC, commonly thought of as the first modern computer, was built in 1944. It took up more space than an 18-wheel tractor trailer, weighed more than seventeen Chevrolet Camaros, consumed 14,000 watts of electricity, and could execute up to 5,000 basic arithmetic operations per second. Today's 4886 microprocessor is built on a tiny piece of silicon about the size of a dime. It weighs less than a packet of Sweet'N Low, uses less than two watts of electricity, and can execute up to 54,000,000 commands per second." Commenting further on the great economy of computing power today versus fifty years ago, which is 18,000 times less expensive, he said, "Whole new industries are emerging and continue to revolutionize the way we live and work."

Several developments have made possible the miniaturizing of the first modern computer. The first necessity was to make available high purity silicon. This is a metal that is found in great abundance in the earth known as the oxide, and which people in general know as the sand of the seashore. However, it is difficult to separate it from the oxide and to purify it. The next development involved the etching of the silicon chip to make an integrated circuit. Finally, all development programs were aimed at making the chip smaller and smaller while etching these to make the integrated circuit, a difficult task as the chip size was shrunk. Today's smallest microchip is a remarkable achievement.

"Who hath despised the day of small things?"
---Zechariah 4:10

MOST PEOPLE STAND in awe of God's great and marvelous works. The universe is so vast and magnificent, and the Planet Earth is so small in comparison, that the

people of earth are as “the small dust of the balance.” (Isa. 40:15) In speaking of God’s greatness, the Prophet Isaiah said, “All nations before him are as nothing.” (vs. 17) That which is small and insignificant is often of little note or concern; yet much that is important and life-sustaining is tiny—even microscopic in size. We are more likely to take note of the mighty creative works of God, and to overlook the small things of his creation.

The human body is an excellent example of the use of small, intricate designs in its many features. As remarkable as the modern microchip may be, it cannot compare to the human brain in its capability to perform many important functions by signals transmitted by tiny neurons—this in spite of the fact that the brain is imperfect. The flow of blood platelets in tiny capillaries that service all the body’s needs is absolutely enthralling, as studied under a microscope. All these and similar features of miniature design are part of God’s remarkable creation.

We are not to overlook the small things which God has used in his projects, and in carrying out his will. There are tiny microbes in the soil which are performing a yeoman’s service of purifying the air by absorbing noxious components from the air, and produce useful nutrients for growing food for man’s sustenance. Other microbes purify polluted waters, and the oceans are teeming with plankton, which are the beginning of a life-chain in the seas. Such minute organisms, which are not visible to the human eye and can only be seen under a microscope, are performing valuable service in sustaining life on this planet.

The Prophet Isaiah in the 40th chapter of Isaiah establishes how small and insignificant man is in comparison to the mighty works of God. The attempts on the part of man to liken God to a graven image is shown to be utter foolishness, and totally incomprehensible of the grandeur, power, and glory of God—the Supreme Creator of the

universe. "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One."—vs. 25

The LORD seeks to find humility in all of us; in other words we must have a sober estimate of our capabilities and limitations. God wants us to be aware of the great accomplishments that can be achieved by his use of small and seemingly insignificant things. Therefore, he caused his prophet, Zechariah, to write the words of our theme text: "Who hath despised the day of small things?" When things are small, they are likely to be overlooked.

The question in Zechariah was prompted by the work which was being done by Zerubbabel—that of rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. It was not an easy task, and there was much opposition to it. After the Medes and Persians had supplanted the mighty empire of Babylon, "the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia. He made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

"Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem."—Ezra 1:1-4

Zerubbabel, who was of the royal family of David and Solomon, was appointed governor of the colony of workers that volunteered to return for this task. They numbered over 42,000. Their first assignment was to build an altar for burnt offerings and sacrifices to the LORD. Once this was done, they observed all of the ordinances given to them by Moses, such as the Feast of Tabernacles. Even though the

foundation of the Temple was not yet laid, the people kept these ceremonies.

The first year that the colony went to Judea, they built and settled in homes, built the altar, and revived all the rituals of the Law. It was not until the second year that work began on the restoration of the foundation of the Temple. "And when the builders laid the foundation of the Temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel."—Ezra 3:10

This was such an emotional occasion that the people shouted for joy, and others wept, as they recalled the grand structure which had been built by Solomon, and had been razed to the ground by the Babylonians. This was the beginning—notably a small beginning—of restoring the glorious Temple in Jerusalem.

Then trouble arose fomented by adversaries of Israel. News of the progress made in building the Temple reached the enemies of Judah and Benjamin, and they went to Zerubbabel and asked to join the others in the building work. It is believed that these people could have been the forefathers of the Samaritans, who, in the time of our Lord Jesus, lived north of Judea. They were of mixed nationalities colonized by Assyria and Babylon, to unite the remaining Israelites with these nations. Zerubbabel declined their offer of assistance, stating plainly that Cyrus had given this select group the mandate to do this work, and they intended to follow his command.

These, and other enemies, then sought to disrupt the work of building the Temple by weakening the hands of the builders, and troubling them in every way possible. They sought legal action against the project during the reign of Cyrus. They made accusations against the inhabitants of Judah to King Ahasuerus, and convinced his successor, King Artaxerxes, that these people were a rebellious nation. They contended that the building of the Temple

would cause the builders to refuse to pay taxes, and lead to their seceding from the empire. Artaxerxes then commanded that the work cease. The Scriptures tell us that "then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia."---Ezra 4:24

As soon as Darius became king, Zerubbabel resumed the work of building the Temple. His enemies immediately objected to the king, and reported that the claim to have permission from King Cyrus for this work should be substantiated. A search was made for the original decree, and it was found. The king then ordered the adversaries of Judah to cease and desist in their actions to interfere with the building. He said, "Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place." (Ezra 6:7) The penalty for interference would be death by hanging.

Zechariah's prophecy was written at the time that these events occurred. He was instrumental in inspiring the people to complete the work, as recorded in the Book of Ezra: "The elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo."---Ezra 6:14,15

The Temple was now completed, and there was great rejoicing by those in Judea. It was a foregleam of things to come. Zechariah's prophecy foretold of a greater rejoicing that would take place when the church of Christ would be complete, as written in God's Holy Word. He also showed how important God's Word is, in the realization of all the precious promises recorded therein.

Zechariah, like the Apostle John, received many revelations from God. God's angels were used to communicate with him, and to show him visions. In Zechariah 4:1-3 we read: "The angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the

top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof."

No doubt, Zechariah, being a priest as well as a prophet, recognized the golden candlestick of the Tabernacle, and of the Temple, but he may have wondered about the two olive trees. So he asked the angel, "What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the Word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."—vss. 4-6

Zechariah did not receive an answer to his question. Rather, his attention was diverted to Zerubbabel and the work he was empowered to do as directed by the LORD's Word. Later, Zechariah went back to the same question, "What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?" (vs 11:12) The angel thought that Zechariah should know who these were, but he professed ignorance. "Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth." (vs. 14) It is generally believed by Bible students that these represent the Old and New Testaments of God's Word. This is the same symbolism that is used in Revelation 11:3,4, where they are called God's "two witnesses," and are described as "two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the Earth."

The Bible adorns the pulpits of every Christian church, but few people, either serving or attending, comprehend its message. If they could, they would realize the greatness and beauty of God's wonderful plan. Everything God has done and purposes to do for mankind is contained in that wonderful Book. The world will be amazed in the near future when God's plan is revealed, and mankind in general will see the mighty, noble, wise, and blessed features of it. Who

would have thought that those possessing Bibles had access to these stupendous revelations! This has been the case for those now privileged to have this plan revealed to them. But God has chosen to hide his magnificent plan from the majority during this 'day of small things'. A most wonderful feature of that plan of God is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27) This feature has been called a mystery, or a sacred secret—a "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."—Col. 1:26

As God's great plan of the ages unfolds, we see that he has selected his Son, Jesus, to be the principal character in his purpose for all the universe. We can understand why, because "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, and I heard them saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power of the Almighty, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:12,13, *Tischendorf's Codex Sinaiticus*), and God has "highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." (Phil. 2:9,10) But what is extremely difficult to understand is how members of Adam's family should be invited to share in his sufferings, and in his glory! The promise is, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10) How could such insignificant, little creatures be given such great honor? But, again, this is the 'day of small things'!

As we go back to the vision which Zechariah saw, and reread his conversation with the angel in the 4th chapter, we recall that the angel's first answer to the prophet's question was that he should take note of the work of Zerubbabel, who was a picture of our Lord Jesus. As Zerubbabel was commissioned to build the Temple in Judah, so,

during the Gospel Age, Jesus has been commissioned to build the antitypical temple of God.—Eph. 2:19-22

This, then, is the great work which God is performing in the world today. As the angel told Zechariah, this work would not be done by the might or power in the world, “but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Zech. 4:6) The only way that this work could be accomplished would be by the knowledge of the LORD’s Word, and the Spirit of truth. In Zechariah’s time the LORD guided the workers by his Spirit, to attain his purpose. Likewise, the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was poured out upon the apostles and the Early Church, and has continued to be received by those chosen of God to be the ‘living stones’ of the antitypical temple.

The work faces many obstacles. As was true of the roadblocks and interferences to the work being done by Zerubbabel, so also the Adversary tries to stop the work from proceeding in our time. In Zechariah’s prophecy the opposition is pictured as a great mountain of difficulty, which we recognize as the kingdom of the Evil One. But the angel asks, “Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.” (Zech. 4:7) Nothing can stand in the way of the completion of the work of the antitypical Zerubbabel. The kingdom of the Evil One will be removed and made a plain.

When John the Baptist began his ministry to prepare the way for Jesus, he fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3,4. He not only prepared the way for Jesus’ ministry, but he predicted indirectly that verse 4 would be fulfilled: “Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth.” (Luke 3:5-7) John knew that Jesus would gain control of the kingdoms of this world, and they would be brought low in due time. This, too, was forecast by the Apostle John: “The kingdoms of this world are become [in the Millennial Age] the king-

doms of our LORD and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.” ~Rev. 11:15

The angel speaking to Zechariah continued to say, “So shall he bring forth the headstone, with thundering shouts, Beautiful! Beautiful! thereunto.” (Zech. 4:7, *Rotherham Translation*) Immediately there is projected for us the geometric figure of the pyramid with the headstone or capstone put into place signifying the establishment of God’s Kingdom with Jesus as the chief cornerstone at its apex. But then the angel’s message is interrupted, and the word of the LORD comes to Zechariah saying, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.” ~vs. 9

From here we are brought back from the time of triumph, the laying low of the mountain of the Evil One, and the exaltation of the chief cornerstone to the present time of building the Temple. In Zerubbabel’s time a major step forward in this work was realized when the foundation of the Temple had been laid. There was great rejoicing, and ceremonies were instituted that eventually would take place when the Temple was completed. Some may have been inclined to make derogatory remarks about the lack of completion of the Temple, with only the foundation in place! But the Word of the LORD to Zechariah was that none should despise ‘the day of small things’. Rather, they should rejoice as they saw “the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel.” ~vs. 10

The plummet is an important builder’s tool. The line and plummet are used to insure that the structure being built is perfectly perpendicular to the foundation and upright. The significance of this tool is described by Isaiah in his prophecy. (Isa. 28:16,17, RSV) “Thus says the LORD God, Behold, I am laying in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: He who believes will not be in haste! And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet; and hail will sweep

away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter.”

Notice how Isaiah combines the thought of the laying of the foundation with the line and plummet. We know that the foundation represents our Lord Jesus Christ. First because the precious cornerstone is identified with it, and, in turn is identified by the Apostle Peter's words. (I Pet. 2:4-6) Secondly, because the Apostle Paul says, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (I Cor. 3:11) Likewise, the foundation for the temple of God has to be Jesus Christ. This temple is being built to meet the requirements of the line and plummet, where justice is the line, and righteousness is the plummet.

As the work of the LORD in his selection of the living stones for this temple continues even with so much crookedness, corruption, and evil in the world, the latter is cause for rejoicing in the present time. God selects those who appreciate and accept the ransom sacrifice of his Son, Jesus, and who walk in his steps. They “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” and as a consequence “the righteousness of the Law” is fulfilled in them. (Rom. 8:1-4) No stone can be used in this temple that does not conform to the line and plummet held in the hand of the antitypical Zerubbabel.

The scripture in Zechariah 4:10 continues, “Those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.” In pondering the meaning of this phrase, we note that a similar description is given of the Lamb which was the only one found worthy to open the book sealed with seven seals, described in Revelation 5. In that account the Lamb is said to have “seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”

It is believed that this symbolism of this book refers to the plan of God, and that of the seven eyes, the complete and perfect wisdom of God which holds survey of all the earth, supervising the work essential to that plan. Likewise, this is the thought in the message given by God to

Zechariah. How glad we are that this wonderful plan will be accomplished, and that the testimony of the two faithful witnesses described in Zechariah's prophecy as olive trees, will be revealed to be true. They cannot be slain. Their message is sure.

Just as it is written concerning the Word of the LORD, "So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa. 55:11) As the LORD's people look ahead with the eye of faith, we rejoice in all the evidences of his preparation for his kingdom. Small beginnings are appreciated by us. We do not despise the day of small things. But the world does.

If the world knew that God was selecting 'a people for his name' at this time, they would wonder at his selection! Their expectation would be that the most prominent people in the world—the mighty—the wise and the noble—would be selected. The Apostle Paul knew otherwise. He revealed God's strategy in calling his people in I Corinthians 1:17. They would not be attracted by the wisdom the world reveres. What we believe is 'foolishness' to them. As Paul says, "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."—vs. 21

Paul tells us: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not [insignificant items], to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence." (vss. 26-29) The world does not know that God will use this poor, despised company to bless all the earth; when they do, they will no longer despise 'the day of small things'. ■

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 1

BECOMING A SERVANT

KEY VERSE: "Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them."—Acts 6:6

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Acts 6:1-14

ONE OF THE problems that arose in the early days of the church was the proper distribution of necessities for living. Persecution and prejudice against these Early Christians by the Judeans was so severe that a communal system was instituted for survival.

In the church there were many Israelites who had come to Jerusalem to worship at the time that Jesus died, and these stayed on after Pentecost. Also the church contained Israelites, who were already dwelling in Jerusalem, and who had come from other lands. These were mainly Greek-speaking Jews, or Hellenists.

Concerning the conditions that existed, we read in Acts 6:1-4, *New International Version*: "In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our

attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word'."

These were brought to the apostles who gave their consent to their selection and conferred a special blessing on them. All seven had Greek names, and were most likely Hellenists. The Greek-speaking widows now were no longer neglected. "So the Word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."—Acts 6:7, NIV

The church continued selecting elders, or overseers, for spiritual matters, and deacons to take care of things temporal. However, all of God's people are to be servants, not only in such matters for each other, but also in spiritual matters. Very little is said about the service of these deacons in caring for the temporal needs of the brethren. Five of them are never mentioned again, but two became very prominent, not because of their service in temporal matters, but because of their witnessing to

God's plan. One of these was Stephen.

Stephen was a Hellenist, and was able to perform wonders and miraculous signs among the people including those attending a synagogue in Jerusalem where Greek was spoken. The Hellenists in that synagogue disputed with Stephen but "could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke." (Acts 6:10, NIV) This so infuriated them that they brought false accusations against him, seized him, and brought him before the Sanhedrin.

Stephen's masterful defense before the court covered the long period from Abraham's experiences to the time of Jesus. (Acts, Chapter 7) When Stephen declared that he, in vision, saw Jesus on the right hand of God, they cried, "Blasphemy," and, seizing him, took him out of the city to stone him. Stephen voiced forgiveness for these erring ones as he was being stoned. He fell asleep in death, becoming the first Christian martyr. ■

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 8

THE WORTH OF A PERSON

KEY VERSE: *"Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."*—Acts 8:35

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Acts 8:5,6,26-38

THE NEWLY SELECTED deacons in the Early Church must have been very active in their service to the LORD. Stephen's activity was short-lived, when he was stoned to death. The persecution of these Early Christians reached a new peak forcing many who had come from other lands to leave Jerusalem. Others who dwelt in the area also went to seek new homes. At the time of Stephen's death, the Scriptures say, "On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria."—Acts 8:1, NIV

This was God's way of extending the Gospel message, and we read further:

"Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews." (Acts 11:19, NIV) The time for God's exclusive favor to the Jews had not yet ended, because these events occurred in A.D. 34 and 35.

One of those who left Jerusalem then was Philip, a newly selected deacon in the church. He went to a city in Samaria and preached Christ. Philip's ministry was successful, for we read: "When they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."—Acts 8:12, NIV

Philip, when he went to Samaria to begin his ministry, had gone to an area that was not held in high esteem by the Jews of Judea. The Samaritans were a mixture of Babylonians and Jews through intermarriage. Furthermore, the Jews living there were from the ten-tribe, or northern kingdom, and no love was lost between them and Judeans. They were not considered to be people of worth. But God saw that there was worth there, and blessed them by calling them into the body of Christ. The worth of a person is not evaluated by his status, wealth, education, or race; but because God looks upon the heart.

An angel told Philip to use a certain road which was used by travelers from Jerusalem to Gaza. It was there that he encountered a eunuch of Ethiopia—a man of authority—in charge of the treasury of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia. Even though he was a Jewish proselyte, he was not allowed to go into the Temple or synagogue because he was a eunuch. Being devout,

he was reading from the Book of Isaiah as he traveled in his chariot from Jerusalem. Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. "How can I, he said, unless someone explains it to me?" So Philip joined him.---Acts 8:31, NIV

When reading the passage in Isaiah 53:7,8, the eunuch could not understand who Isaiah was talking about. As our Key Verse says, this gave Philip an opportunity to begin "with that very passage of scripture, and" to go on to explain the "good news about Jesus." (Acts 8:35, NIV) Both Jews and proselytes did not know that first Messiah had to suffer and die. The eunuch was baptized.---vs. 36, NIV

Philip's ministry had brought him to another person whom God found worthy to run for the prize of the high calling even though Judaic society could not fully accept him. This has been true of all those selected for this privilege, even as the Apostle Paul tells us so well in I Corinthians 1:26-31. ■

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 15

CONFRONTED BY JESUS

KEY VERSE: "The Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." ---Acts 9:15

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Acts 9:1-6,10-20

WE UNDERSTAND THAT Saul of Tarsus attended the same Hellenist synagogue where Stephen witnessed to the Jews. He is mentioned as holding the coats of those who stoned Stephen. ---Acts 7:58; 8:1

Saul was so incensed against the beliefs of the Christian Jews that he tried to "destroy the church." (Acts 8:3, *New International Version*) In Jerusalem Saul went from house to house, dragging men and women to prison, and "breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples." (Acts 9:1, *NIV*) When many Christians left Jerusalem because of this intense persecution, Saul decided to pursue them and bring them back as prisoners to Jerusa-

lem. He received permission in the form of letters to the synagogues in Damascus from the High Priest, to bring back any Jews who were in "this way." (Acts 9:2) So Saul, with a party of men, set off for Damascus.

"As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord', Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting', he replied. 'Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do'." ---vss. 3-6, *NIV*

The aggressive Saul arose humbly from the ground, having been blinded by the

brilliant light. He was meekly led by others in his party into Damascus to the home of Judas, remaining for three days without sight, not eating nor drinking. He prayed for forgiveness of his sins. He realized that his opposition to Christian Jews was wrong.

There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord appeared to him in a vision, and instructed him to go to the house of Judas on the street called Straight, and to ask for Saul of Tarsus where he was praying. Ananias demurred, reminding the Lord that he had heard about Saul, and the evil and harm he had done to the saints in Jerusalem, and how he had come with the same intent to Damascus. But the Lord said to him, "Go ['Do as I say'], this man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel."—vs. 15, NIV

Ananias carried out the Lord Jesus' instructions, and addressed Saul as 'Brother Saul', knowing now that Saul was indeed a brother in

Christ. "Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized." (vs. 18, NIV) Then Saul took food for the first time in days, was strengthened, and spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

It might appear that Saul then started at once to preach in Damascus, but Luke has omitted part of his experiences later supplied in Paul's letter to the Galatians. (Gal. 1:17) Paul needed to be taught God's wonderful plan, which he received by a direct revelation of Jesus Christ. See Galatians 1:11,12,16,17, and II Corinthians 12:1-4. From Damascus he went to Arabia where he stayed several months, and then returned to Damascus, where the narrative of Acts 9:20 resumes. Paul never forgot his confrontation with the glorified Lord Jesus. He said, "I am the least of the apostles, and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."—I Cor. 15:9, NIV ■

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 22

NO PARTIALITY

KEY VERSE: *“Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”—Acts 10:34,35*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Acts 10:20-29,44-48

GOD, IN THE prophecy of Daniel 9:25-27, promised seventy weeks of favor for the nation of Israel. The prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus came in A.D. 29 as Israel's Messiah, and was immersed in the Jordan River to begin his ministry. At this point there remained one more week, or seven years of God's favor, toward Israel.

In the middle of that 'week', Messiah would be cut off by being put to death. So Jesus died in A.D. 33, three and one-half years after the beginning of his ministry. This was a time of exclusive favor granted to Israel—the chief favor being the invitation to become disciples of Jesus. In the autumn of A.D.

36, that exclusive favor came to an end.

There were many Gentiles who sought the blessings and favors Jesus had to offer, but because of this promised restricted favor to Israel, Jesus could not respond. He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel." (Matt. 15:24) There were some exceptions. One of these was a centurion mentioned in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10, who wanted his servant healed. This centurion loved the nation of Israel, and had built them a synagogue. He knew the God of Israel, and worshipped him.

When the time came for that exclusive favor to Is-

rael to end, Peter was in Joppa at the home of Simon, a tanner. He went on the housetop to pray. He became very hungry, and while the meal was being prepared, he saw a vision of a large sheet being let down from heaven, containing animals, reptiles, and birds. He heard a voice say, "Get up Peter, kill and eat." "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." The voice answered him: "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." (Acts 10:13-15, NIV) This scene was repeated two more times before the sheet was withdrawn.

Earlier, Cornelius—a centurion in Caesarea—was praying to God when in a vision an angel appeared to him. He gave the centurion specific instructions to send for Peter. Three men came from Cornelius and explained their mission to Peter.

The next day, Peter went to Caesarea with these three men, and six brethren from Joppa. When they arrived at

Cornelius' home, he was waiting for them with a houseful of people—his family, relatives, and friends. Cornelius explained to Peter how an angel had appeared to him, telling him to invite Peter to come to speak to them. Now they were ready to hear what he would say.

Peter began his discourse by commenting that God shows no partiality, but was now accepting Gentiles—those from nations other than Israel—who reverence him. Then the apostle gave a brief account of God's message to Israel through the ministry of Jesus, describing that ministry and the concluding events; namely, the death and resurrection of Jesus. While he was speaking, the Holy Spirit came upon all who heard the message, and they were baptized. There was no longer any doubt that God was showing no partiality among the nations, and from this time on, God turned to the Gentiles to select from them also, "a people for his name."—Acts 15:14 ■

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 29

PURPOSEFUL LIVING

KEY VERSE: *"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."*—Acts 11:23

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Acts 11:19-30; 12:24,25

EXCLUSIVE FAVOR FOR Israel's invitation to the high calling of God came to an end in A.D. 36, when Cornelius, his kinsmen, and friends—who were all Gentiles—were baptized into Christ. The way was now open for other Gentiles to receive an understanding of God's plan.

It is evident that the persecution in Jerusalem at the time of Stephen's death was designed by God to force many to leave Jerusalem, and to spread the Gospel message to others in far-flung areas. Those who left went into other parts of Judea and Samaria, and later to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch preaching to Jews only. However, some who had lived among Gen-

tiles in other lands, went to Antioch, and they began to speak to the Greeks, who were Gentiles. A great number of these Greeks believed the Word, and joined the congregation of Jewish Christians in that city.

The congregation at Caesarea became the first one to have both Gentile and Jewish Christians; Antioch being the second. News of these developments reached the ears of the apostles in Jerusalem, and they decided to investigate. They sent Barnabas to explore the matter, since he had lived in Cyprus among Gentiles before coming to Jerusalem. Barnabas was a good choice because the Scriptures say, "He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith."

(Acts 11:24, NIV) And because of his capability, "a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord."

When Barnabas arrived in Antioch he could see the evidences of the grace of God in the hearts of the new believers; his task was to encourage them in this path. However, Barnabas knew that Saul of Tarsus had been selected by God and Jesus to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Therefore he went to Tarsus to find him. When he found him, they both returned to Antioch and became elders of the congregation, staying a whole year teaching the new members.

Barnabas must have conveyed his findings to the apostles at Jerusalem, although he did not see them immediately. There was a new purpose for his ministry, and the ministry of the apostle originally called Saul. After his conversion, Saul had to leave Damascus when the Jews plotted to kill him. This was because his preaching was so compelling that no one could refute

it. At that time Saul went to Jerusalem, where the other apostles thought he had come into their midst to spy against them. It was not until Barnabas had taken him aside and heard his story that Saul was able to get a hearing before the apostles, and became accepted by them.

But when the Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem plotted to kill Saul, the brethren sent him to Tarsus for his safety. At that time, the Lord's purpose for him may have seemed unclear, but now he was brought to Antioch where so many Gentile believers wanted to know all they could about Christ. Saul---Paul---now had a clear purpose for his life, and taught others a purposeful life as well.

So it often is with us. When we begin to serve the LORD, obstacles may be placed in our way. As we strive to work around the obstacles, and continue to seek purposeful living, suddenly opportunities arise, and the way and the purpose of our life becomes clear. ■

GOD'S HOLY PROPHETS

"He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

---Acts 3:20,21

AMONG THE VERY important people of the Bible are the holy prophets of the Old Testament. The majority of these servants, inspired of God, wrote the books which bear their names. These are often referred to as the 'major' and 'minor' prophets, this distinction being determined by the length of the books which they wrote. There are four major prophets---Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The minor prophets number twelve---Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

These, however, are not the only 'holy prophets' of the Old Testament. There are five others---Moses, Samuel, Job, Solomon, and David. In the New Testament, Jude speaks also of Enoch, "the seventh from Adam," as being a prophet.---Jude 14

We know little of the major and minor prophets except what is revealed by their writings. Unlike Moses, Samuel, Solomon, and David, they were not used by the LORD as lawgivers, judges, or kings---their niche in the divine arrangement being largely as writers of prophecies.

ISAIAH

According to verse one of Isaiah's prophecy, he was the son of Amos. The "vision" which enabled him to prophesy concerning Judah and Jerusalem came to Isaiah during the reign of four of Judah's kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The immediate service of Isaiah and of the other prophets was on behalf of God's people with whom they were contemporary. But more important than this was the fact that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they foretold important coming events relating to the plan of God.

The Apostle Peter refers to this larger ministry of the prophets, saying that they foretold "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (I Pet. 1:11) In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah's prophecy we have a notable example of this. He describes the suffering and death of Jesus, saying that he would be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter." Then, in conclusion, he says of Jesus that he would be given a "portion with the Great." This is a prophecy of Jesus' high exaltation to the right hand of the throne of God.—I Pet. 1:7-12; Isa. 53:7,12

In our text, in which Peter refers to all God's holy prophets since the world began, he says that they also prophesied concerning the times of restitution of all things, which would follow the Second Advent of Christ. The prophecies pertaining to Christ's suffering apply to his First Advent, while those which describe the 'restitution' refer to his Second Presence. Thus, the work of both advents was foretold by the 'holy prophets' of God.

Isaiah wrote eloquently concerning the times of restitution. In Chapter 33, verse 24, he says concerning that future time that the inhabitants "shall not say, I am sick." In chapter 25, verses 6-9, he describes the work of Christ's kingdom, which is the work of restitution, and says that then death will be swallowed up in victory, and that the people will be glad and rejoice in the LORD's salvation.

JEREMIAH

The name Jeremiah means 'Jehovah has appointed'. He began his service as a prophet during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, and his ministry continued until the nation was overthrown in the reign of Zedekiah, and the people taken captive to Babylon. Jeremiah was not taken to Babylon, however, but was left with the few whose duty it was to be vinedressers under the Babylonish government. Later, most of these fled to Egypt for their safety, taking Jeremiah with them, and it is believed that the prophet died in Egypt.

Jeremiah is known as the 'prophet of doom'. This is because the LORD commissioned him to call attention to the sins of the nation, and the calamities which would fall upon them because of their idolatries. This message was so condemnatory that Jeremiah for a time hesitated to declare it, but then, as he testified, the Word of the LORD was in him as a fire shut up in his bones, "and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."—Jer. 20:9

The LORD gave Jeremiah the loving assurance of help in every time of need; and in view of the commission given to him, he was many times in need of divine protection. His commission over the nations and the kingdoms to 'root out, and to pull down, and to destroy', and later to 'build and to plant', should not be construed to mean that he would literally destroy and rebuild nations. The thought is, rather, that he was commissioned to utter prophecies covering, first a work of destruction, to be followed by restoration.

Jeremiah fulfilled this commission, both with respect to the nation of Israel, and the world of mankind as a whole. He prophesied the calamities which, even in his own lifetime, came upon his own people when Zedekiah was overthrown and the nation taken captive to Babylon. He foretold that this captivity would last for seventy years, and that then the Gentile nations responsible for it would be punished.—Jer. 25:8-14

In chapter 30, verses 18 and 19, Jeremiah prophesies that the city of Jerusalem, and the temple, desolated by Israel's enemies when the nation was taken into captivity, would be rebuilt, and that out from this place there would again "proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry." Thus we see that Jeremiah forecast the destruction of Judah, and the regathering and rebuilding which would follow the captivity.

But Jeremiah's prophecy takes on a much wider scope than this when viewed in the light of the divine plan. In chapter 16, verse 13, he foretells a time when a much greater scattering of the people would occur than was true in connection with the Babylonian captivity. He declares that they would be "cast . . . into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not show you favor."

From this later and greater captivity, Jeremiah foretold they were also to be delivered. Continuing in this same chapter, Jeremiah declares that the LORD would restore his people from all the lands whither he had driven them, and would "bring them again into their land." ~Jer. 16:14-17

In chapter 31:31-34, Jeremiah ~speaking again for the LORD ~tells of a time when a New Covenant would be made "with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah," a covenant in which the law of God would be written in the people's hearts, and in their "inward parts." This describes a restoration of at-one-ment between God and man, and is one of the promises of 'restitution' which Peter declared had been spoken by the mouth of all God's holy prophets.

"In those days" of restitution, declares Jeremiah, "they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge; but everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." (Jer. 31:29,30) Father Adam ate the 'sour grape' of sin, and all his progeny have suffered

this category, it is well to remember that they are an evidence of God's love. They are disciplinary in nature, and calculated to train and direct us into a more whole-hearted service of God and a more resolute determination to do his will regardless of what the cost may be.

It is true—reassuringly true—that in every age, and under every circumstance, God has been a refuge and strength to his people. He was a source of strength to Abel, who by faith offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; he sustained Enoch, who walked with him. All the patriarchs and prophets—in fact the entire class of ancient faithful ones—found in their God an ever-present source of strength and comfort. In their every time of need they knew that they could flee to God and find in him a haven of refuge from the storms of opposition and persecution by which they otherwise would have been overwhelmed and destroyed.

The same was true of Jesus. It has been true, and continues to be true with all his footstep followers. Not only is it our privilege to suffer with him, but we can rejoice also in the blessed assurance that we will be given grace sufficient for our every time of need. God has not promised to deliver spiritual Israel from trouble, but he has promised to sustain them as they suffer for righteousness' sake. What quietness and peace, therefore, should be ours when we take into our hearts his blessed promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."—Heb. 13:5

While the LORD's people throughout the Gospel Age have rejoiced in the blessed assurance of our text, and have experienced in no uncertain way the LORD's sustaining grace, this promise seems to have a special application to the footstep followers of Jesus living at this end of the age. There are many promises which assure us of his love and care in every trial, in every trouble, but this opening verse of Psalm 46 is a promise of God's grace in a particular trouble (vss. 2,3), also referred to by the Prophet Daniel as

a "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." ~Dan. 12:1

"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." ~Ps. 46:2,3

Because God is our refuge and strength, we will not fear though the earth be 'removed'. This symbolic language clearly identifies the application of the Psalm to the end of the age, the time of Christ's Second Presence; for it is during this time that the symbolic earth is removed and the symbolic mountains are carried into the midst of the sea. It would almost seem as though the Master had this very prophecy in mind when, in answering his disciples' questions concerning the signs of his Second Presence, he described the great "time of trouble" as "distress of nations, with perplexity," and said that the sea and the waves would be roaring. ~Luke 21:25

But we will not fear though "the waters thereof roar and be troubled," wrote the psalmist. Jesus said of this time that men's hearts would fail them for fear as they looked forward to the things coming upon the earth; but we do not share this fear, for we have the promise that 'God is our refuge and strength', that he will care for us in this time of trouble that is upon the world ~that even though the earth be 'removed' ~and it is even now in process of being removed ~he will be our refuge, our sure retreat of safety, so that no evil can befall us. What a reassuring promise!

'Though the earth be removed' ~it is the removal of the symbolic earth that is filling the hearts of the people with fear. It is not alone fear of the devastating trouble they see coming upon the nations in the form of nuclear or bacterial warfare, or other horrors men can produce, but the fear also which is due to uncertainty of the future along economic lines which is now blighting the peace and happiness of the world. But we do not need to share even this fear.

If our faith in the plan of God is strong, we will rejoice in every evidence which reveals the disintegration of the old and selfish order of things, even though it may work to our disadvantage so far as the material things of life are concerned. In the 121st Psalm, there is a statement which says: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." (vs. 1) However, the thought seems more likely to be interrogatory: "Shall I lift my eyes to the hills? From whence comes my help?" Then the psalmist answers, saying, "My help cometh from the LORD."

And today, as well, it is to God that we should look for help. There is no point in putting our trust in the 'hills', or the 'mountains'—symbolic of earthly kingdoms—for we know that they will be 'carried into the midst of the sea'. But we can put our trust in the LORD, for in this time of trouble he is our 'refuge and strength'. And how blessed it is to realize this! How it should contribute to our peace and quietness of mind and heart to know that despite the turmoil and fear with which we are surrounded, no harm can come to us as New Creatures.

Soon there is to be a 'new heavens and a new earth', and that, if we are faithful in laying down our lives in divine service during these trying times, we will have a part in the 'mountain of the LORD'—that glorious Mount Zion which is to take the place of the mountains which even now are being 'carried into the midst of the sea'. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High."—Ps. 46:4

In Hebrews 6:18 we read about 'fleeing for refuge', and 'laying hold upon the hope set before us'—a hope that is based upon 'two immutable things': God's promise, and his oath by which that promise was ratified. The apostle's reference here is to the promise made to Abraham—that oathbound promise, or covenant, which guarantees the blessing of all the families of the earth through the 'seed' of Abraham. It is, in a general way, this same refuge, or source of strength, that the psalmist spoke of when he wrote, as

quoted above: 'There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God'.

The 'river' is undoubtedly the same symbolic river referred to in Ezekiel's prophecy, and also in Revelation. (Ezek. 47:1-9; Rev. 22:1) This river is not 'flowing' as yet for the blessing of all nations. When we examine the text carefully, we discover that the psalmist makes a distinction between the 'river', and the 'streams', which converge to form the 'river'. These 'streams' of the river in the illustration, are all the many tributaries which, by emptying into the main stream, form the river—a very meaningful symbolism of the preparatory work of God throughout the ages which finally results in the 'river of life' flowing with its abundant blessing of life for all mankind.

What has God been doing throughout this Gospel Age? He has been calling and preparing the church, the footstep followers of Christ, to live and reign with their Lord in the heavenly realm. During previous ages he was selecting and training those who are to be "princes in all the earth." (Ps. 45:16) Nineteen centuries ago he sent his Son to be the Redeemer of the world, providing an opportunity of life for all mankind. His method of dealing with his people and of preparing them for the place designed for them in his kingdom arrangements has been to a large extent through his Word.

God has made promises—revealing and heart-cheering promises. To these promises he has attached conditions of obedience. In their entirety these promises outline the divine plan of the ages. But not all of God's people have been blessed with a knowledge of that plan. God promised Abraham that his 'seed' or offspring would be the channel of blessing for all mankind, but Abraham comprehended very little of how this would be brought about. We might think of the promise to Abraham, however, as one of the 'streams' which helped to contribute to the great river of life yet to flow for the blessing of all. It had a powerful effect in the life of Abraham, and in the lives of all the ancient

people who sought to serve God faithfully from Abraham's day to the coming of Christ. It helped, in other words, to prepare for the river.

Throughout the Old Testament there are hundreds of other promises, all in full harmony with the Abrahamic promise, and all helping to make plain the plan of God. In the New Testament there is a further revealing of the divine plan. It is here that the heavenly phase of the kingdom is stressed. And we know, too, that the death and resurrection of Jesus ratified all the glorious promises of God, making them workable and real in the lives of God's spiritual Israelites.

As we have seen, Abraham was blessed by one of the 'streams', while other of the LORD's people have rejoiced in the knowledge of perhaps many 'streams'; but not until the end of the age—the time of Christ's presence—have the people of God been blessed by the refreshing waters of all the 'streams' of the river, for not until now has the divine plan been understood in so full a manner as it is today. And why is this? It is because the LORD knew that in these trying times incident to the ending of the world, when the symbolic earth would be removed and when the 'mountains' would be carried into the midst of the sea, his people would need the whole truth of his plan in order to withstand the fiery ordeals of these trying times.

This is a time when the fulfillment of the promises and prophecies of the Word of God are so manifest that it is almost as though we were walking by sight, yet never has the faith of the saints been tested so severely. One reason for this is our very human viewpoint of time. We are impatient in our waiting for the kingdom, and in our impatience become easy targets for the adversary's arrows of doubt. How great, then, is our need for the truth, the whole truth—all the 'streams' of the river—in this day of trial, this 'time of trouble'.

The psalmist writes that 'the streams of the river make glad the city of God'. The 'city of God' is the kingdom of

God. But here the reference is not to God's kingdom which is to be established in power and great glory, but rather, as the text declares, the city that is represented in the "holy of the tabernacles of the most High." The word 'place' in Psalm 46:4 is not in the original Hebrew text, but has been supplied by the translators, and the reference is, therefore, to the first compartment of the typical Tabernacle called the 'Holy'.

Students of the Tabernacle will recall that the Holy symbolizes the condition of full consecration to God. The church as a whole is represented as dwelling in the Holy from three standpoints---by the Table of Shewbread, by the Lampstand, and by the Golden Altar. The LORD's consecrated people partake of the spiritual food represented by the Shewbread; they are enlightened by the truth as represented by the lights of the Lampstand; and they offer sacrifice of praise on the Golden Altar.

They also hold forth the Word of life, as symbolized by the table which bore the shewbread; and they let their light shine for the guidance of one another, as part of the antitypical lampstand. They show their obedience to doing God's will as symbolized by the Golden Altar.

Briefly, this is the manner in which 'the Holy of the tabernacles' pictures the consecrated life of every true Christian. It is in this condition---this blessed haven of separation from the world---that we find refuge and strength. It is referred to in Psalm 91 as the "secret place of the Most High," and here we are told that those who dwell in this secret place "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." What a beautiful symbol of God's protection and care, of his loving interest in his consecrated people!

How can we be sure that we can claim this provision for ourselves? The answer to this question is in our own hands. God has made every necessary provision for our care, and it remains only for us to take the necessary steps which make those provisions available for our own individual needs. Primarily they are the steps of repentance, the

acceptance of Christ and his atoning work, and full consecration to do God's will. The latter is undoubtedly the crucial test of our faith and devotion. It is so easy to say that we have made a consecration, and in a limited way live a consecrated life. But are we really consecrated in the full and absolute sense of the word? Are we consecrated to sacrifice all in the service of the LORD, not merely to righteous living as human beings; as is the case with so many?

It is important also to note well the psalmist's statement to the effect that it is those who 'dwell' in the secret place of the Most High who shall abide under the shadow of his protection. It is one thing to enter the Holy through consecration, but quite another thing to remain there, to make it our home. It is here that the test of 'patient continuance in well doing' enters into our relationship to the LORD. It has been true throughout the entire Gospel Age that some have run well for a time, and then have become weary and have faltered by the wayside.

Beloved, let us resolve to be permanent dwellers in the Holy, in the 'secret place of the Most High'. There are times, no doubt, when all of us tend to become weary of holding forth the Word of life, and when we wonder if it is necessary to continue letting our light shine. When the fires of sacrifice become more than ordinarily hot we might feel like removing ourselves from the altar. But at such times let us remember the LORD's many assurances of help in our every time of need. Let us also realize that the joy of the LORD is our strength, as surely it is. Let us remember that these "light afflictions which are but for a moment" are working out for us a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—II Cor. 4:17,18

If, when we examine our own hearts, we find that the greatest desire of our lives is still to carry out the terms of

our consecration to God; and if in turn the LORD is continuing to bless us with a knowledge of his truth and a desire to make it known to others; and if we are rejoicing in those blessed spiritual opportunities which are symbolized in the 'Holy', then we may know that God is for us, that he is our refuge and strength; for the streams of the river have made glad our hearts and have inspired us to present our all in devotion to him and his cause. Happy Zion, what a favored lot is thine!

"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." (Ps. 46:5) In this verse we are told of help that goes beyond that which is provided through the truth and the overruling providences of God. 'She shall not be moved', writes the psalmist. As the psalm has its principal application at this end of the age, the reference here is similar to that found in Hebrews 12, where the apostle tells us that at this time everything will be shaken that can be shaken. (vss. 27,28) In the psalm itself we notice the result of this shaking. The earth is 'removed', and the 'mountains . . . carried into the midst of the sea'.

There is one thing in the psalm that is not moved! 'She' shall not be moved! The reference here is to the LORD's people as a class—the Zion class—the city of God—the last remaining members in the flesh, represented in the 'holy of the tabernacles of the Most High'. She shall not be moved! Blessed promise! She will be tried and tested. Her goods will be spoiled. As human beings, each member of this class will seemingly go down in defeat. Like Jesus, they will be "despised and rejected of men," and the world will know them not as ones who will be the future kings of earth. —Isa. 53:3; I John 3:1

God will know them. (II Tim. 2:19) He will care for them. (I Pet. 5:7) Being the last prospective ruling members of the new kingdom to prove their faithfulness, they will not be removed from their place in that kingdom, but will finish their course in joy by being faithful unto death, when they will be given "a crown of life that fadeth not away."

(James 1:12; I Pet. 5:4) As overcomers it will be their glorious privilege to sit with the Master in his throne, and to live and reign with him a thousand years. ---Rev. 3:21; 20:4,6

'God shall help her, and that right early'. The *Marginal Translation* reads, "God shall help her when the morning appeareth." The morning of the LORD's new day is already appearing. The Day Star has arisen, and we know that the time is near ---very near ---when this further 'help' will be given to the LORD's faithful people. (II Pet. 1:19) Indeed, it has already been vouchsafed to many. This is the help which results in the deliverance of the church in the first resurrection. When Jesus answered the disciples' questions pertaining to the time of his Second Presence, after mentioning many of the signs he said, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption [deliverance] draweth nigh." ---Luke 21:28

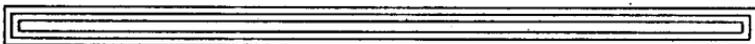
We are now seeing these things. We see the earth being removed, and the mountains being carried into the midst of the sea. We hear the roaring of the sea and the waves. We note that fear is blighting the lives of the people, and the manner in which they are madly seeking pleasure as a retreat from the grim reality of the times in which we live. Instead of fearing, we are rejoicing. Instead of seeking happiness in the pleasures of this crumbling world, we have fled to the LORD for refuge, and he has hid us in the secret of his pavilion. (Ps. 27:5) Instead of leaving us in doubt and uncertainty, he has enlightened us with his truth, and the streams of the future river of life have made glad our hearts. Surely, we should 'lift up our heads' with confidence, and keep our eyes and our hearts fixed upon the fruition of our glorious hope of soon being with the LORD, of experiencing his 'help' in exalting us to glory, honor, and immortality to be a part of the glorified City of God.

How blessed is the promise that God will help 'her' early in the morning. We may not be able to determine just when

the last member of the church will be glorified, and it is better that the LORD has not given us this information; but we do know that the time is short—too short to settle down as though we had the rest of our natural lives to live under normal conditions. For some of us the time may be shorter than we even dare to hope; but it cannot be very long for any of us. So let us see to it that our consecration is up-to-date, and as real as when we said to the LORD that we were giving him our all. Let us make sure that no earth-born cloud—either of worldly hopes, or ambitions, or opportunities for fame or wealth—is permitted to come in between us and the LORD, to hide from us the smile of his countenance and to weaken our assurance of his grace to help in times of need.

“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” (I John 5:4) How strong is our faith? Do we really believe what we profess to believe? Are we really convinced that the world—this present evil world—is coming to an end, and that all forms of earthly security and riches cannot be depended upon? Are we really assured that if faithful to our consecration vows we will be blessed with the high honor of living and reigning with Christ in his kingdom which we believe is now so near?

If we really have faith in these things, we will act in harmony with our faith, and will permit nothing to hinder us from devoting our all to the LORD, even as we covenanted to do. And what a blessed thought it is to realize that if we dwell in ‘the secret place of the Most High’, we will have his protection, his care, and, by his power, will be exalted to the place in the heavenly kingdom which he has prepared for us. Truly, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. May we appreciate this glorious refuge, and through faithfulness to him avail ourselves of the protection which it offers. ■



FOR WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING?

THE EXPRESSION, "LOOKING for a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow," is applied to those whose hopes are seldom realized. But the Christian expects to realize his hope, and he knows that there is a figurative 'pot of gold' at the end of his 'rainbow'. The Apostle Paul in Romans 2:7 describes this hope in these words: "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life."

When one who is humble hears this call, he staggers at the thought of such boundless interest and love on the part of God for him. Of what does this glory consist? It is a glory of nature, and a glory of character. The Christian is promised the same nature that God possesses—the divine nature—which is the highest of the spirit natures. No wonder that Peter, when referring to those who seek for this excellent goal, describes them as striving for "exceeding great and precious promises: that by these," he says, they "might be partakers of the divine nature."—II Pet. 1:4

The Christian who fully submits himself to the Father's will day-by-day, going to him in prayer for grace to help in every time of need, and keeping his mind fixed on the Scriptural promises, finds, as Romans 5:5 puts it, that "the love of God is [being] shed abroad" in his heart "by the Holy Spirit." When this transforming work of the Holy Spirit is complete, and the Christian awakes in the first

resurrection with the divine nature, the character developed during his earthly pilgrimage will have been given a new body. Paul tells us, "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him."—I Cor. 15:38

The honor mentioned in Romans 2:7 is pictured by ancient Israel's High Priest on the Day of Atonement, as described in Leviticus 16, changing from the garments of sacrifice to the garments of glory and beauty. Jesus, the Head, and the church, his body, will be kings and priests and judges to the world of mankind as they minister restitution blessings to them. This is in harmony with the statement: "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

The Apostle Paul says that we who follow in Jesus' footsteps are seeking for immortality. Only those possessing the divine nature are immortal. It is a life which is death-proof and not dependent upon other sources for continuance. Jesus describes it in this way: "As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26) In I John 3:2 we read, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and 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." Just as Jesus is now immortal, so also his followers will have immortality when they awake in his likeness.

In Hebrews 7:16, Paul speaks of Jesus as having the "power of an endless life." What a blessing it will be for those, too, who are of the church class, and are faithful in carrying out their consecration, to have full possession of their faculties forever, and never to be slowed up by old age or illness!

How do we 'seek for' the blessings of glory and honor and immortality? The apostle tells us that it is by 'well doing'. This 'well doing' consists of faithfulness in harmony with Romans 12:1: "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."

This well doing, we are told, should be with 'patient endurance'. Paul gives the illustration of a racer. "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." (Heb. 12:1) Such a runner does not run uncertainly, in fits and starts, but steadily.

When there are many runners in a race, near the end some look weary; while others look strong and vigorous. In our 'spiritual racecourse' there are some who grow 'weary in well doing', and those who lose their first love and zeal, while others are active and alert, seeking ways and means to serve the LORD to the very end. Foot runners lay aside every weight so that they can run with nothing to hinder them in going as fast as possible. The weights could represent 'besetting sins', which we could throw off if we only put forth the effort to do so.

This reminds us of the story of Saul, the king of Israel, recorded in I Samuel 15:9,13,14,17. There we read: "Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

"And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?"

The Amalekites well represent the sins of the flesh—all of which are doomed to destruction. They also could be

some pleasures, not sinful of themselves, but interfering with our compliance with our consecration. There may be one pasttime—one little lamb—which is choice and desirable to the flesh, and we have a temptation to spare it for the time being, with the excuse that later on, of course, it will be sacrificed. This is pictured by Saul sparing King Agag because he liked him so much, despite God's order to leave none of their conquered enemies alive—neither men nor beasts. Saul was willing to destroy the other Amalekites, and the poor and sickly of the animals, but the choice things he wanted to save for his enjoyment.

What a lesson for us! We are to make a clean sweep in the sacrificing of worldly inclinations, as well as all evil thoughts and deeds of the body, as far as we are able! Samuel could hear the bleating of the sheep, and so, if we hold back from full consecration, the LORD will know of the pet earthly projects, and sins, that we are trying to retain.

We read: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. 8:13) In the exercising of the new mind, the New Creature, the spirit is to serve as a deadening drug to the old creature so as to mortify, deaden, the gratification of the fleshly desires whenever and wherever they conflict with our consecration vow.

When one makes a covenant of sacrifice with God, the old will is reckoned dead. But there is a constant desire on the part of the old creature, our human nature, to arise from this condition of reckoned deadness, and to reassert itself. This requires continual watchfulness on the part of the New Creature, and in this respect the Apostle Paul says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."—I Cor. 9:27

The apostle names some of these evil deeds of the flesh, saying: "Now ye also [must] put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your

mouth." (Col. 3:8) This means a slow, lingering death for the old creature, as explained by Paul in these words: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal. 5:24) In II Corinthians 7:1, he uses another figure of speech, and refers to this mortifying of the deeds of the body as a continual cleansing work. He says: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

While it is true that so far as the evil tendencies of the body are concerned, the Holy Spirit is to act as a *deadening* drug, on the other hand, so far as using the various members of the body in the service of God is concerned, the Spirit is to act as a *stimulating* drug. We read, "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."---Rom. 8:11

Yes, the old creature is reckoned dead, but the New Creature is reckoned as living---a figuratively resurrected life. The aims and hopes and ambitions are now directed toward heavenly, righteous objectives, and in every act of life we are seeking to do God's will. Paul wrote, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."---Col. 3:1,2

If the new mind is to quicken the mortal body in the service of the LORD, we will find it necessary to redeem the time. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." (Col. 4:5) We are each given twenty-four hours to live each day. A certain amount we must spend in sleeping, eating, taking care of our personal appearance, working in an office or shop, taking care of our homes, and other duties. But how much of the time that remains do we carefully apply in worthwhile efforts to develop our characters, to worship our God, to serve the

brethren, and to witness to the LORD's plan? It is surprising how much time we can redeem, if we really plan to do so.

Sometimes one can make the mistake of trying to accomplish too much. We plan for more work, more meetings, more witness efforts, and for more studying of the Word of God than our physical strength will allow, and then we get discouraged because we are exhausted before we can accomplish all the things we had planned. A man who has a vineyard is always careful not to have too many bunches of grapes on one branch, because he knows that while there will be many grapes on the branch, they will be small and green. The branch cannot bring too many bunches of grapes to full maturity. He knows that it is better to have fewer grapes and have them all mature in ripeness. So he prunes off some of the bunches of grapes to get better results. The lesson for us is not to plan to do too much. It is better to do fewer things and do them well, than to do too many and only do them half-way.

Our acquaintances may sometimes ask us why we are always so happy. The reason is that we are walking in the way of consecration, and in that path there is fullness of joy. We have great joy doing what the world thinks is foolishness! But to us, spiritual things are not foolishness, but are real blessings from the LORD. Therefore we bend every effort to fellowship with the brethren and study God's Word so that we can please him.

Those who are seeking for 'glory and honor and immortality' are instructed by the Scriptures to watch their thoughts, and words, and doings, and to correct them when they are out of harmony with the admonitions of God's Word. We were justified to life; we were given, figuratively speaking, the 'robe' of Christ's 'righteousness' (Isa. 61:10) to cover our imperfections. The 'robe' pictures justification to life through faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. In James 1:27 we are told that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit

the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep" oneself "unspotted from the world."

'Spots' on the robe of righteousness would represent sins due to carelessness, not willful sins. The unavoidable Adamic sins are covered with the robe of righteousness; but the sins which are only partly willful in the new mind that was not as alert as it should have been, or because it had failed to go to the throne of grace for help to overcome, are only partly covered by the robe. That part which is due to thoughtlessness shows up as a spot on the robe.

For these partially willful sins we are to go to the LORD and ask his special forgiveness. In this way the spots are removed from our robes. Just as people like to keep their clothes neat and clean, so we should be quick to go to the throne of grace to keep our garments free from these spots. This helps in our future experiences to 'keep under the body', encouraging our hearts to grow in love and humility and sympathy.

So, our very failures become stepping-stones in developing Christian character. This is in harmony with I Corinthians 11:31, where we are told that "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." That is, if we are continually scrutinizing our thoughts and words and doings, and, as a result, habitually correcting our own faults and short-comings so far as we are able, the LORD will not have to give us special chastisements. We will be quick to observe the LORD's leadings and to conform ourselves to his will in the little things, as well as in the big things of life.

All should be glad that the LORD is judging us according to our inner heart intentions, because it is our earnest desire to do his will in all of our affairs. When David was selected to be anointed as king, he was chosen because his heart was right with the LORD. The LORD said to Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him [Eliab]: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward

appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”—I Sam. 16:7

Others cannot read our hearts, but the LORD can. Let us seek to have our words unctuous at all times. This we can do if we continually seek to keep our hearts pure and continually bridle our tongues, as the Apostle James admonishes us to do. We certainly do not wish to have the old creature, if we are not watchful of it, yield to the sinful tendencies of malice and hatred, or to revert back to old ways of speaking with unkind words.

It is a great comfort, as we seek for glory and honor and immortality by patient continuance in well doing, to realize that God’s blessing is with us in our battles with the world and the flesh and the Devil. We read, “Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings.” (Ps. 17:8) How quickly we protect our eyes from possible injury. It is good to know that the LORD, in the same fashion, is ready to protect us instantly from spiritual injury—to watch all our affairs, and to overrule them for our eternal welfare.

In I Samuel 18:1 we are told about the warm friendship which existed between Jonathan and David. “It came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” This is a good picture of the warm friendships which exist among God’s people. The word ‘knit’ reminds us how a sweater is made of wool woven closely together by needles. So God’s people are closely bound together in the bonds of love.

Paul refers to the way in which we are ‘knit together’ in Christ. In Hebrews 13:20,21 he uses the expression, “make you perfect.” In *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott* this is translated “knit you together.” We can, therefore, read this text as follows: “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, knit you together in every good work to do his will, working in you

that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever."

Those who have the same hope, and are walking in the same narrow way, delight to come together in meetings. They delight to speak about the things which knit them together. Malachi 3:16 reads, "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."

In the next verse the LORD says, "And they shall be mine . . . in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." The LORD's people are precious to him, and he delights to have fellowship with them. We have also learned that his people are like jewels. Jewels are rare, required to be searched for, and washed from the mire before being prepared to refract the light. When they are polished, they beautifully reflect the light thrown upon them.

In the footstep followers of our Lord Jesus we find the most noble sentiments. They continually reflect the light of Christian love thrown on them by the Holy Spirit, as a result of living closely to the LORD. These have great pleasure now fellowshiping with others of like mind; and they will have still more rich joys while engaged with one another and the Lord Jesus in the great Millennial Age work of lavishing blessings upon the world of mankind!

Jesus often prayed to his Heavenly Father. It was from these seasons of secret communion with God that he drew spiritual strength, consolation, and comfort. They were seasons of precious communion when he could open his heart to the Father as to no one else; when he could tell him all his sorrows, and burdens, and fears; and when the Father manifested himself to him in tokens of loving approval and sustaining grace.

He is our example. Like Jesus we will learn obedience under adverse circumstances. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet he without sin. We know that we have an High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. In submitting ourselves wholly to this High Priest, we have the full assurance of his love, superior wisdom, and grace. We know that the love of God for his children is so great that he will be with us in every trial.

With the sympathetic help of our great High Priest, we can continue on in the 'narrow way' which leads to the glorious prize of the high calling we so earnestly are seeking. Relying on the LORD's help, we, through "patient continuance in well doing," will, in the LORD's due time, obtain "glory and honor and immortality, eternal life."---
Rom. 2:7 ■

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SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The listings in this schedule have been arranged by local ecclesias cooperating with the Dawn:

Michael Balko
Pittsburgh, PA October 14,15

W. Bilcharz
London, Ont. October 8

C. Chandler
Pittsburgh, PA October 14-15

R. Gorecki
New England September 29-
Convention October 1
Orlando, FL 28,29

B. Keith
Pittsburgh, PA October 14,15

S. Jones
Pittsburgh PA October 14,15

T. Krupa
Grand Rapids, MI October 14,15

F. Nemesh
Grand Rapids, MI October 22

L.B. Post
Claymont, DE October 15
Chicago, IL 22

R. Shahan
Middletown, NY October 8

L. Wesol
Louisville, AL October 15

L. Young
St. Petersburg, FL October 8

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CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed at the request of the classes who sponsor them. In order to ensure your convention being accurately placed in these columns, please make your request IN WRITING two or three months before the date of the convention: Convention Listing, Dawn Magazine, 199 Railroad Ave., East Rutherford, NJ 07073

NEW ENGLAND CONVENTION,
September 29-October 1
Howard Johnson's, Crooked St.,
Plainville, CT 06062. Phone:
(203) 747-6876. Contact Mrs.

Richard Suraci, 171 Johnson Rd.
Hamden, CT 06518, for reserva-
tions, and information.
Phone: (203) 248-3793

WASHINGTON, DC, October 7,8---Holiday Inn, Fredricksburg North, VA. Contact for programs, directions, and reservations: Mrs. H. Earl, 2613 Hughes Rd., Adelphi, MD 20783, *before September 22nd.*

Phone: (301) 434-8480

PITTSBURGH AREA CONVENTION, October 14,15---Sewickley Grange Hall, Rte. 136, West Newton, PA. For information, contact: Charles Martig, 94 S. Harrison, Pittsburgh 15202.

Phone: (412) 734-9269

GRAND RAPIDS, MI, October 14,15---*New location:* Fairview School, Corner Alpine Ave. and Hillside Dr. Contact Mark Carpenter, 804 Conger, N.E., Grand Rapids 49505 for information and reservations.

Phone: (616) 365-2635

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA, October 21,22---Masonic Temple, 859 Marsh St. Phone: (805) 545-5680. For questions or assistance, contact: Lynn Murray.

Phone: (805) 544-3037

ORLANDO, FL, October 28,29---Garden Club of Sanford, 200 Fairmont Drive (Cor. Hwy. 17-92), Sanford, FL. For information and reservations, contact Helen Jeuck, 587 Queens Mirror Circle, Casselberry, FL 32707.

Phone: (407) 699-8303

DETROIT, MI, October 29---Redford YWCA, 25940 Grand River, Redford Township. For informa-

tion, contact: Walter Blicharz, 19146 Bedford Rd., Birmingham, MI 48025

Phone: (810) 642-1553

NEW HAVEN, CT, November 5---Italian-American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact: Cindy Mason.

Phone: (203) 481-9935

MILWAUKEE, WI, November 11,12---Lake lodge, 1235 East Howard Ave., Milwaukee. For information, contact: Mrs. Debi Moore, 2176 South 71 Street, West Allis, WI 53219.

Phone: (414) 327-5679

JERSEY CITY PRE-THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, November 18,19---Masonic Temple, 1912 Morris Avenue, Union, NJ. For Information or Reservations, contact: Mrs. Charlotte Teklinski, 84 Arthur Street, Ridgefield Park, NJ 07660.

Phone: (201) 440-0925

SAN DIEGO, CA, (Thanksgiving weekend) November 23-26---Radisson Hotel, 1433 Camino del Rio South, San Diego, CA 92102. Phone: (800) 333-3333 or (619) 260-0111. For reservations, contact the hotel directly either by phone (as given above), or mail (also given above). Mention 'Bible Students' to receive special rates **before November 7th.** Please send meal count for your party by **October 31** to Sandra Bierman, 624 Alta Mira Ct., Vista, CA 92083.

