

## An Intelligent Creator

**ON SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 2001**, on the front page of a prominent newspaper—“*The Los Angeles Times*,”—an article appeared entitled “Enlisting Science to Find the Fingerprints of a Creator.” The “*Times*” religion writer wrote from Burlington, Washington:

“In this rural farming community, a high school biology teacher named Roger DeHart set out to question Darwin’s theory of evolution. He never mentioned God.

“He dissected such scientific topics as bacterial flagella, fossil records, and embryonic development. ‘Examine the evidence,’ he told the students, ‘and ponder the big question: Is life the result of random, meaningless events? Or was it designed by an intelligent force?’

“Over nine years, DeHart would introduce ideas about this theory of ‘intelligent design.’ Then a student protested that DeHart was pushing religion. Then the ACLU filed a complaint. In 1999, school authorities ordered DeHart to drop references to design, and stick to the textbook.

“Last week, DeHart was told he could not even introduce materials questioning Darwin’s theories. Now DeHart is being portrayed as a martyr in the movement promoting intelligent design, the newest twist in the timeless debate over the origin of life.

“The idea that an intelligent force guided creation is as old as Plato. But it is sparking modern battles as a new breed of mostly Christian scholars redefines the old evolution-versus-creationism debate and fashions a movement with more intellectual firepower, mainstream appeal, and academic respectability.

“The scientific establishment generally rejects the theory. But design advocates aim to reshape modern intellectual culture by marshalling scientific evidence that life was created by a transcendent mind, rather than by impersonal, random natural forces.

“‘Our work will alert people to the possibility that God is real rather than a projection of the mind,’ declared Phillip Johnson, a U.C. Berkeley professor emeritus of law, whose 1991 book, ‘*Darwin on Trial*,’ laid the foundation for the emerging movement.

“Arguments about the theory’s use have arisen in public schools from Washington to Minnesota. On Saturday, intelligent-design theorists made their first appearance at the National School Board Association Convention in San Diego to explain to school system attorneys why their ideas should be allowed in classrooms.

“Unlike Biblical literalists who believe God created the world in six days, most theorists of intelligent design are reputable university scholars who accept evolution to a point. But they question whether Darwinist mechanisms of random mutation and natural selection can fully account for life’s astonishing complexity.”

## AN ONGOING DEBATE

Most of the article pits the ‘design’ advocates against its critics. The critics view the promotion of intelligent design by the design group as attempts to get religion into the classroom, saying, “They are using political and social tools to gain acceptance in the classroom that they are unable or unwilling to win in the scientific community.” Design advocates claim that they have been deliberately snubbed by the scientific establishment. Other scientists report receiving correspondence from colleagues who confess doubts about Darwin’s theories, but are afraid to go public for fear of career setbacks.

Ken Miller, a Catholic biochemist at Brown University, and a leading critic of intelligent design, took on a leading design theorist, Michael Behe, a Catholic biochemist at Lehigh University, and author of “*Darwin’s Black Box: the Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*.” Behe’s theory, called “irreducible complexity,” was challenged by Miller, who claims that design advocates duck their peers—failing for instance to publish their arguments in major scientific journals—because their enterprise is religious, not scientific. At this point, neither side has been persuaded by the other.

Bible students have claimed for many years that the Bible teaches a scientific, orderly creation by a supreme, intelligent Creator. As scientists continue to learn more and more of the immensity and complexity of the universe, many freely acknowledge that they are convinced that this did not happen by chance. Instead, it points to the existence of a supreme, intelligent Creator.—Isa. 40:12-26

## PLANET EARTH AND ITS FOUNDATIONS

It should increase our faith in the Bible as the revelation of God's design for mankind, as we realize how accurately it describes many of the essential facts concerning the earth. For example, the ancients believed that the earth was flat, but it is now established that the earth is a spheroid. This fact was referred to by the Bible 3,000 years ago. In the book of Isaiah we read of "the circle of the earth." (Isa. 40:22) Furthermore, the Prophet Job said concerning the Creator, "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing."—Job 26:7

The Creator asked Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding." And again, "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof?" (Job 38:4,6) In the light of geological truths now established, it appears that these questions refer to definite characteristics in the formation of the earth. Man's home does have 'foundations' which are firmly established on what is believed to be a solid mass of nickel-iron substance which forms the hard core of the earth's center.

We note how God uses layman's language to describe the scientific principles he employed in forming the earth. The 'corner stone' of the earth is somewhat like the chief cornerstone of a pyramid, except that instead of being on top, it is in the center. Thus the entire weight of the earth presses down upon its central core. In "*The Making of the Earth*," (*Encyclopedia of Modern Knowledge*, pp. 192,193), Prof. J. W. Gregory mentions seven massive foundations which support the upper crust of the earth. They are located in North and South America, Asia, Africa, Australia, and two in Europe.

While the oceans have a tremendous weight, and are well shored up by a floor of heavy basaltic material, the Lord has provided for additional support for the continents. No wonder the psalmist wrote concerning the Creator, "He hath founded the earth upon her bases, that it should not be removed for ever."—Ps. 104:5 (*Marginal Translation*)

## MEASUREMENTS

God asked Job another important question concerning the earth, "Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?" (Job 38:5) Measurements are vital to an architect when

designing a building. Not only must the building itself have proper proportionate measurements, but these must be related to the surrounding objects and circumstances.

So it was in the design of the earth. The great Architect chose measurements in every way suitable to the purpose of his design. The diameter of the earth is approximately 8,000 miles. The importance of this measurement is appreciated only when it is compared with the smaller size of the moon, and with the much larger sizes of Jupiter and Saturn.

Earth's oceans, it is believed, resulted from water vapor thrown out in earth's early stages of formation when it was a hot mass. The diameter of the earth would therefore determine the amount of this vapor as related to its surface measurement. In the case of the moon, being much smaller, the amount of water resulting from its gases was so small that it was completely dried up as the moon cooled, with the result that there is no water on the moon. Scientists tell us, on the other hand, that planets the size of Jupiter and Saturn gave off such huge quantities of water vapor that their land masses are completely submerged under great depths of either water or ice. If the earth was to be habitable for man, it had to be the correct size, and the Divine Architect knew what that measurement would need to be.

Also, the distance from the sun had to be just right in order that the earth might be properly warmed, but not made too hot. The sun is about 91 million miles from the earth. Scientists tell us that should the sun be removed to 120 million miles away, we would all freeze to death. Or, if the sun were brought to within 60 million miles of the earth, we would all be burned to death; that even vegetation would be destroyed by the heat.

We see further in the Bible's description of Earth as a habitable home for man, the orderly, intelligent design of the Father's work. The six epoch days of Genesis are not twenty-four hour days, but long epochs. In each period a goal is reached in preparing earth for habitation.

## THE FIRST "DAY"

In the beginning of the first 'day,' God's Spirit—his almighty power—"moved upon the face of the waters." (Gen. 1:2) The Hebrew word here translated 'moved' means to 'brood.'

In a general way this is a fitting illustration of how the Spirit, or power, of the Creator brooded over the waters of Earth, that eventually a home might be made ready for the many creatures he had in mind for the earth, and especially for man.

When God's Spirit began to brood over the waters, "darkness was upon the face of the deep." Since this was prior to the time when land and water were divided, the earth's surface was one vast ocean. God asked Job, "Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it."—Job 38:8,9

God's question might well suggest the manner in which the sea came into being. Scientists agree that as the earth-mass cooled, a more or less solid crust formed on the outside. For a time this crust kept the hot gases confined, or, as God's question suggests, 'shut up ... with doors.' But the confined gas would build up a tremendous pressure and 'brake forth' through innumerable small craters, spread over the earth's surface, then cool, condense and fall upon the hot surface of the earth; thus the sea was born, God likening it to an issuing out of the womb.

The Creator said, "Let there be light," and as a result of this decree, "there was light." (Gen. 1:3) This light could have a number of sources. It seems to be associated with the energy expended by God to set in motion a number of chemical reactions to achieve the correct composition for earth and its atmosphere.

## THE SECOND "DAY"

During the second creative period, the earth's atmosphere was formed. "And God said, Let there be a firmament [*Marginal Translation: 'expansion'*] in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." (Gen. 1:6) This division of the waters by the 'expansion' meant that the main body of water remained on the earth, while a tremendous quantity of vapor water was held suspended in the upper atmosphere.

The atmosphere holds billions of tons of water in suspension, ready to be sprinkled upon the earth. What a marvelous watering system! How it reveals the wisdom of the Divine Architect! And how simply it is described, "God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament:

and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven.” (Gen. 1:7,8) The Hebrew word here translated ‘heaven’ is the same one which is also translated “air” in this chapter. It would therefore be just as correct to say that God called the ‘firmament’ air.

### THE THIRD “DAY”

During the third ‘day’ or epoch, the land surfaces of the earth appeared. “God said, Let the waters under the heaven [or air] be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.”—Gen. 1:9,10

By Divine decree, and under the control of Divine power, there began a buckling of the earth’s surface, which was, as yet, a somewhat soft crust, deepening the ocean beds and heaving up our continents. As expressed in Job, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.”—Job 38:11

“Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth [as the oceans originally did].”—Ps. 104:9

Also, in the third creative period, God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, ... whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.” (Gen. 1:11) Thus is described the earlier forms of vegetation.

### THE FOURTH “DAY”

The fourth day involved the sun, moon, and stars. The text reads, “God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: ... God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.”—Gen. 1:14-16

The casual reader might easily get the impression from the record that it was during this period that the sun and moon were created, but this is not the case. The sun and the moon were actually created “in the beginning,” when God created “the heaven and the earth.” They are a part of the ‘heaven.’—Gen. 1:1

In this creative epoch, the sun and moon became visible to someone standing on the earth. The atmosphere had cleared sufficiently to make

this possible, and they were appointed in this manner to ‘rule’ over the day and the night.

### THE FIFTH “DAY”

The fifth epoch was devoted to bringing forth marine life and “fowl that may fly above the earth.” (Gen. 1:20) In the *King James Version* we read that God created great “whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind.”—vs. 21

The *Revised Version* says “sea monsters,” instead of ‘whales.’ *Strong’s Concordance* informs us that the Hebrew word could also be translated ‘land monsters.’ Verse 21 probably refers to those huge monsters to which scientists have given such names as Dinosaurs, Diplodocus, and Tyrannosaurus, meaning huge lizards. Scientists suggest that while these monsters could live on land, their tremendous weight made it easier for them to move about in the water, for the water would help to bear up their weight.

It is most likely that the seas were filled with all forms of small marine life, and that dense vegetation was on the surface of the earth. These sea and land monsters were most likely used to clarify the waters and the earth of the dense marine life and vegetation.

### THE SIXTH “DAY”

At the close of the sixth ‘day,’ God created man, in his own image. Appropriately, it was during this era that the land animals which were to contribute to human needs were also created.

While vegetation appeared during the third day, new species of plant life continued to appear, the flowering and fruit trees being created during the sixth day. Geologists have found that with the appearance of the flowering plants and trees came also the honey bee. It was at this point that the bee was needed for pollination purposes, and prior to this the bee would not have had its proper supply of food. The Creator saw to it that the bee’s natural desire for food would automatically cause it to serve the flowering plants and trees in their process of reproduction.

The crowning feature of God’s earthly creation was man. Creation’s Architect designed the earth and all its appointments for man. In unfolding the truth concerning man’s creation, the sacred writer takes us

behind the scenes and lets us hear the God of all creation talking to his beloved Son, the very “beginning” of his creation. (Rev. 1:8) “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”—Gen. 1:26

It was doubtless a great joy to both the Father and the Son to know that now the great objective of all that had been accomplished by the brooding of Divine power throughout the preceding five days was about to be realized. No matter how wonderful the previous works of creation had been, there was still no suitable representative of the Creator who could be appointed king of Earth. Concerning man’s creation, the Bible says, “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”—Gen. 2:7

Two scientific truths are here set forth concerning human anatomy: (1) Man’s organism is composed of chemical elements inherent in ‘Mother Earth,’ and (2) He lives by virtue of the oxygen which he breathes into his lungs. Leviticus 17:11 says, “The life of the flesh is in the blood.” It is now known that the oxygen taken into the lungs is carried by the blood to every part of the body, and thus the body is kept alive. How wonderful that this knowledge should be recorded in the Bible so far in advance of its discovery by man!

Thus we see in this brief description of creation, the science God used to design a habitable home for mankind, and for all the living creatures associated with it. We marvel at the great knowledge, wisdom, and power possessed by him. Then, further learning of his character, we see the great motivating force of love behind it all. It makes us rejoice and give praise to him. Many of the great minds have not been able to see these things, for Jesus said to the Father, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.”—Matt. 11:25,26

It will not always be so. The time is coming when “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab. 2:14) The Prophet Isaiah tells of God’s kingdom (mountain) and the blessings that shall flow to all the people, especially



the removal of death. (Isa. 25:6-8) As Isaiah continues, he says, “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 [Jehovah]; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”—Isa. 25:9

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## Consequences of Disobedience

***Key Verse: “Thus saith the LORD ; for three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked.”***  
—Amos 2:4

***Selected Scripture:***  
***Amos 2:4-10***

**GOD SHOWED GREAT** favor and blessings to Judah and Israel, but time and again they fell into idolatry and committed the sins of their neighboring nations. Amos was a prophet sent by Jehovah to rebuke them, hopefully to make them turn around. Amos served God during the reign of Uzziah, who reigned in Judah from 783 to 742 B.C., as well as during the reign of Jeroboam, whose reign in Israel (the northern kingdom) was from 786 to 746 B.C. Although God sent messages to Israel through Amos, he was particularly a prophet to Judah. In addition to idolatry, God singled out several other sins—slave trade, victimizing both the righteous and the poor, oppression, and lack of justice. These were violations of their Law. As Amos told them, ‘for three’ sins, even ‘for four,’ God would still

have to punish them, but for their complete rejection of the Law, they faced destruction by fire.

Amos reminded them that they had been saved by God from slavery in Egypt. He had driven the Amorites out of the land for their benefit. Israel, however, was not following God’s Law, and was worse than the Amorites. For this disobedience they had to be punished. The fire prophesied by Amos would not come for about 150 years, when Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, would come and literally destroy Jerusalem by fire.

Amos was used of the Lord to prophesy against Judah’s and Israel’s neighboring nations. In each case a judgment was pronounced upon them

in the form of a destructive fire. The first example of transgressions was Syria. (Amos 1:3-5) Hazael was a wicked king who waged merciless warfare, and the judgment came upon Rezin when Damascus was burned and the Syrians were taken captive to Kir.—II Kings 16:9

Similar prophecies were pronounced against Gaza and the Philistines (Amos 1:6-8), Tyrus (vss. 9,10), Edom (vss. 11,12), Ammon (vss. 13-15), and Moab (Amos 2:1-3). These were all given as examples to Israel (the ten-tribe kingdom), which was condemned by the Lord as recorded in Amos third, fourth, and fifth chapters. They were more idolatrous than Judah, and had to be punished for disobedience. God demands such punishment up to the third and fourth generation, but his mercy is for a thousand generations, as recorded in Exodus 34:6,7, (*Rotherham Translation*), “Yahweh, Yahweh, A God of compassion and favour, Slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and faithfulness: Keeping lovingkindness to a thousand generations, Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, Though he leave not utterly unpunished, Visiting the iniquity of fathers Upon sons And upon sons’ sons, Unto a third and unto a fourth generation.” The mercy of God has become available through the ransom sacrifice of his Son, Jesus.—Rom. 5:19

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## Empty Offerings

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

***Selected Scripture:  
Amos 5:2-5; 5:20-24***

**IN THE PREVIOUS LESSON** on the consequences of disobedience, the kingdom of Judah, and many neighboring nations such as Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab were used as examples of God’s judgments. They were to become lessons for the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, to whom the prophecy of Amos is particularly directed. In the third, fourth, and fifth chapters of his prophecy, he lists the

many transgressions of that nation which culminated in their punishment, captivity by the Assyrians.

God told Israel, not just the ten-tribe kingdom, but all (including Judah and Benjamin), “the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt” (Amos 3:1), “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” (vs. 2) This exclusive favor was theirs and to them were given “the oracles of God.” (Rom. 3:2) They were blessed by the giving of the Law, and when they obeyed God’s commandments they were superior to other nations of the world. Amos, a prophet mainly to Judah, was sent to the ten-tribe kingdom to point out their shortcomings in the hope of stimulating reformation. Severe judgment was predicted because of their oppression of the poor, and their crushing of the needy.—Amos 4:1,2

Furthermore, their practice of religious rites was hypocritical. Their religious observances were a sham and their offerings were empty—insincere. All of God’s judgments designed to reform them were for naught. Rain was withheld; pestilence came upon them; their young men perished in war, and other calamities came upon them—all to no avail. If they had returned to the Lord they would have been spared their captivity. God said to them, “Seek the Lord, and ye shall live.” (Amos 5:6) God further tells them of his mighty power and works and that they should seek him.—vs. 8

This lesson is for those portrayed by the nation of Israel. The Messiah of Israel—Jesus—“brought life and immortality to light” in his message of good news for all mankind. (II Tim. 1:10) When Israel rejected Jesus (Matt. 23:37-39) the Gospel message went to the Gentiles. Of these, the Western world embraced Christianity, and as a religion it grew and flourished.

As in the case of Israel and her hypocrisy, Christendom likewise has not sought after the Lord according to Biblical precepts. Therefore, the lack of reform by Christian nations will bring upon them the same judgments that came upon Israel. As Israel failed to heed the advice of Amos when he said, “Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: ... Hate the evil, and love the good,” (Amos 5:14,15) so also present Christian nations do not listen. Amos further told Israel, “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord!” This is an expression used to denote the end of the present evil world, and is described by Amos as, “the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.” (vs. 18) It is a time, like our theme text describes, when, ‘judgment shall run as a river, and righteousness shall come as a mighty stream.’ The day of the Lord brings an end to all false religious worship, worship that is hypocritical and like empty offerings, insincere. With the end of false religious worship, the worship of God in spirit and in truth will take place.—John 4:23

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## Broken Vows

***Key Verse: “I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.”  
—Hosea 1:7***

***Selected Scripture:  
Hosea 1:2-9; 2:1-4***

**THE WARNINGS GIVEN TO** Israel, the ten-tribe kingdom of the north, by the Prophet Amos, was the subject of our last lesson. During this same period of time the Prophet Hosea gave similar warnings to this nation, using an unfaithful marriage relationship as an illustration.

There is much dispute and uncertainty as to Hosea's role as a prophet. Was he born in the ten-tribe kingdom, or was he from Judah? The consensus is that he was a prophet born in Israel, and a prophet to that kingdom. But, as Amos did not recognize the split in the kingdom, so too, Hosea prophesied concerning Judah.

The introduction of his prophecy is rather peculiar. It appears that Jehovah advises him to take a wife of whoredom and children of whoredoms. The question arises, would God actually have the prophet marry a prostitute to impress a lesson on Israel? Or, did Hosea marry a virtuous woman who became promiscuous as a wife? The latter has been accepted as the true situation. Were all of Hosea's children legitimately his, or were they the children of his wife, Gomer's, promiscuous behavior? It is believed that the first son, named Jezreel, was a legitimate son, and God named him Jezreel because judgments were to be pronounced upon Jehu, king of Israel, by Hosea, because of his bloody reign.

His second child, a daughter, was believed to be illegitimate, and was named Loruhamah. Her name means, 'She that never knew a father's love.' His second son, also believed to be illegitimate, was named Loammi, which means, 'no kin of mine,' or "not my people."—Hos. 1:9

God used the life of the Prophet Hosea to illustrate his own relationship with Israel. As Israel was the only family known by God (Amos 3:2), so this relationship was also pictured as a marriage, with God as the merciful

husband, and Israel as an unfaithful wife. The covenant made with Israel was broken in a similar manner to the marriage vow being broken. Hence the two latter children had names to show that Israel took other husbands, such as Baal and Asshur, and produced illegitimate children. The daughter never knew God's love, and the son was not Jehovah's kin or people.

Israel was given the Law at Mt. Sinai, and when the covenant was made with them, they said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do." (Ex. 24:7) Yet, before Moses came down from Mt. Sinai, they were found worshiping the golden calf. Although all were not faithless on that occasion, as time went on they fell more and more into idol worship. The punishment for this is given in the second chapter of Hosea's prophecy using the illustration of a faithless wife.

The last part of that chapter tells of bringing this faithless wife back into a faithful relationship, illustrating how the nation of Israel is to be restored into God's favor, after receiving at "the Lord's hand double for all her sins."—Isa. 40:1,2

Likewise, Hosea says, "I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."—Hos. 2:23

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## Rejected Love

**Key Verse:** *“I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them.”*

*—Hosea 11:4, New International Version*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Hosea 11:1-9*

**THIS IS A CONTINUATION** of last week’s lesson on the unfaithfulness of Israel. The illustration used is that of a concerned parent for his child. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” (Hos. 11:1) God tells of his love for the young nation of Israel and how he led them out of Egyptian bondage, which is the basic lesson of Hosea’s prophecy. Matthew cites this prophecy in his gospel, when telling of Herod’s murderous intent to destroy the Christ child, Jesus, causing Joseph to take him to Egypt for safety. Then God called them out of Egypt after

Herod died.—Matt. 2:15

In Hosea’s prophecy, he tells how quickly Israel left the worship of Jehovah and sacrificed to Baal, saying, “The more I called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images.”—Hos. 11:2, *NIV*

The theme text tells of the tender love employed by God to nurture and care for his nation, but to no avail. Hosea continues, “Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent? Swords will flash in their cities, will destroy the bars of their gates and put an end to their plans. My people are determined to turn from me. Even if they call to the Most High, he will by no means exalt them.” (vss. 5-7, *NIV*) Because of their disobedience, slavery (as in Egypt) and captivity by the Assyrians of the ten-tribe kingdom awaited them.

As children disobedient to parents, they had to learn obedience. Hosea’s words are directed especially toward the ten-tribe kingdom and their sins, using the figure of Ephraim to represent them. This prophecy tells of the failure of this young nation to accept God’s assistance and the need for their correction. He would not, however, destroy them as he did



Admah and Zeboiim, both cities of the plains destroyed with Sodom and Gommorah. God says, “My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man.” (vss. 8,9, *NIV*) Although Ephraim and Israel had to be punished, they would not be destroyed as by the hand of an avenging man.

It would appear, according to Hosea 11:12, that Judah is not being condemned, because the *King James Version* reads, “Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.” This is a faulty translation. Other translators agree that the intention is to condemn Judah as in the *NIV*. It says, “Judah is unruly against God, even against the faithful Holy One.” This is confirmed when, in the *King James Version*, Hosea 12:2 says, “The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.” Thus, although the specific punishment of Israel is of bondage by the Assyrians, yet Judah also would suffer the same by being taken captive to Babylon.

The twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Hosea continue describing the failure of Ephraim and Israel to learn obedience. In the fourteenth chapter, God tells of their return and prayers for forgiveness of sins. They will finally recognize that “the ways of the Lord are right.”—Hos. 14:9

## High Expectations

***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 3:9-12; 6:6-8***

**MICAH WAS A PROPHET** to Judah and a contemporary of Isaiah who served during the reign of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. (Mic. 1:1) He was given prophecies pertaining to Samaria (the northern ten-tribe kingdom) and to Judah (the two-tribe kingdom). He describes in the first chapter of the prophecy the stately steppings of Jehovah, as he comes to judge the earth. The pronouncement against Samaria is, “I will make Samaria as an heap of the field;” (Mic. 1:6) and against Judah, “Her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of

my people, even to Jerusalem.” (vs. 9) The reasons for the judgments are given in Micah, chapters one and two. Micah then places the responsibility for both Israel’s (Samaria) and Judah’s (Jerusalem) failure with the heads of state in the third chapter of his prophecy, saying, “Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?”—Mic. 3:1

The indictment of these leaders is astounding! They are accused of torture, greed, bribery, lack of justice and equity, and utter disregard for the laws of the Lord. Their prophets are false and their priests take bribes. A pitiful situation existed and judgments were due. As we know, the immediate punishments were captivity of Israel by the Assyrians and captivity of Judah by Babylon. The failings of the people are recorded in the sixth chapter of Micah’s prophecy.

In this prophecy (chapters four and five) are given the final outcome of these punishments of Israel and Judah and of all nations. The establishment of God’s kingdom brings an end to their trials. “In the last days [of this present evil world] it shall come to pass, that the mountain [kingdom] of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the

mountains [over all other kingdoms], and it shall be exalted above the hills [above every other nation]; and people shall flow unto it.”—Mic. 4:1

This glorious establishment of God’s kingdom will be welcomed by all nations who will recognize the true God as the God of Jacob and be desirous of walking in his ways and paths. War will end; true security will be available for everyone.

In chapter five, Micah makes clear that the judge of Israel, the chosen ruler of Israel, our Lord Jesus, would be born in Bethlehem and be mistreated. After enduring the abuse of man he would be exalted to a position where he will put an end to all false religious worship, and help his associates overcome their enemies and restore Israel. Thus, in the middle of the pronounced judgments against the leaders and sinners of Israel and Judah, we have this beautiful prophecy concerning God’s kingdom.

The standard for those who will be in that kingdom is given in our theme text, ‘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.’—Mic. 6:8

This has been God’s standard throughout all generations. Many of the judgments that came upon Israel and Judah could have been avoided if their leaders and people had tried to put these words into practice.

## The Father of the Faithful

**THE FAITH LIFE OF ABRAHAM** stands out very prominently in the Scriptures, and the more so when we realize that in the city of Ur where he was living when God called him, he was one of a very few—perhaps almost the only one—who had faith in and worshiped Jehovah, the Creator and only true God. Findings of archeologists reveal that the citizens of Ur as a whole were worshipers of the moon god, but despite his heathen surroundings, Abraham maintained his belief. Even his father seemingly did not share his faith, although the Scriptures indicate that Sarah, his wife, did; and to some extent this was probably true of his nephew Lot.

**VERSE 8** “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”

Abraham maintained his belief in the true God despite his surroundings. Now his faith was put to a further test, for the God whom he worshiped spoke to him and invited his cooperation in a Divine plan for the blessing of all the families of the earth. (Gen. 12:1-3) In God’s call to Abraham we see exemplified the manner in which he deals with practically all his faithful servants; that is, he told him something about his plan, and then invited Abraham to participate in it. If he has given us an understanding of his Word and plan, we should construe it to be his call to become “workers together with him.”—II Cor. 6:1

Abraham was called to go to a place which he ‘should after receive.’ In the Hebrew text the thought here is that Abraham believed he was about to receive the land; and, of course, there is nothing of record in what God said to him which would indicate that he would not possess the land as soon as he complied with the conditions and entered into it. But in this also his faith was severely tested, for actually he never did become the owner of the promised land. See Acts 7:4,5.

Abraham demonstrated his faith by the fact that he ‘obeyed.’ James stated the thought differently, saying, “Shew me thy faith without thy

works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” (James 2:18) Regardless of how much faith we may claim to have, or believe in our own hearts that we possess, if it fails to pass this simple, though exacting test of obedience, we are deceiving ourselves.

Abraham obeyed, ‘not knowing whither he went.’ His lack of knowledge concerning the outcome of his obedience made the test more severe and caused his faith to stand out more resplendently by contrast with the unbelief of many with whom he was associated in Ur. Sometimes the expression ‘blind obedience’ is used, and this was essentially the sort of obedience by which Abraham demonstrated his faith by leaving Ur and starting for the land of Canaan.

**VERSE 9** “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.”

If Abraham believed that he would possess the land of Canaan soon after he reached it, his faith in God’s promises was again tested, for he was only a sojourner in the land, living there ‘as in a strange country.’ He lived in ‘tabernacles,’ or, as the Hebrew text indicates, tents, or cloth huts.

**VERSE 10** “He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Abraham gladly lived in tents throughout the remainder of his life after leaving Ur, for he ‘looked for a city.’ So far as the Old Testament record is concerned, the only promises God made to Abraham were those pertaining to the land, and that in his “seed” all the families of the earth should be blessed. (Gen. 22:18) Apparently it was from the promises relative to the ‘seed,’ and the blessing to reach the people through this seed, that he was encouraged to look for a ‘city.’

In Galatians 3:8 Paul mentions the promise made to Abraham, and uses the word “nations,” instead of ‘families,’ in his reference to the blessings which are to reach the people through the seed. When we take into consideration what constituted nations in Abraham’s day, there is really no difference in the meaning of these two words, for nations then were merely family arrangements, or tribes, and usually the leading member of the family was ruler of the tribe.

In comparison with nations of today these tribal arrangements were small, usually with only one main aggregation of people in a central city

which frequently was walled for protection, and looked to by the surrounding tribesmen as their center of government. A city then, to Abraham, contained the thought of rulership, or a governing center.

Abraham probably was a respected citizen in Ur, but there is nothing to indicate that he was in any way associated with the rulership of that people. So, when God spoke to him and promised a seed through which all the families, or nations, of the earth would be blessed, he probably visualized himself as becoming the head of a new governing family which, under Divine blessing, would become so large and so powerful that it would extend its beneficent influence over all the other nations. Jesus said that Abraham “rejoiced” to see his day—that is, he believed that all mankind would be blessed.—John 8:56

God’s people know that the city of which Abraham will actually become a part is the glorious kingdom of the Lord; but it is doubtful if he visualized it as clearly in his day as we do now. Since he had no spiritual insight into the plan of God, his concept of the Divine promise would of necessity be limited to the knowledge which was based upon his own experiences and observations. His faith, that God was indeed the builder and maker of the city for which he looked, was strengthened from time to time by the marvelous manner in which the Lord dealt with him, particularly in the birth of Isaac. In this there could be no doubt that the Lord was building the promised city, for otherwise Isaac could not have been born.

**VERSE 11** “Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.”

From this text we learn that Sarah shared the faith of her husband. She also believed that God would fulfill his promises. The fact that Paul emphasizes the power of Sarah’s faith, which resulted in a miracle conception, ties in with his reference in the previous verse to Abraham’s belief that God was the builder and maker of the city for which he was looking. Sarah was barren even in her youth, and now she was old, yet God gave her strength to conceive and to bear Isaac. What better proof could they both have that God was working to fulfill his promises?

**VERSE 12** “Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.”

As the great plan of God unfolds throughout the Scriptures, we learn that the promised seed will be of two parts, the heavenly and the earthly. This seems to be suggested by the double comparison; that is, to the ‘stars of the sky,’ and the ‘sand which is by the sea shore.’ True, in this text, the special emphasis of the illustrations seems to be that of the great numbers involved, but this will be true of both the heavenly and the earthly seeds.

The heavenly seed of Abraham will first of all be Christ and his church, the “little flock” to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give “the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32) But included with the heavenly seed will also be “a great multitude, which no man could number.” (Rev. 7:9) These will serve God in his spiritual temple. (Rev. 7:15) They will be the “companions” of the bride class, who will “follow her” and be with her.—Ps. 45:14

The earthly seed, as represented by the sand, will, to begin with, be the resurrected Ancient Worthies, who, receiving a “better resurrection,” will be made “princes in all the earth.” (Heb. 11:35,39; Ps. 45:16) Then will follow, and be included in the earthly seed, the entire resurrected human race; that is, all who, when given a full opportunity, prove themselves worthy of everlasting life. Thus seen, it will be true of both the earthly and the heavenly seed that their number will be great.

**VERSE 13** “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

The ‘all’ here referred to as having died in faith, are particularly Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob; although the same statement is true of the entire Ancient Worthy class. They received not the promise—that is, the actual fulfillment of the promise. In Hebrews 6:13 Paul tells us that the promise had been made to Abraham, and then in verse 15 he says that after Abraham endured, “he obtained the promise.”

The ‘promise,’ which Abraham obtained after he patiently endured, was something more than he originally received when God promised him the seed and the land—it was an assurance, the guarantee of God’s oath.

This is indicated in the Greek text by the use of a stronger word, a word which means more than the mere making of a statement. It is this stronger word which Paul uses again when he says that ‘these all died in faith, not having received the promises.’

There is no contradiction in these two statements, for Paul is using the Greek word *epaggelia* in the first instance to describe ‘a Divine assurance of good’—as *Strong’s Concordance* defines it—and in the latter case to denote the actual realization of the good which had been assured. The fact that Paul uses the word in this sense indicates that it embraces this stronger meaning. The inspired use of a word can always be relied upon as a correct interpretation of its meaning.

Paul says that the patriarchs saw the fulfillment of the promises ‘afar off.’ As we have seen, when Abraham first left Ur to go to the promised land, he believed he was about to realize the fulfillment of the Lord’s promises. But the circumstances of the ensuing years gave him, as well as Isaac and Jacob, a different viewpoint. As they went through year after year of their long lives without the city for which they were looking coming into actual view, their faith extended their vision farther into the future. They continued to look for the city, however, even though it was afar off, even in a resurrected life beyond the grave. By their steadfast adherence to God’s promises, they ‘confessed,’ the apostle says, that they were ‘pilgrims and strangers on the earth.’ Some might try to read into this statement that the patriarchs entertained a heavenly hope, but this is not the correct thought.

The Greek word here used by Paul, and translated ‘earth,’ is *ge*. Its basic meaning is ‘soil;’ by extension, it can be used to describe a region, and it sometimes denotes the solid part of the entire globe. Paul uses it in this text, however, to describe the land in which, as stated in verse nine, Abraham ‘sojourned ... as in a strange country.’ Here, the word land is a translation of the same Greek word *ge*. In Acts 7:3 this word is used twice. It is a quotation of God’s command to Abraham, and reads, “Get thee out of thy country [Greek, *ge*], and from thy kindred, and come into the land [*ge*] which I shall shew thee.” It was in this land that the patriarchs continued to be pilgrims and strangers until they died.

**VERSES 14-16** “They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from



whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

‘They that say such things’: The patriarchs testified their faith in God’s promise concerning the land and the seed by their steadfastness in remaining in the land even though it had to be as nonowners, or strangers. Paul suggests that they had opportunity to return to the land of their fathers, where they would be at home and among their own people. But they did not do this, which demonstrated that they had their hearts set on a better inheritance, even on that which the God of heaven had promised to them.

The contrast in these verses is not between the earth and heaven, but between the former home of the patriarchs and the one which the Lord had promised and in which they continued to be strangers. Paul’s lesson is on the faith of the patriarchs; their faith, that is, in the promises of God; and God had not promised them a heavenly home, but a home in Canaan; and they died in faith, not having actually received this home.

God was greatly pleased with their faith, so much so that he was not ashamed of them. They became his friends because of their faith. And while they did not grasp the fullness of their part in the Divine plan, God actually ‘prepared,’ or promised, for them a ‘city,’ or kingdom, for they will be among the ‘princes’ in the Messianic kingdom.

Paul’s assertion that they desired a ‘better country, that is, an heavenly,’ must be construed to mean that which the God of heaven had promised, for they were given no basis to desire anything except earthly blessings. Jesus understood this, and told the Jews of his day that they would “see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” in the kingdom of God, and he shows clearly that it will be right here on the earth, not in heaven.—Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28

**VERSES 17-19** “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

God's request that Abraham offer up Isaac as a sacrifice was doubtless the severest test that had been placed upon the faith of this 'father of the faithful.' One reason for the request was that Abraham's faith might be further tested. Another was that God was making a picture, or illustration, of what he would later do, that he would offer up his own Son in sacrifice for the sins of the world.

There is a veiled reminder of this in the expression, 'only begotten.' Later, as we know, this term appears in the Bible and is applied to God's own Son. Abraham fathered Ishmael, and by his wife, Keturah, he had many children. But, as the record states, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," (Gen. 21:12) and because Isaac was the promised seed, he was also, in the Divine plan, Abraham's 'only begotten son.'

Abraham's faith did not waver when it was confronted with this test, for as Paul explains, he believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead; and he did thus receive him back, 'in a figure.' This completed the illustration of the sacrifice of the antitypical Isaac, and of his actual resurrection from death. What a wonderful privilege Abraham and Isaac thus had in the outworking of the Divine plan!

**VERSE 20** "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."

That Isaac did not entertain a heavenly hope, either for himself or for his children, is evidenced by the blessings which he pronounced upon Jacob and Esau shortly before he died. (Gen. 27:28,29,39,40) Isaac received the birthright blessing, which included future rulership. We have already noted how Abraham would construe God's promise concerning the seed to mean that his descendants would become rulers; and this comes more clearly to light in Isaac's blessing upon Jacob.

The remainder of the blessing upon Jacob was "the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine." Esau also received this part of the blessing, but in selling his birthright he forfeited the right to become a part of the ruling seed of Abraham. This right continued with the descendants of Jacob until the first advent of Christ, when, because of their rejection of him as their Messiah, their house was left unto them "desolate."—Matt. 23:38

Isaac's blessing upon Jacob and Esau is one of the clear evidences that the patriarchs were beginning to perceive that the promises of God were

not to be fulfilled in their day. Nevertheless, this did not weaken their faith. They continued to believe that God would keep his covenant, so they died in faith, not having received the fulfillment of the promises.

**VERSE 21** “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.”

Jacob actually blessed all twelve of his sons, but in keeping with the theme which Paul follows in tracing the faith life of the patriarchs, he specially mentions Jacob’s blessing upon the two sons of Joseph. Genesis 48:4 records a part of this blessing, and in this text the land is again especially emphasized. Jacob was then in Egypt, but he still had confidence that God would fulfill his promise concerning the land of Canaan, this better country, in which, together with his father and grandfather, he had lived as a stranger. So in this again is emphasized that the patriarchs’ hopes were earthly, not heavenly, and those earthly hopes will yet be realized.

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***Dawn Bible Students Association***

## The Heritage of the Sons of God

***“I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.”***

***—Psalm 82:6,7***

**THROUGHOUT MOST OF** the Western world of today the idea of the universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man is being stressed. If this viewpoint were true it would mean that all human beings are children of God. In Luke 3:38 Adam is declared to be the “son of God,” but because he transgressed Divine law he forfeited his inheritance as a son, was rejected by God, and sentenced to death.

Legally, his children also were born outside of the Creator’s parental jurisdiction, not being considered by God to be his children, but God continued to love his erstwhile and disinherited children.

Through the redemptive work of Christ he made provision for them to return to his family and again share in the joys of the restored relationship as human sons. This restoration to the family fold, so far as the world in general is concerned, will be fully realized at the end of the millennium, when to those who qualify for eternal life under the judgment and kingdom regulations of the thousand years of restitution, Jesus will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”—Matt. 25:34

Meanwhile the world in general, alienated from God through wicked works, are not the children of God in the truest sense. Man, however, was originally created in the image of God, and varying traces of that image still remain in the hearts of the people. It manifests itself in conscience, and in all the noble traits of justice and benevolence which we so often see unselfishly displayed by those with whom we are surrounded. These remnants of the Divine image exercise such a power of good in an otherwise evil and selfish world, and are reminders of the grandeur and nobility of character which Adam must have possessed. When he sinned he began his journey over the “broad” road which leads “to destruction.” (Matt. 7:13) The superb qualities of man will be possessed by the human

race when restored to perfection and reinstated as human sons of God at the end of the millennium.

The broad view entertained today that all human beings are the sons of God was not held by the people in Jesus' day, especially by those of the Jewish nation. Divine sonship was considered very sacred and beyond the reach of any member of the fallen race. To claim the status of sonship with God was construed within the religious circles of Israel to be blasphemy, and according to the Law, made one worthy of death. It was this viewpoint which helped to bring about Jesus' crucifixion.

## IGNORANCE OF THE PROPHECIES

Had the religious leaders of Jesus' day not been so ignorant of the prophecies, they would have known that in the Divine plan for human salvation the Heavenly Father had made provision for some to become his sons, his children. Our text is one of these prophecies. In it Jehovah addresses those whom he calls 'children of the most High,' referring to them as 'gods.' True, the scribes and Pharisees, even if they knew of this prophecy, would have no idea to whom it might apply.

Jesus, however, gives us this information. It was on one of the occasions when his own sonship was called in question and he was being charged with blasphemy. In his reply to his accusers, Jesus quoted this prophecy and explained that it applied to those to whom the "word of God" came, meaning, of course, his disciples, and those who believed on him through their teachings. (John 10:34-36) There are many texts of scripture to show that the 'word of God' was designed for, and came to, the church of the Gospel Age. Jesus said to his Father concerning his disciples, "I have given them thy word." (John 17:14) Peter explains that the Old Testament Scriptures were written, not particularly for the benefit of the people during the Jewish Age, but "unto us."—I Pet. 1:12

It is to the followers of Christ during the present age that our text applies. These who, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, are made spiritual children of God. John, who reported Jesus' application of our text, seemed particularly impressed with this sonship viewpoint. In his first epistle he writes, "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."—I John 3:2

The truth of his sonship helped to lead Jesus to his death, and those who then espoused his cause and, like him, professed to be sons of the Creator, thereby placed themselves in jeopardy, especially among the people of Israel. But sacrifice and suffering are one of the present heritages of the sons of God. This is indicated in the verse following our text, in which the Lord says, “Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.”—Ps. 82:7

This does not mean that the great Creator of the universe, is incapable of protecting his children from harm. It is unthinkable to suppose that they ‘die like men’ because he is disinterested in them or is unable to prevent them from being overwhelmed by their enemies. The only conclusion to be reached is that these sons of God, these children of the Most High, die like men because it is the Divine will for them to die.

The full meaning of the text is more readily understood when we consider the further expression explaining that these ‘fall [in death] like one of the princes.’ The word princes is translated from a Hebrew word meaning ‘a tribal or family head.’ Since the Divine plan of salvation pertains to the human race, we can properly think of one of the princes referred to in this text as Adam, the head of the entire human family.

Adam, the perfect human son of God, was created not to die, but to live. He went into death because he transgressed Divine law. He died as a sinner, condemned to death, losing both his sonship and his right to live. His children, likewise born in sin, have continued to die as condemned sinners.

But surely the children of the Most High do not die as sinners under condemnation. These to whom the Word of God has come during the Gospel Age, and who have accepted that Word, are given eternal life. (John 5:24) They are no longer under condemnation, but have passed from death unto life. Yet they die, as the psalmist says, like men.

How true this is! All the faithful followers of the Master from Pentecost on have died like men. From the human standpoint there has seemed to be no difference between the death of a saint and the death of a sinner. The vast majority of both classes die of sickness or of old age. Some sinners die by accident and, likewise, some saints. Many true Christians earlier in the age died as martyrs for the cause of Christ, and many non-Christians also die as martyrs for one cause or another.

## LIKE ONE OF THE PRINCES

God has a different viewpoint. While seemingly, and to all outward appearance, these children of the Most High die like men, actually they ‘fall’ in death like one of the princes. We have seen that one of the princes referred to in this statement is Adam. He died because condemned to death. But the children of the Most High have, through faith, been released from the condemnation of sin and death that is upon the human race through its princely head, Adam. They do not, therefore, die as he died.

There is another ‘prince,’ Prince Jesus. As the “last Adam” he is the new head of the human race. (I Cor. 15:45) Through ‘regeneration’ he will become the father who will give everlasting life to those who lost life through Prince Adam. (Matt. 19:28) In order to accomplish this Divine plan for the restoration of Adam’s children to life, Jesus also died. But unlike Prince Adam, he did not die as a condemned sinner, but as a sacrifice for sinners.

Jesus did not forfeit his life through disobedience to Divine law, as did Prince Adam, but voluntarily gave up his life in order to take the sinner’s place in death. Thus his was a sacrificial death. Writing to the church at Rome, to the children of the Most High in that congregation, and to us as well, Paul spoke of being “planted together in the likeness” of Jesus’ death. (Rom. 6:5) We die like one of the princes, that is, like Prince Jesus, who voluntarily poured out his soul unto death that the world might have an opportunity to live.

Jesus and the apostles had much to say about our privilege of dying with him and like him. Jesus asked two of his disciples who requested special places with him in his kingdom if they were able to be baptized with his baptism. (Mark 10:38) Paul referred to this as being “baptized” into Jesus’ death.—Rom. 6:3

Peter wrote, “Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” (I Pet. 2:21) In Revelation 14:4 John identifies those on Mt. Sion with the Lamb as the ones who had followed the Lamb—followed Jesus, that is, into sacrificial death. In Revelation 20:4 they are described as those who are “beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.”

## A TYPE OF CHRISTIAN DYING

In Hebrews 13:13 Paul speaks of the children of the Most High of this age as going forth unto Christ “without the camp, bearing his reproach.” This is a reference to a part of the ceremony that occurred on Israel’s typical Day of Atonement. On that day two animals were sacrificed, and their blood was taken into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and sprinkled on the mercy seat to make atonement for Israel’s sins—first a bullock and then a goat. The goat was treated exactly like the bullock in every way.

These animals were slain by the high priest. Their fat and life-producing organs were burned on a brazen altar in the court surrounding the Tabernacle proper. The carcasses of the animals were taken out of the court, ‘without the camp,’ and burned. The priest took coals of fire from the brazen altar in the court, together with his hands full of incense, went into the first Holy of the Tabernacle, put the coals of fire on a golden altar which was situated there, and sprinkled the incense upon the fire. The sweet odor of the burning incense penetrated into the Most Holy, preparing the way for the priest’s entry to sprinkle the blood upon the mercy seat.

Since Paul admonishes us to go to Jesus without the camp it is clear that in his mind the two animals sacrificed on the typical Day of Atonement represented first, Jesus (the bullock), and then the church (the goat). To go to Jesus without the camp means that we have the opportunity of suffering and dying with him, and under similar circumstances. We have the privilege of sharing in his ignominy and of being outcasts from the world.

## THE THREE FIRES

There is a more comprehensive picture for us in Israel’s Atonement Day sacrifices than merely the opportunity it points out to us of sharing in the suffering and death of Jesus. As we have seen, three sacrificial fires burned on that day—one without the camp, another on the brazen altar in the court, and the third on the golden altar in the first Holy. These seem designed to picture three viewpoints of Jesus’ life of sacrifice, and ours as his followers.

Obviously, the burning of the carcasses of the animals without the camp, in view of all Israel, pictured the manner in which the unbelieving world views the sacrifice of true believers. Their minds being blinded by



the “god of this world,” to them true Christian sacrifice is more or less obnoxious. (II Cor. 4:4) They look upon zealous Christians as foolish, and wasting their time and effort. Because these sacrifices manifest themselves largely in bearing witness to the Truth, and because the darkness of the world hateth the light of the Gospel, they become a stench in their nostrils, leading oftentimes to persecution.

But this is merely the viewpoint of the unbelieving world. The burning of the fat and life-producing organs on the brazen altar in the court represents the viewpoint of fellow sacrificers, the household of faith. If we, as individuals, are falling in death like one of the princes, that is, like Prince Jesus, we will appreciate the position of those who are likewise presenting their bodies a living sacrifice. Instead of hindering them, we will do all we can to help them. Instead of adding to their burdens, we will endeavor by kind words of encouragement to help them bear their trials.

Fat burns furiously, so the fire upon the brazen altar would also represent the consuming zeal of our Master, and of a like zeal on the part of his true followers. Of Jesus it was written that the zeal of God’s house consumed him. (Ps. 69:9; John 2:17) His example of self-sacrificing devotion to the will of the Heavenly Father is a pattern for us; and, like him, we too will want to be consumed in serving our Heavenly Father’s cause, cooperating zealously with him in whatever share of his work he gives us to do.

If we are not as zealous ourselves as we should be, we might be tempted to be critical of those who are laying down their lives faithfully in the service of the Lord, instead of our being inspired by their faithfulness to greater diligence and zeal. When Paul was in prison in Rome the church at Philippi sent a gift to him by Epaphroditus. (Phil. 4:18) It was a hazardous undertaking and Epaphroditus became “sick nigh unto death.” (Phil. 2:25-30) Paul then wrote to the Philippian brethren instructing them that they should hold this faithful servant “in reputation.” Instead of suggesting that Epaphroditus did not have the spirit of a sound mind, Paul indicated that he greatly appreciated his self-sacrificing zeal. This is the viewpoint of all fellow sacrificers, as antitypically we note the burning fat of our brethren in Christ who, together with us, are falling in death like Prince Jesus.

There is still another viewpoint of Christian sacrifice; namely, that which was represented by the burning incense on the golden altar in the Holy. This is primarily God's viewpoint, although as New Creatures in the Holy we should also be aware of and appreciate the sweet odor of praise pictured by the burning incense. Paul speaks of this as the "sacrifice of praise to God," which all who are faithful to their covenant of sacrifice offer to God "continually." (Heb. 13:15) This is not a different sacrifice from that which is pictured by the burning carcasses outside of the camp. It is merely another viewpoint of that sacrifice, and another viewpoint also of the same sacrifice pictured by the burning fat in the court. It indicates that what is misunderstood by the world, and obnoxious to them, is a sweet-smelling savor to God.

It is true, of course, that the Lord also sees the burning carcasses without the camp. He is aware of the reproaches which this brings upon his people. He knows of the shame and ignominy which is often heaped upon them, and it is only by his sustaining grace that the sacrificers are able to continue thus to lay down their lives as Jesus did. We can always rely upon him to encourage and strengthen us, and when the trials become too severe, to provide a way of escape.

The Lord also appreciates the zeal of his people, as pictured by the burning fat on the brazen altar in the court. Through Christ, he has called us to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14) In this text the Greek word translated 'peculiar' means 'special,' or 'extraordinary.' Those who are truly zealous for the Lord and for the cause in which he has invited them to participate are a very special people to him. He loves them, treasures them, and protects them.

As pictured by the burning incense, their sacrifice is as a sweet odor to him which penetrates beyond the veil, into heaven itself, as pictured by the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. It was this odor of the burning incense penetrating beyond the veil which prepared the way for the priest to enter with blood to sprinkle upon the mercy seat. Had he not carried out every detail of the Atonement Day service exactly as he had been instructed by the Lord, including the burning of the incense on the golden altar, he would have died as he passed under the second veil.

This was true, antitypically, of Jesus, and it is also true of us who, like him, are falling sacrificially in death. Paul tells us that God has given

“assurance” unto all men in that he has “raised” Jesus from the dead. (Acts 17:31) This ‘assurance’ is in the fact that Jesus’ resurrection by his Father proves that his sacrifice was acceptable, and that he has now entered into the “holiest” of all, there to appear in the presence of God for us, and later, for all mankind.—Heb. 10:19

In entering into the antitypical Most Holy, Jesus was our “forerunner.” (Heb. 6:20) This means that we follow him into death, and thus also pass under the antitypical second veil. This is one of the special privileges of the Gospel Age sons of God. Paul explains that in “bringing many sons unto glory” it was the Father’s plan to make the “captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb. 2:10) This suffering was typified by the three fires which were used on the typical Day of Atonement in completely consuming those typical sacrifices, and it is our privilege, as part of the ‘many sons,’ to present our bodies “a living sacrifice” to be consumed by those fires.—Rom. 12:1

It is essential for us, as it was for Jesus, to be faithful to our covenant of sacrifice, faithful even unto death, if we are to hear the “well done” on the other side of the veil. (Matt. 25:21) “Be thou faithful unto death,” Jesus said, “and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) If, in being planted together in the likeness of Jesus’ death, we are faithful until the sacrifice is wholly consumed, then we will share in his resurrection.

### “ARISE, O GODS”

This glorious hope of resurrection to live and reign with Christ seems clearly shown in the verse following our text, although the thought is obscured by an inappropriate translation. The sequence of thought seems obvious. “I have said, Ye are gods,” the Lord declares, “but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.” This traces the experience of these children of the Most High into sacrificial death with Prince Jesus.

Then comes the statement as found in the *King James* translation, “Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.” (Ps. 82:8) As this translation reads, it would seem to have no relationship at all to the preceding verses. The fact is, however, that the Hebrew word here translated “god” (*elohim*) is the same one which is translated “gods” in the statement, “I have said, Ye are gods.” (vs. 6) It is the plural form of the Hebrew word meaning ‘mighty ones.’

To imply that Psalm 82:8 refers to the mighty one, Jehovah, does not fit, because Jehovah owns the nations, the earth, and all that dwell therein. (Ps. 50:10-12; 2:8) This verse says plainly that *elohim* shall inherit all nations.

These whom the Lord himself declares to be gods, and who are the children of the Most High God, go down into death sacrificially; they fall in death like Prince Jesus. Having fallen in death, in the next verse these same gods are bidden to ‘arise.’ It seems reasonable that this is a prophetic summons to the church to arise in the first resurrection, that they might live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

These children of the Most High are promised that if they are faithful they will, together with Jesus, judge the world. (I Cor. 6:2,3) They are also promised, upon the condition of faithfulness that, together with Jesus, they will ‘inherit all nations.’ How much in keeping with this glorious prospect is the statement, “Arise, O gods, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.”

Jesus assures us that it is God’s plan that his faithful followers shall enter into this inheritance with him. “He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.”—Rev. 2:26,27

It was this honored position in the Divine plan that Jesus ‘received’ of his Father in a wonderful promise recorded in the second Psalm, and upon the basis of the fact that he was the faithful Son of God. The promise reads, “I will declare the decree: the Lord said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”—Ps. 2:7-9

The Heavenly Father said, to Jesus, ‘Thou art my Son,’ and to us, footstep followers of Jesus, who are being planted together in the likeness of his death, he also affirms this precious relationship—I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are the children of the Most High. When we begin to realize the implications of this marvelous declaration, we can understand John’s feelings when he wrote, “What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

(I John 3:1) May we ever keep in mind the conditions upon which this may be true of us—that we fall like one of the princes.

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## Think It Not Strange

***“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”  
—I Peter 4:12,13***

**PERHAPS FEW HAVE** learned to value the discipline of the Lord as did the faithful apostle who wrote these words. While he, as well as others, realized that no affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous, yet knowing the ministry of such discipline, and recognizing it as an additional evidence of sonship to God, he rejoiced in being a partaker of it.

We are not to worry about the trials which may be ahead, but to remember the apostle’s words, when they do come, ‘Think it not strange.’ They come to prove us, to strengthen our character, and to cause the principles of Truth and righteousness to take deep root in our hearts.

They come like fiery darts from our great enemy, Satan, whose wrath against the children of light is permitted to manifest itself in various ways. But his darts cannot injure those who securely buckle on the divinely-provided armor of Truth and righteousness. “Wherefore,” says the apostle, “take unto you the whole armour of God, ... Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts [not merely some of them] of the wicked.”—Eph. 6:13-16

### TESTINGS COME

The Apostle Paul, speaking concerning the church of the Gospel Age, says, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (II Tim. 3:12) God allows his people to have these experiences and to suffer for right doing. In the present time he is calling out a saintly company. This company will be the royal priesthood of the future, to bless all the

world during Messiah's reign. And the Bible explains to us that these need trials to prove and test their characters.

God wishes to see how loyal we are to the principles of righteousness. In the church there are some who would endure a certain amount and then withdraw. Others will endure more. The Lord declares that he is seeking those who will give up everything in order to prove faithful to their covenant with him. This faithfulness means entire loyalty to God, to his laws, which are the laws of righteousness.

## FIERY TRIALS

These trials test the church and do a purifying work in their midst. It is an experience that must be endured by each one individually. Not only will the church as a whole have opposition against them, but each individual will be personally exposed to the fiery trials.

It is a different kind of trial from that which comes to any other body of people. The explanation of this difference can be briefly quoted in these words, 'Inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.'

When we know that each member of the body of Christ must be tried, we can rejoice when some of this fire touches us. We can say, "I am having a share in the sufferings of Christ; I am glad that in God's providence I have a share in these trials; for without them, how could I know that I am one of the body members?"

## PRIMARY SOURCE OF TROUBLE

We all rejoice, knowing that these fiery trials are permitted by the Lord. Not that the Lord is the cause of them; for usually it is the Adversary. But we have put ourselves into the Lord's hands, and he has promised to supervise all that concerns us. Therefore, whatever comes to us, we may be sure that it is of the Father's purpose, or permission, for our good. If, therefore, we recognize that this is something that the Lord's providence has arranged for us, it is all right, even though frequently we have to go to the throne of grace for help in time of need.

God has revealed to us that he purposes to give to the Christ (Jesus the Head, the church his body) very great exaltation; great glory, honor, and immortality. (Rom. 2:7) Therefore we are looking forward to the time when this body of Christ shall be completed, and we shall share in the glory of our Head.

## PERSECUTIONS TODAY MORE REFINED

Concerning the devilish disposition manifested toward our Lord, resulting in all his sufferings, we cannot think that mankind under any ordinary conditions could ever have had so malicious a spirit as that manifested against him. Evidently the Devil had to do with this, as also with all the wicked persecutions of the saints. The average man today would not permit the things done in the Dark Ages. The wicked feelings, however, may still be there, the animosity and bitterness. As the Apostle James says, “The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: ... and setteth on fire the course of nature.” (James 3:6) In our day, the tongue and the pen are often used as weapons of evil.

## SECONDARY SOURCE OF TRIAL

Not only from the Adversary do these trials come, but they come from the weaknesses and imperfections of others. Perhaps those that come from Christians are the most difficult to bear. If in any one of the Lord’s professed people we find the persecuting spirit, we are the more discouraged and less likely to have the proper sympathy for them.

We are to remember, however, that nothing can happen to us unless the Father permits it. If we did not get the trials from certain ones, we would get them from somewhere else, in order to burn up our dross, and strengthen the elements of our character which need development. We are to take all these experiences patiently, knowing that they are working out for us a “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”—II Cor. 4:17

We are to look away from these difficulties, and recognize the grand purpose of God. We are to reflect that this is the way in which God is chiseling and polishing us to make us ready for the grand temple of glory. And when we think of this, we can look with fortitude and patience on these fiery trials, fully recognizing that we shall get rich blessings from them.

## GLORY IN TRIBULATION

Thus we learn, as people of God, to rejoice in all things which he has done for us. The things in which we would naturally be least likely to be happy are our tribulations and persecutions. We can have joy also in these. Not that we enjoy the tribulations, the persecutions, but we realize



that these are working for us characters pleasing to God. The Lord will see to it that we get enough, and not too much, tribulation.

It is for us to recognize that in all these trials the Lord makes them work for our good. We can therefore rejoice in any persecution, especially if we are in no way blameworthy. “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed [feel disgraced]; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”—I Pet. 4:16

## FAITHFUL AMBASSADORS

God has committed unto us the Word (message, good tidings) of reconciliation (at-one-ment); and we, each one, are to shine as lights in the world, holding forth this Word of life. Concerning the true Gospel, the world is a dark place. Sin and error abound. Is it any wonder, then, that as we continue to be faithful ‘ambassadors’ for Christ, following closely in his footsteps, we have the privilege and honor of suffering “with him” for righteousness sake?—Rom. 8:17

It is still true that whoever will faithfully exercise his ambassadorship, and not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, will soon know something of the sufferings of Christ, and can say truly, “The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.”—Ps. 69:9

The powers of darkness and evil tend to deceive and discourage. These adverse influences, if not resisted, would lead us to lukewarmness—a weariness in well-doing.—Heb. 12:3

Directly, or indirectly, Satan introduces bitter aggression, painful injustice, against the faithful followers of Jesus to beat their courage down. They, like their Master, are reviled (abused in language), but they revile not in return. (I Pet. 2:23) Jesus, through the Revelator, has said, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.” (Rev. 3:21) Suffer with him now, and we reign with him in the kingdom.

## BLESSINGS FROM PERSECUTION

Should we say that we will not be reconciled to any certain experience? No! We have committed all to the Lord, and it is for us to bow in full submission, knowing by faith, and from the assurance of God’s Word, that all things are working together for our good.—Rom. 8:28

No matter what the trouble may be, it will bring patience, if we are rightly exercised. Some of the Lord’s people may have patience well

developed, and thus not need so many of these experiences. But whatever we truly need, we should desire.

A certain brother prayed earnestly for patience to the Lord. He kept praying when difficult trials came, and the more he prayed, the more difficulties he seemed to have. Then it occurred to him that this was the answer to his prayer; for that was the way to get patience. When he began to see the matter aright, it encouraged him and made a great change. He realized that the Lord was answering his prayer by granting him the very experiences he needed to develop in his character this grace of the Spirit.

## THE REWARD OF PATIENT WAITING

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.” (Ps. 37:5,7) We must not be disappointed and allow our faith to falter when the test of patient endurance is applied, while the outward peace and quietness which we crave tarry long.

Outward peace and calm are not always the conditions best suited to our needs as New Creatures; and we would not desire conditions in which the precious fruits of the Spirit would not grow and develop in us. Therefore, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice.”—I Pet. 4:12

Our loving, tender God is wise and strong. His promises have never failed those who have put their trust in him. We may feel that our efforts to be good, and to do good, are very unproductive; that the oppositions from without and within are very strong. But it is when we are weak, when we realize our own helplessness and incompetency, that we may “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10) It is then that we may realize that his strength is made perfect in our weakness.—II Cor. 12:9

## FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

It is when continued trust in the Lord and his responsive providence in our lives have ripened into precious personal acquaintance and intimacy that we learn to delight in him. It is when heart answers to heart, when pleading prayer brings recognized answers of peace, when the Divine

love and care have been clearly seen in the guidance of our way, that we can recognize the abiding presence with us of the Father and his Son.

However dark may be our way and severe the storm that rages about us, the thought of Divine protection is ever with us, so that, as the children of the Lord, we are never in despair. Paul says though “cast down,” we are “not destroyed;” though “persecuted,” we are never “forsaken.” (II Cor. 4:9) We know our Father’s hand is ever at the helm, that his love and care are sure and unfailing.

The present mission of the church is to develop in herself every grace; to be God’s witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests in the Millennial Age. Then in glory, associated with the beloved sympathetic High Priest and King, the church shall establish God’s glorious kingdom in the earth. The fiery trials this side of the veil, in which we are to rejoice, fit us for eternity in the heavenly kingdom.

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